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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our shelter and shield, today we remember 9/11. As we recall the tragedy, infamy, and heroism of that day, we better understand that freedom isn't free.

We remember how the pain united us so that we knew we were not hyphenated Americans but one people. Infuse us in these challenging times with a similar spirit of oneness, inspiring us to work for the well-being of all people.

Lord, we are grateful for the protection You have provided us for the 23 years since that calamitous day. May we continue to trust You to be our refuge for the future of this land we love. Continue to use our lawmakers as instruments of Your peace.

We pray in Your majestic 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, September 11, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, a Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. HICKENLOOPER 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 Kevin Gafford Ritz, of Tennessee, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 23 years ago today, forces of evil brought their war on the United States to American soil. They filled a clear blue

sky with smoke, fire, and the shattered lives of 2,977 innocent people.

Before the dust had settled, the world witnessed the extraordinary heroism of first responders, the compassion of neighbors and volunteers, and the will of a proud nation not to let this savagery go unanswered.

The terrorists had started this war, but America resolved to finish it. At times, that resolve has wavered. Over the years since September 11, 2001, I have counseled administrations of both parties not to shortchange, hamstring, or abandon our fight against the terrorists or let up on the adversaries who support them. I have urged colleagues in Congress not to make the job of the warfighter harder by taking essential counterterrorism authorities off the table, and I will continue to do so as our colleagues consider our recent vote on section 702 and the one we will take in less than 2 years to further extend this vital intelligence collection authority.

The Biden-Harris administration pretends the War on Terrorism is over. The Vice President herself claimed last night that "there is not one member of the United States military who is in active duty in a combat zone . . . [for] the first time this century."

Well, this, of course, would be news to U.S. servicemembers who conducted operations against ISIS in Iraq last week and to the sailors intercepting Houthi rockets in the Red Sea and to the families of servicemembers killed and injured in the attack on Tower 22 near Jordan's border with Syria earlier this year.

Our current Commander in Chief and the Biden-Harris administration are not the first to chase the tail of shutting down terrorist detention at Guantanamo Bay. They are not the first to indulge in the idea of a pivot away from a region full of important U.S. interests. They are not the first to suggest that America gets to decide unilaterally when threats from Afghanistan end, but they were the ones who

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



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followed through with the disastrous retreat that torched American credibility and left 13 servicemembers dead.

The administration pinned its hopes on the mistaken idea that because the U.S.-led coalition had made tremendous progress in keeping terrorist threats under control, we could continue to do so from over the horizon. So how is that going? Despite assurances from the Secretary of Defense that over-the-horizon operations would not suffer from a lack of human intelligence after the U.S. withdrawal, the administration hasn't conducted a single strike—not one—against ISIS-K, the terrorists responsible for the Abbey Gate bombing, among other atrocities, since 2001. Of course, that is not because the terrorists have been quiet. In fact, by one analysis this year, ISIS-K planned 21 external plots or attacks in 9 countries in the previous 12 months alone, compared to just 3 between 2018 and the spring of 2022.

The ODNI annual threat assessment was forced to acknowledge that “terrorists will maintain an interest in conducting attacks . . . against U.S. persons, allies, and interests worldwide.” Indeed, America's retreat from Afghanistan has invited violence elsewhere, from the resurgence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, to the AQAP in Yemen, to al-Qaida affiliates across the Sahel. And then there is Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah and the Houthis and Iraqi terrorist groups, all of whom have been trained and equipped, aided and abetted, by the world's most active state sponsor of terror—Iran.

Hamas's attack on October 7 is described as Israel's September 11. Relative to population, it was actually September 11 15 times over. It was the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, and it wouldn't have been possible without the involvement of Tehran.

The chaos stemming from this genocidal assault and the violent choreography by the IRGC of attacks on Israel and U.S. interests across the region are evidence of the failure of this administration's passive, accommodating approach to Iran and its terrorist proxies.

America's weakness and hesitation will not deter our adversaries. Withholding critical assistance from partners on the frontlines will not defeat them. This is true in Israel just as it is true in Ukraine.

There is no doubt that allies, partners, and adversaries in Asia and elsewhere are watching a tentative America pull its punches. They are questioning our resolve and our commitment to our friends.

