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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.

O God of light and truth, in these tumultuous times, enable our Senators to hear Your still, small voice. May this awareness of Your presence renew their spirit and lift their vision of what this Nation can become by Your grace. May they be people dedicated to moral values and determined to live by the highest ethical standards possible.

Lord, keep them from success that is purchased by deviating from the path of wholehearted obedience. Enable them to experience the constancy of Your presence so that they will choose the harder right and leave a legacy that honors You.

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, December 10, 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 proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Lauren McGarity McFerran, of the District of Columbia, to be a Member of the National Labor Relations Board for the term of five years expiring December 16, 2029. (Re-appointment)

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

CHIPS AND SCIENCE ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, when we passed the bipartisan Chips and Science Act 2 years ago, we promised to bring semiconductor manufacturing back to our shores, to strengthen our national security, and shore up our domestic supply chains. Today, that promise is coming to fruition in Upstate New York.

Micron just finalized, this morning—early this morning—a \$6.1 billion—that is billion, \$6.1 billion—award that was made possible by the bipartisan Chips and Science law, to bring advanced memory chip manufacturing to Upstate New York and to America. Most importantly, Micron's Chips award is now locked in. It is signed, sealed, and ready to deliver for Central New York, all of Upstate New York, and for America.

Micron's Chips award is more than just a once-in-a-generation investment in Upstate New York. It is an investment that will span multiple generations, create over 50,000 jobs, and spur historic amounts of private investment in the region.

And the chips Micron will make are essential—essential—for America's future. They are critical for our national security, for AI, our smart phones, our cars, our computers, and so much else. And the benefits go beyond New York.

This award is also fueling expansion of Micron in Idaho, and, today, the Commerce Department has struck yet another deal with Micron to expand their Virginia facility. So Micron is investing and expanding in States big and small, from coast to coast. This is just the latest in a flurry of good news, showing that chip production is expanding in America from New Hampshire and New York to Arizona; New Mexico to Ohio.

That is what Chips and Science is all about: making sure that America harnesses all our potential to stay No. 1 in chip manufacturing.

And when I conceived the Chips and Science bill, I had Upstate New York in mind. We knew that manufacturing had left New York, and we wanted it to return. And that is now coming to fruition from one end of the State to the other. And the I-90 corridor, from Buffalo to Albany, will be known as the "semiconductor superhighway," where close to a quarter of all chips made in America will be made.

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



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It is great news, not only for this generation but for future generations, whose kids and grandkids will want to live in Upstate New York.

SENATE BUSINESS

Mr. President, on Senate business, we will continue the work of confirming more nominations this week. Last night, I filed cloture on the nominations of Lauren McFerran and Joshua Ditelberg to sit on the NLRB, the National Labor Relations Board.

Ms. McFerran is a current member of the NLRB, but her term will expire soon, unless she is reconfirmed for another 5 years.

The Senate will take the first votes to advance these NLRB nominees on Wednesday. If you truly care about working families, then you should be in favor of advancing the NLRB nominees. The NLRB is essential for protecting workers' rights so employees can speak up for better pay, stronger protections, and the right to organize without retaliation.

If we are worried about income inequality and too much of a gap between working people and those who are very, very wealthy, the NLRB is a great, great way to deal with that problem because, again, it strengthens the worker's hand.

So anyone who says they stand with working Americans should care immensely about getting these NLRB nominees done.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on Senator RUBIO, on the topic of nominees, today, I will later sit down with the President-elect's nominee for Secretary of State, our longtime colleague Senator MARCO RUBIO. I have known Senator RUBIO for many years and have worked with him on many issues. So I expect we will have a good and productive conversation.

I look forward to giving him the same fair chance to make his case that all nominees, regardless of party, deserve.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. President, on disaster aid, in 2024, at least 24 major disasters have battered communities across the United States, killing—killing—over 400 Americans, costing over \$60 billion in damages. The true cost is certainly higher. These disasters and disasters of recent years have left the Federal Government's emergency resources all but depleted.

So, for the last month, I have worked with my colleagues to try and get a comprehensive disaster aid package done before the end of the year. I believe we must try as much as possible to get it done, and we on the Democratic side have been persistent in getting as many dollars as possible to help both blue and red States affected by the disasters.

