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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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.

Eternal God, our Father, thank You for the gifts You have given to us and to all humanity. Thank You for the loveliness of earth and sea and sky. Thank You for the beauty You have enabled the minds and hands of people to conceive. Thank You for a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to freedom. Thank You for enabling us to harness the forces of nature to find ways of defeating disease and easing pain. Thank You for lawmakers who seek to enable us to live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity. Lord of us all, to You we raise these our prayers of grateful praise.

We pray in Your mighty 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 assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 21, 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 resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Noel Wise, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, the Senate stayed late to keep working on confirming more of the President's judicial nominees. We made excellent progress this week confirming judges, and I am pleased to say that we have cleared the way to confirm many more judges when we return after Thanksgiving.

Today, we will pick up right where we left off last night. Later this morning, we will hold two more cloture

votes to advance two more district court judges: Noel Wise to the Northern District of California and Gail Weillheimer to the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. We will finish today with a confirmation vote of Sharad Desai to be district judge for the District of Arizona. This would put our total for the week at six new judges confirmed to lifetime appointments to the Federal bench, one circuit court judge and five district court judges. And again, we are in a strong position to confirm many more judges when we come back. We hope to make progress on as many as we can.

Now, I thank all my colleagues for their hard work last night and for being flexible amidst all the rollcall votes. And I want to thank the floor staff, the cloakrooms, the pages, and all the staff in the Senate for staying late several nights this week so we could keep working on the floor. I understand if you feel a little groggy this morning. That is OK.

I am proud that the judges we have confirmed under President Biden are exceptional, highly qualified, and have already begun to bring balance to our bench. Our nominees are adding new perspectives and broad ranges of experience to their courts. We have confirmed individuals with strong experiences in consumer protection and voting rights and civil rights, Supreme Court advocacy, prosecution, and more. In other words, the nominees we have considered represent a balanced and evenhanded group of jurists.

And we will keep going when the Senate returns. Voting on the President's nominees is a basic responsibility of the Senate. We will take that responsibility very seriously between now and the end of the year.

Now, a look ahead. When the Senate returns after Thanksgiving, Senators can expect a very busy few weeks to finish our work before the end of the year. Both sides must continue working together to keep the government

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



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open beyond the December 20 deadline. Letting the government shut down just before Christmas would be asinine, plain and simple, and nobody wants that to happen. Well, there may be a few in the other Chamber who do, but they are a distinct minority.

We must pass the annual Defense authorization bill to provide for our troops and hold the line against America's adversaries abroad. We have passed the NDAA every year over the last six decades. With so much going on around the world—in the Middle East, the Indo-Pacific, in Europe, and beyond—passing the NDAA is as critical as it has ever been. We intend to get it done.

We also hope to make progress on the farm bill to avoid going over the so-called dairy cliff at the end of December. Chair STABENOW released text of her bill earlier this week, and I want to commend her for drafting such a strong bill that provides for farmers and ranchers as well as working families through nutrition programs. I know that Democrats are ready to work with Republicans to get the farm bill done.

Another issue we hope to get done is disaster aid. Both sides know we need to act because both sides represent States that have been impacted by disaster. Earlier this week, the Biden administration released a comprehensive plan for disaster aid that does a lot of very good things. It replenishes not just programs housed within FEMA—which is what most Americans think about when they think of a disaster response—but other programs across the Federal Government that are dangerously low on funding, if not totally depleted.

A few days ago, I highlighted the important role that the SBA's Disaster Loan Program plays in times of crisis.

Another one I want to mention is the Department of Transportation funding to repair and reconstruct our highways and roads. When disaster strikes and highways and roads are damaged and rendered impassable, it brings everything to a standstill. Aid is slower to arrive, getting people out of danger is harder, and entire communities can be left isolated.

This is just one example of why we need to pass a robust disaster aid package, and I hope to work with Republicans to get it done as soon and as robustly as possible.

Finally, as I have said, when we return after Thanksgiving, we will pick up right where we left off, confirming more of President Biden's judicial and executive nominees. So it will be a very busy and consequential few weeks in the Senate when we return, and I thank my colleagues for their cooperation.

