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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable GEORGE S. HELMY, a Senator from the State of New Jersey.

### PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by His Grace Bishop David of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate Diocese of New York and New England from Chestnut Ridge, NY.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Mr. President and honorable Members of the U.S. Senate, I humbly offer the following prayer on your behalf. Please bow your heads in acknowledgement of the presence of God in our midst.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we thank You for this precious gift You have given to each one of us: the opportunity to serve our brothers and sisters and our beloved country. We realize that authorities that exist are appointed by You.

We ask, Lord, that You grant us the wisdom, courage, and compassion to serve honorably and to lift our neighbors and to be an instrument of peace in all that we do.

Grant us, Lord, the humility to listen deeply and the strength to act boldly. May our decisions be rooted in justice and our words be filled with kindness, lifting up those who are weary and giving hope to those in despair. As we serve, help us to see beyond ourselves, to seek what is good for all, and to stand steadfast in Your truth and integrity, trusting in Your light to guide our path.

Awaken in each one of us, Lord, a heart after Your own, so that our actions may reflect Your love and mercy and inspire a spirit of unity and sacrifice in every leader, every branch of government, and across our country.

Accept, Lord, our prayers on behalf of ourselves but also on behalf of all of

Your people, Lord, who are in need of Your presence in their lives, as we, too, are in need of Your presence in our lives and in our service, so that we may be an example of collaboration and a source of comfort to those who entrusted us with this sacred responsibility. They put their trust in us, and we place our full trust in You, Lord, to guide and support us so that each of us may play a part in securing peace and prosperity for our country with our humble prayers for Your guidance, for Yours is the glory and the power forever. 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 assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, November 19, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable GEORGE S. HELMY, a Senator from the State of New Jersey, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. HELMY 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 assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Mustafa Taher Kasubhai, of Oregon, to be United States District Judge for the District of Oregon.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

### JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, the Senate moves forward on confirming more of President Biden's judicial nominees.

Yesterday, the Senate confirmed Judge Embry Kidd to serve a lifetime appointment as a circuit judge to the Eleventh Circuit. Judge Kidd will be an excellent addition to the bench. He is exceptionally qualified. He has extensive experience as a judge, a prosecutor, and an attorney in private practice.

I thank my colleagues for supporting his nomination and for moving him through the Chamber.

Last night, I also filed cloture on another nine nominees to serve as district judges across the country, including Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia. If you include these nominations with those I filed last week, I will now have filed cloture on a total of 12 district court judges since the end of last week.

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



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We will keep working to confirm these nominations as quickly as we can, starting this morning with the cloture vote on the nomination of Mustafa Kasubhai to be a district judge for the District of Oregon.

For the information of Senators, we expect to vote on as many as three judges today. Members should be prepared for another late night on Wednesday to vote on the nominations I filed last night.

Voting on the President's judicial nominees is a core function of the Senate. It is one of our basic responsibilities, and we are going to carry out that responsibility as long as this majority continues.

I am very proud of the judges we have confirmed over the past 4 years under this administration. They have all been highly qualified individuals, and together they represent a wide range of experiences and areas of expertise.

For a long time, this Chamber primarily focused on confirming nominees with backgrounds as prosecutors or from big law firms. Of course, many of these individuals have gone on to serve as excellent judges, but this majority and this administration have cast a wider net. For 4 years, we have expanded the sort of backgrounds and resumes that make for a qualified nominee to the Federal bench. We have more judges from backgrounds in consumer protection and civil rights and voting rights. We have confirmed more women and people of color too. All of these individuals are highly qualified by their own merits, but their broad range of backgrounds and experiences is an additional asset to the bench.

But we are not done. There are more judges to consider and confirm. We are going to spend the rest of the week and the rest of this year focused on confirming them, and I thank all of my colleagues for their continued good work. Let us continue.

#### DISASTER AID

Mr. President, now, on disaster aid, yesterday, President Biden sent Congress his request for a disaster aid package to replenish a number of vital programs that help Americans recover from natural disasters. The House and Senate should respond by working together to pass a strong disaster package as soon as possible. It is a priority for me, just as it is a priority for so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

The Speaker said last month that House Republicans will focus on disaster aid when they returned this month to Congress, and yesterday he said the House is taking a look at the President's request. That is good. I urge House Republicans to work quickly to review this request so we can begin formulating a package that delivers this critically needed assistance.

