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Senate

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.

Magnificent God, great are Your mercies, for You are a God of compassion. All day long, we put our hope in You. Thank You for fueling this hope with Your compassion and unfailing love. Give us the humility to depend on Your guidance as we strive to live for Your glory.

Lord, forgive us for our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Use our lawmakers to accomplish Your purposes as You show them the path they should choose. Remind them that You are a friend to those who choose to do Your will.

We pray in Your marvelous 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, November 18, 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 Embry J. Kidd, of Florida, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Senate gavels in this week with a lot to do. Off the floor, we will keep working on government funding, the NDAA, and try to move the ball forward on the farm bill and helping communities battered by disaster.

On the floor, the Senate will focus this week on confirming more of President Biden's judicial nominees. The majority will keep working to confirm

as many of President Biden's judicial nominees as we can before the end of the year. That will be one of the Senate's top priorities.

We will begin today by voting on the confirmation of Embry Kidd to serve as circuit court judge for the 11th Circuit. Judge Kidd boasts an impressive legal resume and is exceptionally qualified to serve on the Federal bench. I am confident he will make a great addition to the 11th Circuit. If confirmed, Judge Kidd would be the 45th circuit court judge and the 216th Federal judge confirmed to a lifetime appointment under President Biden and this Senate Democratic majority.

The judges we have confirmed represent perhaps the widest range of backgrounds and experiences ever seen under any President. We have more judges that worked as defenders, legal aid attorneys, civil rights lawyers, Federal prosecutors, voting rights lawyers, and more women and people of color than we have ever had under one administration.

After we vote today, we will keep going. Tonight, I will file on additional judges whom we will move forward on the floor this week. We also have several more nominees coming out of the Judiciary Committee on Thursday, and we will work quickly to move them out of this Chamber and onto the bench.

So let me repeat: The Senate is going to keep prioritizing judicial and administrative confirmations this week, this month, and for the rest of the year.

Now, on disaster aid, in addition to confirming more judges and administrative officials, the Senate also has much to do on the legislative side. We must keep the government open after December 20. We must pass the annual Defense authorization bill, the NDAA, just as we have done for over six decades. We hope to keep making progress on the farm bill. I see the Senator from Michigan here, and she is working diligently on that.

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



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But today I want to focus on disaster aid, something both Democrats and Republicans have long supported and which impacts people in every State of the country. Earlier today, the OMB, the Office of Management and Budget, released a letter addressed to Congress calling for swift action on disaster aid, along with a detailed breakdown of where that money is needed.

Right now, a host of Federal programs from various Agencies are running critically low on the funding they need to function. In some cases like the SBA, Small Business Administration, funding has already dried up. Without congressional action, the Federal Government may not be ready to respond to the next wave of disasters when they strike.

Many of the programs in need of replenishing focus on the long-term elements of disaster recovery. When disaster strikes, obviously, the first priority is getting people out of danger, providing for their needs. But then homes need to be rebuilt. Schools need to be reopened. Farmers need help recovering their losses from ruined crops. Roads and bridges and railways need funding for repairs. Businesses need loans to get back on their feet. All of these priorities are running critically low on Federal dollars.

A month ago, Speaker JOHNSON said getting disaster aid would be his priority upon Congress's return this month. I hope the Speaker honors that commitment and works with Democrats to get disaster aid done as soon as we can. We should not kick the can down the road nor withhold vital resources the Federal Government needs to properly help recovering communities.

It is a longstanding tradition that when any community is hit by disaster in this great country, we all rally together to help our fellow Americans. With just a few exceptions, this has almost always been nonpartisan. That is how it should be on issues like this that impact communities of all kinds and in all places.

We must work together to get disaster aid done as soon as possible so that we will be ready the next time disaster strikes.

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.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

FEDERAL JUDICIARY

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I was talking before about the ongoing campaign to undermine the Federal judiciary. Leftwing activists and elected colleagues, alike, continue to make

their disapproval of constitutionalist orthodoxy known at all levels, and Federal judges who are worried about where things are headed are in a bind.

They can't retaliate using their office because they swore an oath to uphold the law without respect to persons. They can't go on social media to defend themselves or put out press statements. That is because the American people rightly expect their judges to focus on deciding cases and interpreting the law, and not engaging in crisis communications.

Of course, the Founders anticipated some of this dynamic by giving Federal judges life tenure. They hold their offices until they give them up, regardless of how loudly law professors may complain.

So recent unanswered attacks may not have professional consequences for individual judges, but they do have an alarming effect on the judiciary as a whole. The article III branch lacks Congress's power of the purse. It can't exercise force like the President. Instead, it relies on the legitimacy of its judgments for its power, and these constant attacks are designed to erode that legitimacy.

Leftist law professors and journalists attack the courts seemingly with impunity. They know they can affect the institution, while their targets have to just sit there and take it. That is why I am so vocal and consistent in my defense of the Federal judiciary.

Sometimes—very rarely—the tables turn. Sometimes a judge does get a chance to respond to those who seek to undermine the integrity of the judiciary. It actually happened just last week.

At the latest Federalist Society convention, Judge Edith Jones of the Fifth Circuit was on a panel with one of the field marshals of the academic project to undermine the judiciary. Any of our colleagues who know Judge Jones wouldn't be surprised to hear that, in this academic context, she let the law professor have it.

When he complained that this is unfair and that he wanted to talk about abstract legal principles of judicial integrity, she pulled out his tweets denigrating conservative judges in Texas. The reaction from liberals in the legal academy—although I repeat myself—was outrage. How dare, they said, the judge give one of their own the sort of tongue-lashing they give conservative judges every day.

Well, bullies always cry foul when they are the ones who get punched right in the nose. So kudos to Judge Jones for standing up for her colleagues. She proved yet again why she is a lion of the bench.

And even if organizations like the American Bar Association and the American Law Institute continue to refuse to defend the judiciary from partisan attacks, our Federal judges can know that I, at least, will be in their corner.

RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Now, on another matter, I would like to pay tribute to an organization that has dedicated 40 years to protecting America's children.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has saved literally thousands of lives, and I hold it in particular high regard because its roots run deep in Kentucky.

Over 40 years ago, when I was a local official, the issue of missing and exploited children had yet to receive the national focus it deserved. Thankfully, two public servants, Ernie Allen and John Rabun, had vision and drive on this issue when few others did.

John and Ernie proposed to me that Jefferson County create a special unit bridging social services and law enforcement to combat the problem. Together, I believe we created the first police-social services team in the Nation dedicated to working child abduction and exploitation cases. The team pioneered new techniques, like a statewide fingerprinting effort that met much success—enough success, in fact, that other jurisdictions adopted our model, eventually leading Congress to establish a national center in 1984.

Today, the national center quarterback platforms like AMBER Alerts and a central tip line, mobilizing a vast network of data, resources, and child welfare professionals to help thousands of families avert tragedy. To date, their work has directly led to the recovery of over 400,000 children. Last year, they recorded a success rate of 88 percent.

So I am honored to recognize the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children on 40 years of immense service to our country. I know parents all across America are thankful for the peace of mind that should the unspeakable ever occur, this fine organization stands ready to bring their children home.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

FARM BILL

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, for more than 2 years, I have been working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass my sixth farm bill, the third one that I have either been chair or ranking member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

I have met with farmers across the country who have made clear that crop insurance is their No. 1 risk management tool, farmers who made clear that the farm safety net must be the backbone of support for all farmers and not just a handful of mostly southern commodities.

I have met with families who are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet as food insecurity in our country continues to grow.

I have met with rural communities who are struggling to access the basic things they need to thrive, like access to healthcare, including mental health,