



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 170

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2024

No. 177

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at 12 noon.

Senate

MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2024

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.

Eternal God, we give You our lives, for You alone are our mighty fortress. You have been our help in ages past. You continue to be our hope for the years to come. Remind us that those who trust You are on the road to peace. You show us the path of integrity and point out the way that we should follow.

Lord, continue to lead our lawmakers by Your truth, for You are the God who sustains them. May they find delight in the knowledge of Your holiness so that their lives will glorify You. Guide them as they seek to find common ground.

We pray in Your great 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, December 2, 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 assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Anne Hwang, of California, to be United States District

Judge for the Central District of California.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

ADVICE AND CONSENT AUTHORITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, when the 119th Congress commences next year, one of the first great tasks of this body will be fulfilling our constitutional duty to provide advice and consent regarding the President-elect's nominees.

The advice and consent authority is a cornerstone of the Senate's constitutional mandate, a power central to preserving America's system of checks and balances. The Founding Fathers knew firsthand the great danger of allowing unchecked Executives to appoint individuals to positions of power without any guardrails. In fact, this was one of their greatest grievances against the British Crown.

Very soon, the Senate will be called upon to exercise its advice and consent authority once again as a new administration enters office next year.

The Senate's advice and consent power will be especially important next year given that the President-elect has at times made statements about potentially working around the Senate to appoint his nominees. Hopefully, this doesn't become an issue.

But, nevertheless, it will be the responsibility of the incoming Republican majority to protect the Senate against any attempt to erode its authority.

So, today, I sent a letter to incoming Republican Leader THUNE, urging him

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S6743

to uphold the Senate's constitutional duty to provide advice and consent on the President's nominations. I said Democrats will be ready to work with Republicans in a bipartisan way on the nominations process and give each nominee the same fair and thorough consideration that previous nominees of both parties have received.

We should hold hearings with the nominees and markups in committees. And Senators should be given the chance to vote on nominees here on the Senate floor.

The American people deserve public servants who put the needs of the country ahead of the political needs of any individual, Republican or Democrat. The American people deserve public servants whose judgment, character, and experience inspires confidence and reflects our Nation's highest ideals.

Most of all, the American people deserve public servants who will uphold their oaths to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.

The best mechanism for ensuring the President appoints qualified, capable, and ethical officials is precisely the advice and consent power of the Senate. And it will be the responsibility of the incoming majority and the incoming majority leader to ensure that the authority of the Senate is carried out and preserved.

I urge incoming Leader THUNE and Senate Republicans to work with Democrats to protect the Senate's authorities under the Constitution.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Madam President, now, on Senate business, we are at the beginning of what will be a very busy December. There is a lot the Senate has to do, both on the nominations and the legislative side and not a lot of time to do them.

Let me begin with the nominations. We are picking up where we left off before Thanksgiving, confirming more of the President's nominees to the bench and to Federal Agencies of great importance to the American people.

Later this afternoon, the Senate will vote to confirm the nomination of Anne Hwang to be District Judge for the Central District of California. As the week progresses, Members should be advised we aim to hold additional confirmation votes on the nominees that we invoked cloture on before the Thanksgiving break. We hope to move to them as soon as possible.

On the legislative side, the Senate also has a handful of priorities we must deal with before the year is out: the annual Defense authorization bill—the NDAA—and the legislation to prevent a shutdown right before Christmas.

On government funding, both sides are making progress negotiating on a bill that can pass the House and Senate with bipartisan support. We need to keep divisive and unnecessary provisions out of any government funding extension or else it will get harder to pass a CR in time.

For now, I am pleased negotiations are on the right track, and I thank the

appropriators in both Chambers for their good work.

Now on the NDAA, I am hopeful that we are close to beginning the process of moving the bipartisan bill through both Chambers. The NDAA has been passed without fail for decades with the cooperation from both sides, and I hope this year is no exception. Few priorities matter more than providing for our national defense and taking care of our troops in uniform and their families.

Finally, Senate Democrats will keep pushing to finish work on a disaster aid package, to replenish the many relief programs that are dangerously low on resources. The President sent us his request last month and spelled out in very clear detail the disastrous consequences should Congress fail to act. I remain hopeful we can get a disaster package done soon. National disasters affect red States and blue States and purple States and everything in between.

We have a long tradition in this Chamber of coming together when it comes to disaster aid, with very few exceptions. We should come together again at the end of the year to get disaster aid done or we may not be ready to respond the next time Mother Nature wreaks havoc on our communities.

UPSTATE NEW YORK

Madam President, finally, on snowfall in Western New York and upstate, first, let me say my team is monitoring the heavy lake effect snowfall that has pummeled Western New York just as New Yorkers were driving home from Thanksgiving. There are numerous reports of people left stranded in their cars, facing terrifying conditions and utter chaos on the road. In at least one instance, first responders saved the lives of one couple trapped on the road in the middle of the snowstorm.

The Governor has issued a state of emergency for a number of local counties, and I urge everyone impacted by the snowfall to follow local guidelines and stay off the road as much as they can. There is more heavy snowfall on the way.

But amidst all the snow, there was one happy element. Last night, all of America got to witness the beauty of Buffalo on national television, seeing the Buffalo Bills clinch the AFC East championship amidst a deluge of snow. What happened in Orchard Park was out of a storybook—a snow globe game for the ages.

Despite frigid temperatures, mounds of snow, and a tough opponent, the Buffalo Bills came out with a huge 35-to-10 victory over the 49ers. It was an amazing game to watch. I watched the whole thing. Josh Allen did it all. He set the franchise record for the most total touchdowns and became the first quarterback ever to throw a touchdown, run for a touchdown, and catch a touchdown in the same game—an unthinkable hat trick. How impressive is that?

Of course, as always, the Bills Mafia was out in full force supporting the

team, shoveling snow to get to their seats, and cheering in the harshest conditions. They continue to show why the Bills Mafia is the most passionate and most loyal fan base in the league.

Now, with their fifth straight division title, it is clear the Buffalo Bills are truly the Beast of the East. So I only have two words to say: "Go Bills!"

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. 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.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, well, the Senate has 3 weeks to complete some of the most important business of the year, and at this late hour, we will have to act on legislation that comes to us over from the House. But let's be absolutely clear: December drama is not the way to demonstrate we are serious about our most basic governing responsibilities.

With the exception of urgent supplemental assistance to States and communities hit hard by natural disasters in recent months, essential and predictable annual assignments like the NDAA and government funding are now well overdue.

Our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee completed their work on the NDAA back in June. They conducted extensive hearings, considered a wide array of amendments, and, thanks to the work of Ranking Member WICKER, secured an increase to top-line authorization, and they did it with bipartisan support. They handed the legislation off to the Democratic leader with months to spare.

Similarly, over in the Appropriations Committee, they worked diligently to present full-year funding bills ahead of the start of the fiscal year. I am particularly proud of the work of committee Republicans, under Vice Chair COLLINS' leadership, to secure higher top-line funding for national defense.

The most important power in the Senate is the power to set our agenda. Only the majority leader holds that power.

Last year, the majority leader said publicly that "the United States is ready to compete vigorously with the PRC." The overwhelming consensus of U.S. national security experts contradicts that view.

But even if we were once ready to compete and deter aggression from the adversaries who are working together to threaten us, letting critical national security legislation collect dust for months while the Senate rubberstamps radical nominees is one heck of a way to sustain that elusive readiness or project American resolve.