

forward. One of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle predicted the meeting would be “an expression of unity.” “[A]n expression of unity”? I will be honest. It is getting harder and harder to differentiate between the Republicans’ agenda and the extreme, hard-right MAGA agenda. In many ways, they seem to be one and the same nowadays.

The topics up for discussion between Senate Republicans and Donald Trump today read like Republicans’ greatest hits: taxes, Social Security, Medicare, and more. But when you take a closer look under the hood, it is not difficult to see that these are issues where Republicans are way out of touch with the American people.

Cutting taxes on the very wealthy and on corporations that don’t pay their fair share? That is what they want to do. Social Security and Medicare—when 180 House Members are part of the group that said we should cut them, and RICK SCOTT—running for leader—from Florida says we should cut Medicare and Social Security? Give us a break. If that is unity, the American people sure as heck don’t want it.

I yield the floor.

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. MCCONNELL. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF SARAH NETBURN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, soon, the Judiciary Committee will consider promoting a magistrate in New York, Sarah Netburn, to the district court after a less-than-judicious committee process.

Judge Netburn’s hearing was a contentious affair. You should go watch it. My friends the junior Senators from Louisiana and Texas had the judge dead to rights on her judicial activism from the bench. She was clearly prepared for their line of questioning, but by the end, she wilted under the withering fire from my colleagues.

That is when the acting chairwoman of the committee got involved. After Republicans were finished questioning Judge Netburn, she invited the nominee to defend herself. Her defense, of course, flatly contradicted her written opinion as a judge.

Committee Republicans rightly objected. It is one thing to give a nominee the chance to rehabilitate herself, but giving her the last word as she lied to the committee is a different matter entirely. After the nominee gave two different explanations for why she had engaged in political activism from the bench, committee Democrats blocked further questions and closed the hearing.

It sounds an awful lot like the way another nominee, Adeel Mangi, explained his policy views to liberal interest groups only after the committee was finished questioning him. Judge Netburn got the last word here.

As the junior Senator from Louisiana said, it looks an awful lot like a cover-up. Apparently, it is not enough for Senate Democrats to rubberstamp radicals to the courts. They desperately don’t want the American people to even know about it.

Well, it is not working. The Judiciary Committee has received almost 100 letters from liberals opposing Judge Netburn’s activism. The cat is literally out of the bag. So I would urge my colleagues to pay attention to what happens in the Judiciary Committee as Judge Netburn’s nomination moves forward.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. President, now on another matter, this week, the Armed Services Committee has been marking up the National Defense Authorization Act for the coming year. In the past, the committee has prided itself on considering hundreds of amendments and thoroughly exercising Congress’s oversight responsibilities in the process. I expect this year to be no different.

But one essential question hangs over both the NDAA and the appropriations process to come: Is Congress ready—finally ready—to fulfill our most fundamental responsibility of adequately providing for the common defense? This, of course, remains an open question. For a fourth straight year, the process of funding the Federal Government began with a White House budget proposal that would impose net cuts to the national defense.

I have said it before. How can we expect to keep up with the pacing threat, the PRC, if our military budgets don’t even keep pace with inflation? I know a number of our Democratic colleagues recognize that the threats we face are growing and that our defense requirements are growing along with them, but they don’t seem to be ready to respond with any sense of urgency. Senate Democrats continue to indicate that they will stick to their long-standing demand for artificial parity between defense and nondefense appropriations for any increases above the President’s budget.

It is time for all of us to face the actual facts. The threats we face have grown since the bipartisan budget caps were negotiated. They have grown since the President’s budget was drafted. The defense of Israel and Ukraine continue to offer lessons on the glaring need for modern air and missile defenses. We have learned how insufficient our inventories of critical long-range munitions might be in the event of a direct conflict in the Pacific. And with the risk of simultaneous conflict in multiple regions actually growing, the enduring importance of the two-war force planning construct is making itself abundantly clear.

This is the reality our colleague Ranking Member WICKER was grappling with when he put together a detailed plan for an overdue generational investment in the national defense, and I am grateful to my friend for his leadership. A serious roadmap for preserving our military primacy is on the table. The question now is whether the Senate will follow it; whether we will lay the groundwork right now for urgent investments in critical munitions, long-range fires, sea power, and in the defense industrial base required to sustain all of it for long-term strategic competition.

Way back in 1940, when the scope of the Axis threat was finally so glaringly obvious that even longtime skeptics began to soften their opposition to long-overdue military investment, the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold Stark, pointed out a harsh reality: Dollars can’t buy yesterday.

We are already facing a steep uphill climb to prepare America’s Armed Forces to deter aggression and outcompete our adversaries. You can’t surge readiness. We can’t modernize overnight. Yesterday is right now, and it is time to invest in what we need to deter and defeat looming threats.

So I will be watching our colleagues’ work closely, and I will urge the Democratic leader to bring the NDAA to the floor for consideration as soon as the committee completes its work.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. President, on one final matter, earlier this week, Senate Democrats took up the Biden administration’s banner of prescription drug socialism.

Our colleague Chairman SANDERS announced he would ask his HELP Committee colleagues to subpoena a drug company executive to testify before the committee about the prices of innovative treatments.

Never mind that U.S. Senators shouldn’t require remedial lessons in the workings of the market economy. And never mind that the company in question had already expressed willingness to testify. Our colleague has decided to take the route of maximum escalation.

I have discussed the facts behind America’s world-leading medical innovation sector at length before. What innovator would sink the time, resources, and risk into the development of a new treatment if there were no prospect of recouping their investment? Apparently, Senate Democrats aren’t the only ones who seem to be stumped—stumped—by this question. The Department of Commerce is taking steps to finalize a framework it announced last December known as march-in rights. Under this policy, if the Federal Government deems that the prices of certain drug treatments are too high, it could elect to “march in” and seize the company’s intellectual property rights.

In a rather ironic twist, the Department’s proposed policy relies on a law—the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980—that

was designed to do the exact opposite: to promote cooperation between government and innovators. This time around, the latest chapter of prescription drug socialism would send all the wrong signals to would-be innovators behind future lifesaving cures. It would tell them not to take risks; not to build new things; and not to invest their time, resources, and creativity to develop more of the greatest medical achievements the world has ever seen.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CELEBRATING THE 247TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CREATION OF THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES AND EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I rise today—I have done this several times since I have been here in the Senate. It is always an honor to do it. When something is that important, I think it is worth repeating. I am rising today to offer a resolution expressing support for the Pledge of Allegiance as an expression of patriotism and honoring the 247th anniversary of the introduction of our U.S. flag.

Tomorrow, we celebrate Flag Day, which was established over 100 years ago by President Woodrow Wilson. As we pause to recognize all that our flag represents, let us also honor those who have sacrificed everything to defend it.

In 2002, Senator Tom Daschle raised a similar resolution with unanimous support from the Senate. It passed on the floor uneventfully. Today, I ask this body to reaffirm our support for the Pledge of Allegiance, also bringing into account somebody from Indiana—Red Skelton.

In 1969, the American entertainer, who was well known for his program “The Red Skelton Hour,” wrote a speech on the importance of the pledge. Reflecting on his time in Vincennes, IN, he spoke about the values instilled by one of his high school teachers.

After the performance of the speech, CBS received 200,000 requests for copies. I wonder if that would occur in this day and age. This speech would go on to be sold as a single by Columbia Records and performed at the White House for President Nixon.

I think it would honor Mr. Skelton's memory and the importance of the Pledge of Allegiance if it were recited again today on the Senate floor like I have done several times since I have been here.

Red Skelton:

When I was a small boy in Vincennes, Indiana, I heard, I think, one of the most out-

standing speeches I ever heard in my life. I think it compares with the Sermon on the Mount, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and Socrates' speech to the Students.

We had just finished reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, and Mr. Lasswell, the Principal of Vincennes High School, called us all together. He says, “Uh, boys and girls, I have been listening to you recite the Pledge of Allegiance all semester, and it seems that it has become a little monotonous to you. Or, could it be, you do not understand the meaning of each word? If I may, I would like to recite the pledge, and give you a definition of each word:

I—Me; an individual; a committee of one.

Pledge—Dedicate all of my worldly goods to give without self-pity.

Allegiance—My love and my devotion.

To the Flag—Our standard. ‘Old Glory’; a symbol of courage. And wherever she waves, there is respect, because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts, ‘Freedom is everybody's job.’

of the United—That means we have all come together.

States—Individual communities that have united into 48 great states;—

Forty-eight because of when it was done—

48 individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose; all divided by imaginary boundaries, yet united to a common cause, and that's love of country—

Of America.

And to the Republic—A Republic: a sovereign state in which power is invested into the representatives chosen by the people to govern; and the government is of the people; and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.

For which it stands

One Nation—Meaning ‘so blessed by God.’

[Under God]

Indivisible—Incapable of being divided.

With Liberty—Which is freedom; the right of power for one to live his own life without fears, threats, or any sort of retaliation.

And Justice—The principle and qualities of dealing fairly with others.

For All—For All. That means, boys and girls, it's as much your country as it is mine.”

Afterwards, Mr. Lasswell asked his students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance together, with newfound appreciation for the words.

I pledge allegiance
to the Flag of the United States of America

and to the Republic for which it stands;
one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Red Skelton concluded his speech by saying:

Since I was a small boy, two states have been added to our country, and two words have been added to the Pledge of Allegiance: Under God. Wouldn't it be a pity if someone said “That is a prayer”—and [it should] be eliminated from our schools [as well]?

Just as those students that day—Mr. Red Skelton included—recommitted to the meaning of the words of the Pledge of Allegiance, I call upon the U.S. Senate to recommit to the meaning of these words.

There are times today that the words of the Pledge of Allegiance are tossed around without care. Other times, they are altered to remove what today is deemed offensive or antiquated. But Americans should not misuse or abuse our Pledge of Allegiance. The pledge is

meant to remind Americans of our guiding principles and inspire adherence to those ideas that made our country great: equality under the law; recognized rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That is why, in honor of Flag Day tomorrow, I am requesting unanimous consent from my colleagues that my resolution expressing support of the Pledge of Allegiance be passed.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session and notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 732, which is at the desk; further, that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 732) celebrating the 247th anniversary of the creation of the flag of the United States and expressing support for the Pledge of Allegiance.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. BRAUN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The resolution (S. Res. 732) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today's RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican whip.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Democrats made their latest move yesterday in their yearslong campaign to undermine the legitimacy of the Supreme Court. Their failed attempt to gain unanimous consent on a so-called Supreme Court ethics bill was yet another attempt to bully the Court into ruling the way Democrats want.

With decisions in multiple controversial cases coming from the Supreme Court over the next few weeks, including today, I expect this was just the prelude to yet another dramatic Democrat temper tantrum if things don't go Democrats' way. I say “if things don't go Democrats' way” because it is a funny thing—when the Supreme Court decides things Democrats' way, we hear a lot less about the legitimacy of the Supreme Court.

Take the Court's decision in Consumer Financial Protection Bureau v. Community Financial Services Association of America, Ltd., in which most