



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 170

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2024

No. 21

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we sing about the glory of Your Name. May we live lives that will tell our Nation and world how glorious You are. Thank You for Your promises, for they refresh us each day. We are grateful for Your promises to supply all our needs, to guard our hearts with Your peace, and to keep us from stumbling or slipping as we strive to walk on the road of integrity.

Bless our Senators. Use them to contribute to the forces for harmony and goodness in our Nation and world. Give them the wisdom to make decisions that will glorify You. May they seek to serve rather than be served, following Your example of humility and sacrifice.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 6, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Kurt Campbell, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of State.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, Iran-backed terrorists carried out another deadly attack on a base that houses U.S. personnel in Syria. The Iran-backed Houthis continue to

threaten U.S. vessels and international shipping in the Red Sea.

Three days after President Biden directed strikes in response to the killing of three U.S. soldiers in Jordan, Iran and its proxies are demonstrating that their particular calculus has not changed.

The President said on Friday that our adversaries should know that “if you harm an American, we will respond.” Well, by their actions, our adversaries are turning the President’s words back around. They are essentially saying: We will attack America at times and places of our choosing.

Iran and the expendable terrorists it trades for American blood are demonstrably undeterred, and they are hardly the only ones. For 3 years, America’s adversaries have luxuriated in a world that no longer takes us at our word. Embarrassing retreat from Afghanistan, fawning climate diplomacy with our top strategic competitor, failure to take Putin seriously until it was too late, and fears of escalation that delayed lethal aid to Ukraine at every turn—for 3 years, America’s foreign policy has been defined by hesitation, half measures, and self-deterrence. President Biden has dug our credibility—the value of America’s word—into a hole.

Meanwhile, our adversaries are aligning and coordinating to an unprecedented degree. As America gives our allies and partners reasons to doubt our resolve, Russia and China are engaged in a “friendship without limits.” The contrast couldn’t be starker.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Take it from practitioners who know that better than anyone. For example, just yesterday, former National Security Advisor retired Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster had this to say:

The abandonment of Kyiv would be a gift to the Moscow-Tehran-Beijing-Pyongyang axis of aggressors. Allies and partners would lose trust in America as those aggressors are emboldened. The result could be cascading

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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conflicts even more costly than the interconnected wars in Ukraine and across the Middle East.

Of course, General McMaster was the National Security Advisor to President Trump.

Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, in the Trump administration, put it this way, after his recent visit to Ukraine:

It will be far more costly and dangerous if Putin wins.

Another former National Security Advisor, Robert O'Brien, also with the previous administration, expressed his support for supplemental security assistance to Israel, Taiwan, and Ukraine, saying simply:

The free world has been attacked, and we're the arsenal of democracy.

It is in America's direct interest to take growing threats seriously, to invest even more urgently in our capabilities to meet them, and to support our allies and partners on the frontlines.

The reality of hard power competition simply does not wait for the President or Congress to take it seriously. Either we confront challenges we face with clear strategic and firm resolve or we lose. Around the world, 21st-century autocrats and medieval theocrats will continue to challenge the U.S.-led order that has underpinned global peace and prosperity for generations, and their proxies will continue to target American personnel and American interests with lethal force.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, the Sun may be shining outside, but today is a gloomy day here in the U.S. Senate.

Last night, Members of the other side of the aisle met to decide whether they were going to side with the American people or obey the wishes of former President Trump and his friend Vladimir Putin.

While I was not party to that meeting, the reports that came out of it were disturbing, to say the least. After months of good-faith negotiations, after months of giving Republicans many of the things they asked for, Leader McConnell and the Republican conference are ready to kill the national security supplemental package, even with the border provisions they so fervently demanded.

Those reports are disturbing because this is a good bill, a bipartisan bill that will address the problems at the border directly, expeditiously, seriously.

And don't take my word for it, just ask the conservative editorial page of the Wall Street Journal that called this "a border bill worth passing" or the president of the National Border Patrol Council—who rarely sides with Democrats—who called this bill "far better than the status quo" or the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which called this package "a commonsense measure" and warned that "Congress cannot afford to ignore these problems any longer."

So last night's reports coming from the Republican conference meeting are alarming because they represent a dramatic transformation in Republican thought. In October, Republicans objected to President Biden's national security supplemental request, telling the world they could not consider it without, in Leader McConnell's words, "something credible on the border." He said his conference would give "this supplemental request a serious look and probably recommend some changes as well." That was October 22, 2023.

Since then, Senators on both sides of the aisle have conducted intense, good-faith negotiations to try and find a way forward on the border. We thought we were close in December, but some on the other side did not want to be "jammed" by the Christmas holiday so we gave them more time.

Senator Graham reasoned that a delay was necessary and thought that President Biden "should get involved in border/immigration negotiations." Well, President Biden did get involved, and he gave Senator Graham more time that he asked for. And yet again yesterday, he asked for more time once again.

In December, Senator Fischer accused Democrats of not wanting to address border security, saying that "my democratic colleagues support [border] security for Taiwan, they support [border] security for Ukraine, and they support [border] security for Israel. But what they won't support is basic border security for the United States of America. We are told that our own border security is not related to the national security supplemental? That's absurd."

That is what she said. "That's absurd" not to have border security in the bill, in December. Well, yesterday, she said she would refuse to even debate a bill that addressed our national security and border security—not even a debate.

The entire process has been quite a roller coaster. And it is not just my Senate colleagues who keep moving the goalposts. In November, Speaker Johnson said that "with our appropriations bills for Ukraine funding, for example, we're going to marry that with border security. These two things are going to be handled together because we believe it's a top priority."

But when former President Trump said he didn't want Republicans to solve the border problem, that he wanted it as a campaign issue, Speaker

Johnson did a 180-degree about-face and obediently and obeisantly changed his tune.

Now, I understand politics. I understand electoral strategy. But for more than a year, Members on the other side of the aisle have been wailing that the border was an emergency situation; that the country was in urgent crisis.

As the senior Senator from Wyoming said, "This crisis requires swift, serious, and substantive action," or like the senior Senator from Texas said, "This current crisis cries out for a solution" and "nobody believes the status quo is acceptable."

How about the words of Speaker Johnson just 1 month ago. Just 1 month ago, he said that the time to act on the border is yesterday.

This morning, Republicans are singing a new tune. Suddenly, this crisis is not so urgent. Suddenly, we need to take even more time before we address this crisis. One hard-right Republican Member of the House even ridiculously suggested that we wait until after November. This morning, a member of the Republican leadership who had recently called for swift action now says that action must wait until after the next election.

Give me a break.

Today, this is the new Republican line on the border: It is an emergency, but it can wait 12 months or until the end of time.

What utter bunk.

A cynic might suggest that this request for more time was a political ploy. But maybe we should take the Republicans at their word. Maybe we should take them at their word when they say: There is absolutely no reason to agree to policies that will further enable Joe Biden. Or when they say: Let me tell you, I am not willing to do too damn much right now to help a Democrat.

That is why this is a gloomy day. That is why the Republican Party is being thrown into disrepute by many of its own members back in their States.

Some Republicans will claim they have not had enough time to read the bill. Some Republicans will claim that they want an amendment process. Some will claim that they want guarantees their amendments will be accepted. Some Republicans will claim we need more time for debate and consideration. My guess is, they will ultimately want 10 to 12 months.

Finally, some Republicans will claim that we should separate—new tune—separate border solutions from funding for Ukraine.

I would like to address each of those claims right here, right now. For those who claim they have not had enough time to read the bill, on January 25, 10 Republican Senators wrote me a letter.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: