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Senate

The Senate met at 10:01 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.

Almighty God, You are supreme over all the nations. With loyalty and love, You continue to guide us.

As our Senators deal with today's challenges, unite them in the common task of doing what is best for our Nation and world. May our lawmakers see that they can accomplish far more by finding common ground and working together.

When these servants of freedom are tempted to doubt, steady their faith. When they don't know what to do, give them the wisdom that can change and shape our times according to Your plan.

Lord, empower them to trust You more fully, to live for You more completely, and to serve You more willingly.

We pray in Your powerful 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 10, 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 bill clerk read the nomination of Adam B. Abelson, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, House Republican colleagues are struggling with a bad case of Groundhog Day: The government faces a critical funding deadline in a few weeks. If that

deadline isn't met, the government will shut down. Only bipartisanship will help us meet that deadline. But instead of pursuing bipartisanship, Speaker JOHNSON is yet again—yet again—wasting time caving to the hard right, despite his razor-thin majority.

Hasn't he learned? This is what got the Republicans in trouble the last few times that we had to fund the government. An appeal to the rightwing—the rightwing, in their sort of strict, narrow partisan ideology, thinks they can force everybody—even dissident Republicans, let alone Democrats and the President—to go along with them. But, of course, it doesn't happen, and then we come to a bipartisan agreement.

Oh, yes, it is certainly Groundhog Day once again as the Republicans repeat the same mistake they have made over and over again; and that is the House Republicans led, unfortunately, by Speaker JOHNSON.

As I have said, we have seen this play out time and time again. Is it any surprise that the Speaker's purely partisan CR seems to be running into trouble? The answer is very simple: The House should stop wasting time on a CR proposal that cannot become law. The House should stop wasting its time gathering together among themselves—not even all of them—putting together a bill without consulting HAKEEM JEFFRIES, myself, or the President. But that is what they do. And it doesn't work. It just doesn't work.

Instead, Republicans should work with Democrats on a bipartisan package—one that has input from both sides, one that avoids harmful cuts, one that is free of poison pills. We are ready to sit down and work with them immediately.

Now, to be fair, the Speaker's proposal was not entirely bad news. I was heartened to see that Speaker JOHNSON's proposal held on to the bipartisan top-line spending agreement that I reached with the Speaker earlier this year. It is a good sign that Speaker

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



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JOHNSON seems to accept reality that any CR we produce in the coming weeks will have to include that funding level.

But sadly—sadly—the good news ends there, because, on the whole, the House Republicans' CR is an unserious and uncooked product. It is not serious for Republicans to say they want to kick the can down the road for 6 months on funding the government.

Funding the government is the most basic responsibility we have in Congress. So to say "let's hold off for half a year" should be a nonstarter. It is also not serious for Republicans to release a proposal that endangers troop readiness, risks troop pay, hamstringing our efforts to outcompete the Chinese Government. You cannot run an Army on a 6-month CR. You cannot put everything on hold for 6 months, have the defense contracts put on ice for 6 months, and allow for Russia and the Chinese Government to gain on us. It is that simple. And the head of the Joint Chiefs sent a letter that said just that.

It is not serious for Republicans to say they want to pass a CR that fails to properly extend E-Verify, H-2B visas, and other border security programs that stop drugs like fentanyl. They talk a lot about the border, but then the fundamental ways that we toughen up enforcement on the border and interior of the country with E-Verify, they ignore.

It shows how political this document is. It is particularly egregious that the Speaker's own proposal disbands a critical law enforcement effort to stop drug smuggling, drug cartels, money laundering. But the parade of horrors keeps going. It just doesn't end there.

It is not serious for Republicans to say that they want to pass a CR that forgets to fund critical health programs. Under the Republican proposal, telehealth would be harmed. We know how important telehealth is, particularly for rural Americans. It has made healthcare much better, cheaper, and more effective in rural areas. But they don't fund it. Wait for 6 months to tell someone in a rural area who needs medical help?

People with diabetes would struggle to get the aid they need. And community health centers, often the only resource for millions of working-class Americans to get their healthcare if they don't have insurance but fall above the Medicare and Medicaid lines to get their healthcare—that is where they get it. That funding, again, would be in danger.

And if all that weren't enough, Republicans have no plan for extending farm bill funding. One of the consequences of failing to pass the farm bill is going over the so-called dairy cliff, which is what happens when the dairy margin coverage program dries up. For this to happen would decimate farmers across the country and, I know, in my own State. Farmers have told me. Some of them would go out of business if we wait over that dairy

cliff. Monthly payments that help farmers cover the gap between the price of milk and feed would halt.

And it would not only affect our farmers, it would affect our consumers. The cost of milk needed for our babies and for healthy kids and all of us—I like milk; I look forward to drinking it a lot—but the cost of milk could potentially double if we went over that dairy cliff. It would create seismic disruptions in our supply chains and cause market panic.

So these are just some of the terrible consequences of proceeding with Speaker JOHNSON's 6-month, unserious CR proposal. It is a little surprise that the White House has already issued a veto threat.

Now, as far as their timeline, let's be very clear about what Republicans are trying to do with this 6-month CR. They are trying to lay the groundwork for Project 2025 in hopes they get a favorable result in the election. That is why the rightwing is pushing this. It is not just, you know, that they don't like government funding. They have this horrible document, Project 2025, which would turn America inside-out.

I believe it would create huge economic, social—all kinds of problems—problems of protecting freedom. But that is what they want to do. That is their goal. Why Speaker JOHNSON goes along with it is beyond me. But by trying to set up a funding fight in March, rightwing Republicans hope for the chance to hold government funding hostage in exchange for some of the nastiest, most harmful policies that Donald Trump promises in his Project 2025.

Let there be no mistake: Project 2025 is the Trump agenda. Some of his top advisers helped put it together. Some of the lead people on this have talked about their high-up positions in a Trump administration should, God forbid, it occur.

Over 140 people who have worked in the Trump administration contributed to it. To call the ideas in Trump's Project 2025 radical would be an understatement. Project 2025 would pave the way for the hard right's national abortion ban by restricting access to FDA-approved medication.

Project 2025 would abolish the Department of Education, decimate our public education system by wiping out school meal programs.

Hungry kids? We want to send people to school with an empty belly? They can't learn. Oh, we have to spend little money to provide a nutritious breakfast, which, incidentally, helps our farmers? Isn't that horrible? says the rightwing. They would rather—the billionaires who helped fund all of this stuff—pay even less money to the government.

It would defund public schools. They would end student loan forgiveness. All the young people who have this burden of student loans on their back—you and I and others are trying to reduce or eliminate that burden—forget it if this rightwing budget goes into effect.

Project 2025 would make healthcare less affordable for tens of millions of Americans. It would rip away benefits from our veterans. It would attack small farmers and small businesses and so much more. The list goes on and on and on, unfortunately.

These ideas aren't theoretical. No, no. They are not abstract ideas up in the clouds; they are real proposals that the hard right intends to push if they come into power. They are so narrow and so focused on their own agenda, as I said, in large part over the years funded by billionaires—greedy. Not all wealthy people are greedy; many of them understand their obligation to help the country that has been so good to them. But they are a narrow group, very greedy. They don't want to pay any taxes, some of them. "Let's have a national sales tax," some of them say. That would create huge inflation on the average middle class so they don't have to pay an income tax. Lord help us.

And Republicans right now are hoping that a funding fight early next year would turn into a hostage negotiation between keeping the government open and passing Project 2025's terrible policies.

But let me assure the American people, we Democrats are not fooled. And let me assure our mainstream Republicans, who quietly grit their teeth when they hear about this, that the American people are not fooled. Surprisingly, a large number of American people have already heard of Project 2025 and don't like it.

The more people learn about Project 2025, the more they realize how devastating it is and how horrible it would be for our economy, how disastrous it would be for public safety, and how catastrophic—catastrophic—it would be for our country.

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY

Mr. President, now, finally, on the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony later this morning. Later this morning, I will join with congressional leaders and with families of military servicemembers for a most solemn observance: the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to the 13 servicemembers killed during the suicide bombing of Abbey Gate in Kabul.

The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest honor that Congress can bestow, but it is a small gesture when compared to the immense sacrifice of these brave Americans.

To us, these 13 Americans were sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, spouses, friends, loved ones. Some were even younger than the war in Afghanistan itself. But to the citizens desperately trying to escape the Taliban's rule through Abbey Gate on that fateful day, these 13 Americans were something more: heroes, guardians, saviors. They were fighting for a cause far bigger than themselves to deliver freedom to those who otherwise might never have known it.