If we are unwilling to change Iran's calculus and compel an end to attacks on American forces in Iraq and Syria or international vessels on the high seas and if we are unwilling to stand with partners like Israel or Ukraine, can we be trusted to stand up to the PRC?

Twenty-three years ago, a dangerous world struck America here at home.

We must not wait for today's threats to do the same.

BIDENOMICS

Mr. President, on another matter, since President Biden took office, consumer prices have increased more than 20 percent. That is the hard truth of the monthly inflation report, and it is worth remembering where it came from.

Vice President HARRIS has said:

“We are very proud of Bidenomics.”

Well, she should be. After all, it was the Vice President herself whose vote here in the Senate helped send our economy into a historic inflationary spiral. Back in March 2021, she cast the tie-breaking vote on the motion to proceed to the so-called American Rescue Plan, and in August 2022, she did the same for passage of the so-called Inflation Reduction Act.

Sure enough, the Vice President is rather proud of this record. The way she tells it, “Through all our work, President Biden and I are building an economy that works for working people.” But does it really? Does it really work for working people? If you ask some of the folks I talked to last month, you would likely hear a different story.

Two years on, high prices in the wake of the Inflation Reduction Act are still forcing working Americans to make tough choices. A mother in North Carolina told a reporter recently:

Sometimes I have to choose whether I am going to pay the light bill or pay all the rent or buy food or not let my son do a sport.

Surging prices are especially challenging for seniors on a fixed income. One Pennsylvania retiree observed recently that she was “down to eating ramen for lunch, which I never ate in my life until recently. If it is not marked down, I just don't eat it. I haven't eaten beef since I don't know when. I can't afford it.”

This is the economy that Vice President HARRIS has said is working for working people. This is Bidenomics in action—or perhaps it is time to give the economy the Vice President is so proud of a new name.

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. THUNE. 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.

23RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, ATTACKS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin, I want to take a moment to acknowledge what today is: 23 years ago, terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and 23 years since a heroic group of Americans prevented even greater tragedy by bringing down a fourth hijacked plane

before it could crash into another target.

As on every September 11 since that black day, we remember the heroes who rose up—at the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon, and in that bare field near Shanksville, PA—and we mourn all those who were lost.

My prayers, as always, are with the families of all those who still grieve their fallen loved ones and with all those whose calling is to respond to danger and stand between us and terror.

2024 ELECTIONS

Mr. President, there has been a dizzying amount of change in the Democrat Party over the past couple of months. First, and obviously, there was the replacement of President Biden with KAMALA HARRIS on the ticket. Democrat voters who had gone to the polls in the primaries and cast a vote for President Biden were informed that, in fact, the delegates they had chosen would be supporting Vice President HARRIS instead.

That was a big change but not the only one. There is also the new Democrat nominee's attempt to reinvent herself. It began 5 short years ago since KAMALA HARRIS was running for President in the Democrat primary as a leftist. She endorsed, among other things, a ban on fracking, taxpayer-funded gender reassignment surgeries for detained immigrants, decriminalizing drug possession, decriminalizing illegal border crossings, mandatory buybacks of certain guns—and I could go on.

Of course, none of that was a big surprise. After all, then-Senator HARRIS—a supporter of a government takeover of healthcare and the budget-busting Green New Deal—regularly made lists of most liberal Senators. But what is surprising is the apparent 180-degree flip she has made in the past—well, let's say, 7 weeks or so in this campaign.

She opposed a border wall; now she apparently supports one. She supported a ban on fracking; well, now she opposes one. She supported Medicare for All—the Federal takeover of healthcare—and now says she won't push for it if she is President. She supported mandatory gun buybacks; now she won't push for them. She supported an electric vehicle mandate; and now, apparently, she doesn't.

I could go on, on that list. It is amazing what a brief 7 weeks or so can do or perhaps I should say it is amazing what getting nominated for President can do. But it seems that despite her apparent move to the center, progressive voters should not be alarmed.

A far-left compatriot of the Vice President, the senior Senator from Vermont, whose Medicare for All government healthcare takeover she co-sponsored, was asked on “Meet the Press” last weekend whether he thought Vice President HARRIS was abandoning her progressive ideals. “No,” he answered, “I don't think she's abandoning her ideals. I think she's