



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 170

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 2024

No. 6

## 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.

Our Father in Heaven, You soar on the wings of the wind. You are our strength, our rock, and our fortress. Without You, we do not know from whence we have come, why we are here, and where we are going. Without You, life is a narrow valley between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. With You, life becomes an open gate into eternity.

Merciful God, be a shield of protection for our lawmakers, our Nation, and our world. Place Your arms of love around us all, for You are our hope for the years to come.

We pray in Your powerful 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, January 11, 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 senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Erika L. McEntarfer, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of four years.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, as the Senate begins its work for the year, the most immediate need on the calendar is avoiding a government shutdown and fully funding the government for fiscal year 2024.

A shutdown is looming over us starting on January 19, about a week away. For the most part, both parties—Demo-

crats and Republicans—agree we don't want a shutdown. Instead, we want to work together to pass the 12 appropriations bills based off top-line funding levels that Congressional leadership agreed to last Sunday.

Chair MURRAY, Vice Chair COLLINS, Chair GRANGER, and Ranking Member DELAURO are all committed to working as quickly as possible to make that happen. Unfortunately, it has become crystal clear that it will take more than a week to finish the appropriations process.

So, today, I am taking the first procedural step for the Senate to pass a temporary extension of government funding, so the government does not shutdown on January 19. What I am doing today is filing cloture on a shell bill we can act on next week. Members should be ready to take the first procedural vote on this vehicle upon our return after the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday. I am taking this step because even a temporary extension of government funding takes about a week to pass through the Senate. So we want to act with enough time before the January 19 deadline.

I urge my Republican colleagues in the Senate to work with us to keep this process moving quickly on the floor. Leader MCCONNELL and I are in discussions about this very issue. The vast majority of us are all on the same page that a government shutdown would be a recipe for chaos.

Now, there are those on the hard right, over in the House, who think they can bully their colleagues and the House and the country into a shutdown. Amazingly, this band of hard-right extremists actually say a shutdown would be a good thing.

But to those 30 or so hard-right extremists, how on earth would it be good for the country to freeze, for example, nutrition programs that benefit 7 million women, infants, and children—many of those women pregnant? How would it be good for the country

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



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S79

to close regional VA offices and keep our veterans who served us—many of whom risked their lives for us—waiting in line to get the benefits they are entitled to? How would it be good for the country to furlough food inspectors to ensure that the groceries we buy don't make us sick, or delay new applicants for military retirement benefits?

These are just a few of the things that will happen if we shut down next week. When the hard right says they want a shutdown, they are saying they want these things—VA closures, no food inspections, delayed military benefits, and so much more. This shows you that the hard right is not serious about governing. The only tactic in their playbook is to try and bully the rest of Congress and the country to bend to their extremist views.

But here is the incontrovertible truth. The White House is controlled by a Democrat. The Senate has a Democratic majority. And the Republican majority in the House is about as narrow as it can get. So it takes compromise to get anything done in these conditions of divided government. The top-line agreement we reached last week has borne that out. And I am hopeful that reasonable Members, on both sides of the aisle, in both Chambers, are ready to work together to ensure a government shutdown is avoided.

#### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mr. President, now, on artificial intelligence, as we begin the new year, one of the Senate's top priorities will be to legislate on artificial intelligence.

Mr. President, 2023 was a year to remember in the world of AI, with the popularization of technologies like generative AI. It is impossible to predict what 2024 will bring. So we must act and act quickly to ensure that the United States keeps leading the way.

Thankfully, thanks to our bipartisan AI Insight Forums and the leadership of our committees, the Senate has come very far in understanding how AI works and what we should do. We have listened to experts in tech, labor, business, academia, civil rights, and more.

We have discussed everything, from AI's impacts on democracy, on our workforce, on national security, and the thorny but important technical issues like transparency, explainability, bias, and more.

AI, for sure, will be one of the most difficult issues that the Senate has ever faced. But if there has been any consensus so far in these forums, it is that Congress must intervene to promote safe AI innovation.

