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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 9, 2024, at 6:30 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Majestic Father, Your glory fills the Earth. In this first month of a new year, manifest Your glory and might in our Nation and world.

Arise, O Lord. Stand up against the evil that seeks to destroy freedom, to steal, kill, and desecrate. Rule over our world with Your marvelous might, using our lawmakers to do Your will on Earth even as it is done in Heaven.

Eternal God, we praise You with all our hearts.

We pray in Your wonderful 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 8, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. DUCKWORTH 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 legislative clerk read the nomination of John A. Kazen, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

CONGRATULATING THE BUFFALO BILLS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, let me start out today by saying it is a great day to be a Buffalo Bills fan. For the fourth year in a row, the Buffalo Bills have won the AFC East championship, squishing the fish last night by defeating the Miami Dolphins 21 to 14. What an incredible night. What an incredible win. What an incredible team. Buffalo is truly the Beast of the East.

It hasn't been the easiest season for the Bills, but this team can be summed up in one word: perseverance. They never gave up. They never threw in the towel. And last night, it began to pay off because they are on their way to the playoffs.

In true Buffalo fashion, Bills Mafia showed up in the early hours of the morning at the Buffalo Airport to welcome their team home. And, of course, it seemed like half of the people at the Miami stadium were Bills fans as well.

Congratulations to Buffalo. Congratulations to Coach Sean McDermott and the whole team as well. Let's keep going. And, as always, go Bills.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, now on the new year, I would like to begin the 2nd session of the 118th Congress by wishing you and all of my colleagues a happy new year. I hope everyone was able to spend time with family, with friends, and meet constituents.

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



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This past Christmas-New Year's recess, however, was a busy, consequential, and most of all a productive time for the U.S. Senate. Senators and staff worked straight through Christmas and straight through the new year on avoiding a government shutdown, on protecting America's security, even protecting the future of Western democracy, and we made some real progress.

First, I have excellent news on government funding. Yesterday, I announced with Speaker JOHNSON that congressional leaders have reached a top-line agreement for government funding for the 2024 fiscal year. When we began our negotiations, our goal was to preserve a nondefense funding level of \$772 billion—the same level agreed to in our debt ceiling deal last June. That \$772 billion was precisely the number we reached. Not a nickel was cut. Again, our goal was \$772 billion, and that is precisely the number we reached in this bipartisan agreement.

The agreement now clears the way for Congress to act in the coming weeks to avoid a government shutdown, while also preserving key domestic programs that benefit millions of Americans. The framework agreement will enable the appropriators to address many of the major challenges Americans face at home and abroad. It also allows us to keep the investments for hard-working American families that congressional Democrats and President Biden secured through our legislative agenda.

Both parties reached this agreement without resorting to the painful and draconian cuts that the hard right—particularly those in the Freedom Caucus—clamored for. The hard right wanted to put a chopping block on programs that help millions of Americans. So I am happy to say that Democrats protected vital priorities like housing programs, veterans' benefits, healthcare, nutrition programs, small business support, the National Health Service—the NHS—and funding for Federal law enforcement.

I am particularly pleased that we will protect the historic climate investment Democrats passed in the Inflation Reduction Act. The hard right wanted to use the appropriations process to undo our climate investments. Democrats said no, and we held the line.

The hard right also wanted to make cuts to the IRS so that the ultrarich tax cheats could weasel their way out of paying their fair share. By keeping the cuts at \$20 billion, I am happy to say this agreement will not affect the IRS's ability to keep holding the richest tax cheats accountable. Remember, when Democrats passed the Inflation Reduction Act, we gave the IRS new tools to audit the richest of the rich who don't pay their fair share. All these tools will remain in place.

So this top-line agreement is an excellent start to the year because it is a

huge step towards avoiding a government shutdown. Of course, our work must continue. Producing 12 appropriations bills will not be easy. It is going to require agreement from the four corners and a lot more compromise between the parties.

And make no mistake—Democrats have made clear to Speaker JOHNSON that we will not support the inclusion of any poison pills in any of the 12 appropriations bills before the Congress. In a statement that Leader JEFFRIES and I put out yesterday, we made it clear that we will not accept poison pills. If the hard right chooses to spoil this agreement with poison pills, they will be to blame if we start careening towards a shutdown. I know Speaker JOHNSON has said that nobody wants to see a shutdown happen.

Finally, thank you to my colleagues on both sides in both Chambers who made this agreement possible. I want to particularly thank my staff, who worked morning, noon, and night over the past few weeks. I must have spoken to them 10, 12 times a day every day and even several times on Christmas Day because getting this done was so important.

The next few weeks are not going to be easy, but the Democrats—we Democrats—are committed to working as hard as we can to avoid a government shutdown.

I hope our Republican colleagues, particularly in the House—we have good cooperation here in the Senate—are ready to do the same.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Madam President, on the supplemental, in addition to fully funding the Federal Government, Senators have also been hard at work over the winter break on finalizing an emergency national security supplemental. The supplemental package is a national necessity, with critical aid to help Ukraine defeat Putin, help Israel combat Hamas, provide needed assistance to innocent civilians in Gaza, and fix our broken immigration system.

At the end of last year, I said Democrats would remain committed to finding a bipartisan agreement on the supplemental. The only way to get something done on an issue as hard as the border is through bipartisan cooperation, and we have kept our promise to work in good faith.

Now, on the supplemental, it has been a very promising few days. We have made more progress in the past couple of days on the border than we have in the past few weeks. The work is not yet finished, but I am more hopeful right now—even more than I was a few days ago—that we can get something meaningful done on the border and pass the supplemental.

Getting over the finish line is still not going to be easy. It will take continued compromise, good faith, and recognition from both sides that nobody is going to get everything they want.

Immigration reform has always been one of the hardest issues facing the

Senate. But our broken border and our national security are at stake in this supplemental, and we must do everything we can to reach an agreement.

I urge my colleagues to continue their negotiations, and I want to thank them all for their good work to bring us to this point. Their example is an affirmation that the only way to get things done is through bipartisanship. So I urge them to stay the course until the work is done.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6, 2021

Madam President, now, on the January 6 anniversary, 3 years ago—on January 6, 2021—America experienced one of the darkest, most infamous days in our Nation's history. The Capitol we stand in right now became the target of mob violence. Our democracy fell under attack, orchestrated and encouraged by Donald Trump and fueled by the Big Lie.

Three years can pass, 5 years can pass, a decade can pass, but January 6 will always seem like yesterday to me. At one point, I was within 30 feet of the rioters, who I was told were shouting, "Let's get him," pointing at me, before my detail pulled me away to safety.

Our Capitol was desecrated. Walls were scaled, windows smashed, and offices vandalized.

The mob's goal on January 6 was clear: to overturn the will of the American people and block the peaceful transition of power. But, on that day, in an act of patriotism that history will forever remember, the four leaders decided we would not let Donald Trump and his mob stop us from counting the ballots. We came back later that night, finished the count, certified the election, and preserved our democracy. And, of course, we couldn't have finished our work without the heroics and quick thinking of the Capitol Police and MPD officers who defended the Capitol on January 6.

Though vastly outnumbered and underequipped, these public servants held the line, saving countless lives and preventing a violent riot from becoming something worse. These brave men and women, many of whom still bear the scars from the attack on January 6, still come to work every day. We say to them now and always: Thank you. Thank God for you. We are here for you.

Three years after the attack, much has changed, but one thing remains true: Our democracy, despite those who seek to derail it, marches on. Let this anniversary be a reminder that the work to protect democracy is never over, that it is a precious gift, and we all must do our part to make sure our democracy endures today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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