I remain hopeful and determined that we can reach a deal with our Republican counterparts, but the only way we are going to get a disaster package

done is with a serious show of bipartisan cooperation. That is how the CRs work. Disaster aid is not a Democratic or Republican issue whatsoever. Mother Nature comes for us all, as we have seen in every part of the country, time and time again.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. President, on artificial intelligence, for more than a year, I have worked relentlessly with Senators on both sides of the aisle to find a way forward on strong bipartisan AI legislation. I created a bipartisan working group with Senators HEINRICH, BROWN, and YOUNG. With the help of many of our chairs and ranking members, we created a never-before-seen, bipartisan AI Insight Forum—many forums, nine of them—to bring top experts from across the country.

Democrats and Republicans also worked together on writing bills, and through hard work, we came to significant compromises that would have led to meaningful AI legislation and kept America No. 1 on AI, both in keeping innovation our North Star, but making sure there were safeguards so that the worst could not happen.

In fact, Speaker JOHNSON and I agreed that all our committees should keep working together to figure out a way to get AI legislation done before the end of the year. We were feeling quite good about that until, unfortunately, the November elections occurred, and following those elections, Senate Republicans chose to walk away from the bipartisan negotiations, abandoning over a year of good-faith hard work.

This is deeply unfortunate because, if we want America to remain the technological leader of the 21st Century, we can't turn a blind eye to the changes AI will bring, nor can we let AI become a partisan issue. That is why I will never walk away from AI talks. I remain committed to working with both sides to make AI a top priority here in the Senate.

As I said, Speaker Johnson and I have had productive talks on AI for months, and I am glad to say we are still having those talks with the hope of finding opportunities for action in the future. It is not going to be easy. It isn't. It is a difficult issue, but we have some opportunities to move the ball forward on AI next year.

I know that many of my Republican colleagues here in this Chamber are just as committed as I am to finish the job. There are two Senators I would like to thank in particular on the Republican side, Senators YOUNG and ROUNDS, who have been excellent bipartisan partners with Senator HEINRICH and myself for over a year. I thank them for their hard work. I thank their staffs for their hard work and tell them we must keep going. We can't let a handful of us on this Senate Republican side stop us from moving forward on AI.

Again, no matter how difficult it may be, my commitment to Members

in both Chambers remains steadfast. I will work with anyone, regardless of party, to get meaningful, sustainable, and transformational AI done—transformational because of what AI could do to cure heart disease, to educate young people around the globe, to deal with our climate crisis; and sustainable so that we have guardrails that prevent AI if some bad force, whether it is a country or a rogue group, get hold of it. We would prevent them from doing bad things and keep AI sustainable.

We must get both done. Our outline and our work are a good step in that direction. We must continue to move forward.

TRIBUTE TO BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

Mr. President, finally, saying goodbye to Senator BEN CARDIN. Today, one of the most beloved Members of our caucus and this Chamber, and a very near and dear friend of mine, will deliver his farewell address on the floor: Senator CARDIN. Everyone knows BEN. He is humble and modest, and I expect his speech will reflect that. But make no mistake about it. BEN's legacy is giant, and he has left an indelible mark on this institution, on his home State of Maryland, and on America.

Now, it is no surprise that BEN and I became so close—and, frankly, our wives, Iris and Myrna, have become very close friends—because we are cut from the same cloth. We both began our careers in the State assembly before coming to Congress.

BEN, I believe, stayed—he was elected when he was 23 years old, as I was, to the assembly. And we both have strong Jewish values. We are both known for showing up to any event, big or small. We both married up. And another thing, we took great inspiration from our fathers.

When BEN was just 23 years old and a newly elected member of the Maryland House of Delegates, his father told him something that BEN still draws upon to this day:

He had something people worked for a lifetime for . . . the opportunity to make a difference.

BEN has made an immense difference in Maryland, whether you are enjoying the beautiful views of the Chesapeake Bay, which BEN has fought so ardently to restore, protect, and conserve; or riding the many roads and bridges and trails and rails across Maryland that BEN helped secure billions in Federal funding for; or talking to the millions of Marylanders who today have access to better health and dental care and the promise of a secure retirement because of BEN's efforts. BEN has been a difference maker.

As chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, he has made a huge difference on human rights and foreign policy. When I asked BEN last year to serve as chair, I knew he would be up to the task, and he sure was. Despite the many challenges facing America at home and abroad, BEN is one of the reasons that America has the power today to hold accountable the gross violators