To put it mildly, Federal disaster aid is currently running on fumes. It is a problem happening across the board. FEMA, SBA, Department of Agri-

culture, Department of Transportation, and so many other Agencies are running low on resources specifically aimed at helping battered communities rebuild.

One of the worst cases right now is the Small Business Administration's Disaster Loan Program. This program is a lifeline for homeowners and small businesses that need help picking up the pieces after disaster strikes. The SBA Disaster Loan Program helps Main Street businesses make repairs, cover operating expenses, and mitigate against future damage. It is also a critical source of relief for homeowners and renters to repair or replace damaged real estate.

This vital program has run out of money and is unable to provide assistance to over 100,000 people who have applied for help in the wake of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. This is just one of many programs that, if properly funded, will help rebuild our communities and infrastructure so people can get back to their daily lives. States cannot be left to fend for themselves. Communities cannot be left in the lurch. Infrastructure cannot remain damaged.

I hope that very soon we can come to a bipartisan solution to get a strong and comprehensive disaster package done. We have a great tradition in this Chamber of coming together to help our neighbors when disaster strikes. It is a hallmark of America that we look after each other in times of need, no matter where we live. With so many communities impacted by recent disasters and with Federal resources running low, we are called to help our fellow Americans once again.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant bill 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.

#### NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this week concluded the latest act in a familiar play on the world stage. It goes something like this:

First, Russia commits acts of aggression and pounds Ukrainian military and civilian targets with overwhelming force.

Then Western observers urge their leaders to equip Ukraine's defenders with decisive countermeasures.

Then, setting aside the fact that Russia is demonstrably more likely to escalate in the face of weakness than in strength, the Biden administration refuses, citing unsubstantiated fears of—you guessed it—escalation.

Next, precious opportunities for Ukraine to seize the advantage over Russian invaders come and go.

Then, after months of dithering, the Biden administration provides belated assistance or permission to use more advanced or longer range weapons on the battlefield.

Finally, administration officials brag to the media about the decision and pretend that it is not months—months—late.

In earlier acts of this tired production, the administration dragged out the authorization of HIMARS, fighter jets, and long-range artillery, to name just a few.

History will record hesitation, indecision, and cowardice as the hallmarks of this administration's Ukraine policy from the beginning.

This time, if recent press reports are true, Ukraine at long last has permission to use long-range American ATACMS weapons systems against military targets in Russia. Some of our colleagues might be conflicted about this development. I would ask them, would helping Taiwan or the Philippines defend themselves in the event of Chinese aggression be provocative? Was it escalatory to help equip the United Kingdom to defend itself against Nazi aggression before America's entry into World War II?

Needless to say, Ranking Member WICKER and I have urged the administration to authorize ATACMS strikes against Russia for months. Starting a full 6 months ago, so has the Speaker of the House. So has a chorus of policymakers on both sides of the aisle who understand that maximizing Ukraine's leverage over Putin's forces will be critical to the resolution of the conflict.

It is too early to tell just how much the Biden administration's needless delays have allowed Russia to move weapons they use to strike Ukraine's cities out of range of the ATACMS or let Russia's North Korean mercenaries take over. But one thing is certain: In Europe, as in Asia and the Middle East, the next Commander in Chief will inherit a world of threats made worse by the Biden administration's hesitation and half measures.

Next year, it will fall to the Republican government the American people elected this month to shore up America's position in the face of very real and directly linked threats to our interests. After 4 years of proposed net cuts to defense spending, it will fall on us to start investing seriously in the sort of hard power to contend with the coordinated efforts of Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China.

Consider just the most recent evidence of overlapping aims of the world's authoritarians. Reports this week indicate that in operations against Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon, Israeli forces have uncovered caches of modern Russian weapons—the same sort of caches on which another butcher relied further east in Syria.

Russia and Iran are strategic partners. Russia is using Iranian drones