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.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID POPP

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, well, it is a busy time around Washington. Newly elected colleagues who will join us in January are hiring staff and getting acquainted with the rhythms of the Nation's Capital. I imagine that seasoned veterans are passing along a familiar piece of advice from Harry Truman:

If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog.

It is an observation colored by exposure to the more cutthroat, double-dealing corners of public policy. It seems to suggest that loyal, devoted counsel that you can trust implicitly is so rare that you might as well quit looking for it. Clearly, the 33rd President of the United States never had the privilege of meeting my friend David Popp.

Certain corners of the Capitol press corps may be surprised to learn that, indeed, my communications director actually has a first name. But like most folks in the building, I call him "Popp" as well. Around my office and, frankly, across Capitol Hill, this is one word that has become shorthand for fierce loyalty and a peerless capacity for hard work.

Early on, it wasn't exactly obvious that the proud son of Wilmington, OH, would end up applying these qualities at the highest levels of American politics. For many years, Popp's highest political loyalty and most significant vote went to his mom Leilani and her campaign for the school board. And at least until college, his appreciation for hard work had him following in the footsteps of his dad Tom, a longtime community banker. But for those of us who have seen Popp on the clock here in the Capitol, it is hard to imagine him winding up anywhere else.

By the time I got the chance to hire him, Popp was already a seasoned pro here on the Hill. And being the humble, self-effacing guy he is, I am sure he met the opportunity to join Senate leadership staff with the awe and wonder that the upper Chamber rightly commands.

Still, the thought must have crossed Popp's mind that working in communications for a notoriously tight-lipped principal might be a welcome break from the rambunctious world of the House, where he had cut his teeth. That, of course, was not to be. As it turns out, when I stay mum in the hallway and members of the Fourth Estate don't get the answers they are looking for from me directly, they simply go to Popp.

One of the immense luxuries of my time as leader is knowing that when you turn to staff to tackle challenges, you get your pick of the very best. I have never doubted that the man with

ultimate responsibility for broadcasting my views, eyeing blind spots, squashing rumors, and shaping stories is among the very best.

As the very best tend to be, Popp is modest. He often tries to convince his colleagues that he is really not much of a writer, that he couldn't cut it as a pure flack, that he doesn't have an eye for the creative side of political communications. But nobody buys that. Popp is a pro.

He is also an incredible teammate. Deflecting praise from his own work usually means showering it instead on the team he leads so capably. Popp treats the rest of my communications staff like his own family. When the Senate pulls a late night, he is quick to send as many of them home as possible. After a long session, he is known to appear with a stack of Italian subs from a favorite spot down Pennsylvania Avenue.

If Popp treats team like family, I should note that his real family makes a great team as well. Popp's wife and ultimate teammate, Monica, is herself a proven veteran of Senate leadership. As chief of staff in the whip's office, she was an essential member of our extended team. For anyone who has met Monica, there is no question where Dave Popp learned grace under pressure.

My field general for communications brings an invaluable combination of skills. He has both the warrior's instinct to anticipate and prepare for everything that could possibly go wrong and the even keel to stay on course when big waves do inevitably crash across the deck.

At moments of immense national importance, Popp is unflinching. In chapters of great personal significance to me, he has my utmost confidence. Around the office, no matter the news of the day, Popp is quick to remind us: all eyes on stakeout. And in the mold of a certain one-named predecessor who was once mistaken for an automated email system, he is even quicker to keep me and my team informed of the latest developments at all hours.

But lest anybody worry that I am working Popp too hard, I should point out that he does have hobbies outside of work. After all but the most demanding weeks in the Capitol, he and Monica find time to escape to their happy place on the water. In the near future, I suspect he will have a bit more energy to devote to the hunt for par—and a club championship—on the golf course and to more sundowners on the Bay with Tilly and Captain in tow. Until then, I will relish having such a trusted hand and consummate public servant in my corner.

So, Popp, my friend, thanks for everything.

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