So AI is going to be a big focus for many Senators this year. My colleagues in the bipartisan AI gang—Senators BROWN and YOUNG and HEINRICH—agree that the Senate will work in tandem with the regular order committee process, using findings and insights that our AI Insight Forums have uncovered. Our committees have already done great work, and I thank all the

chairs and ranking members for their continued leadership.

And I want to emphasize, underline, underscore that our work on AI remains wholly bipartisan. Both sides recognize the need to get something done on AI. So I thank my colleagues on both sides for their work on AI, and I look forward to making more progress on this very difficult issue in the months to come.

#### NEW YORK

Mr. President, now, on bad weather, across my home State of New York, thousands of our friends and neighbors are just having their power restored after enduring the first major storm of 2024. We have seen heavy rain, coastal flooding, and hurricane force winds across much of Upstate New York.

While communities are just beginning on the road to recovery, we must remain vigilant. Weather reports already show more snow and wind storms are expected this upcoming weekend that could hit communities just as they are starting to recover and rebuild. Senator GILLIBRAND and I have sent a "stand ready" letter to FEMA, urging them to stand ready to provide New York the support it needs if requested.

I will continue to work with the Governor and local officials to ensure New York communities have the tools they need to recover from this storm.

#### MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., DAY

Mr. President, finally, on M.L.K. Day, this Monday, America will celebrate a national holiday in honor of the great Martin Luther King, Jr. It is a great holiday, and I was proud as a Congressman to be one of those leaders in helping to pass this legislation. And you would be surprised at some of the bigotry we heard when we tried to do it.

But just one point today, when you think about it, this is the only Federal holiday named for one person. We have Mother's Day for the mothers and Father's Day for the fathers and Veterans Day for the veterans and Independence Day for our Founding Fathers and Mothers, but only one day for one man. And the reason for that is simple: Dr. King was unique.

And, I like to say, he hoisted a giant mirror on his shoulders, and with his eloquence, with his brilliance, and with his faith, he forced America to look into that mirror, and America didn't like what it saw. And that began our slow march to racial equality, on which we are still trodding and still have a long way to go.

But I think every American should be saluting one of the greatest Americans who ever lived, Martin Luther King, Jr., and I look forward to joining with many of my friends in New York to celebrate and commemorate this holiday.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as I noted earlier this week, the Senate's first major business of the year is addressing a historic array of national security challenges. For the first time since 1945, there is a land war in Europe. A Russian imperialist is deploying North Korean and Iranian weapons in his assault on Ukraine, with additional support from the People's Republic of China.

After the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust, there is a land war in the Middle East. Iran, the world's most active state sponsor of terror, is living up to its title, underwriting multiprong aggression against Israel, brazen attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria, and a growing war on the global commerce in the Red Sea.

And just today—just today—Iran itself has reportedly hijacked an international oil shipment on the high seas, a further reminder that the Biden administration's failure to impose serious costs and restore credible deterrence is emboldening Tehran.

Our single greatest strategic adversary is supporting this worldwide challenge to the West, interfering more aggressively with peaceful neighbors and investing relentlessly in the capabilities to outcompete us.

Meanwhile, record-setting illegal arrivals have rendered America's own southwest border functionally nonexistent.

This is the most serious crisis of America's credibility in decades, and I don't use the word "crisis" lightly. It implies that a situation requires urgent action.

Of course, that is exactly why the Biden administration spent years twisting itself in knots to avoid acknowledging the record-shattering humanitarian and security crisis that unfolded on their watch and because of their policies at the southern border. Remember how the White House engaged in damage control back in 2021 when the President himself slipped up and called the situation facing CBP and ICE a crisis. It was a big deal because a crisis is something that requires action.

Well, right now, the Senate is very close to an opportunity to finally do something meaningful to address the Biden administration's border crisis. Thanks to our colleague Senator LANKFORD, we are inching closer to a chance to restore sanity, commonsense enforcement mechanisms, and the rule of law. Our colleague's efforts are the foundation of supplemental legislation to address each of the glaring national security challenges that we face: securing America's sovereign borders, investing heavily in American leadership and strength, and equipping America's military with critical capabilities and expanding our defense industrial capacity to deter threats from major adversaries like China. These requirements go hand in hand, and the world is watching to see whether we are willing to meet them.