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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, speak to our lawmakers and fill them with bright memories, holy commitments, and deep resolve. May their bright memories remind them of the way You have guided and protected this Nation throughout the seasons of its history. May their holy commitments prompt them to be true to their duties to stand for right, though the heavens fall. May their deep resolve motivate them to not become weary in doing Your will.

Lord, remind them that without Your power, human efforts are useless. We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JOHNSON). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 2 or 3 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

IOWA LEGISLATURE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I served 16 years in the Iowa House of Representatives before I came to the Congress of the United States. Frequently, I visit that body.

Yesterday, I participated in the opening of the 91st session of that Iowa House of Representatives. I enjoyed hearing from Iowa legislators about the issues their communities are concerned with. I also had the opportunity to swear in my grandson Patrick Grassley for his sixth year as speaker of the Iowa House of Representatives.

I wish both the Iowa House and Senate a productive session as they work to better the lives of Iowans through State law.

By the way, I can say to my colleagues here: Congress could learn a lesson not only from the Iowa Legislature but from most State legislatures in the balancing of the budget because the Federal budget needs that sort of discipline.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ENERGY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, 2 months after Americans soundly rejected his Presidency and its policies, President Biden is doubling down. Last week, he unveiled a new front in his war on American energy: a sweeping ban on new offshore oil and gas development covering the entire east coast and large portions of the west coast, the eastern Gulf of Mexico, and parts of the Northern Bering Sea in Alaska. All told—all told—he is closing off more than 625

million acres to new oil and gas development, on top of the bans that were already in place.

The President's decision last week was particularly notable for its size and for the clear snub to American voters. But this is just the latest in a long series of actions by the President hostile to conventional energy development: a pause on approvals of liquefied natural gas exports; a sharp decline in leases issued for oil and natural gas on public lands and waters; restrictions on drilling in large areas of the Natural Petroleum Reserve in Alaska; the cancellation of leases in the Arctic; the administration's so-called good neighbor rule, designed to effectively force fossil-fuel-powered powerplants to close. And the list goes on. In short, President Biden has done everything he can to set us up for a future of diminished conventional energy production.

That is a problem because we are nowhere near being able to rely primarily on alternative energy. And if we don't have sufficient conventional energy, we are going to find ourselves in serious difficulties.

For starters, insufficient conventional energy production could mean big increases in energy bills for American families. A lack of domestic supply—or the need to rely on expensive energy imports—would be likely to make things like gas and electricity far more expensive. Needless to say, that is the last thing that Americans are looking for after the steep increases in gas and electricity bills under the Biden administration.

And apart from price, there is the even more concerning prospect of major supply shortages. I am fairly sure Americans don't want to wait in long lines for gas—or face rationing—or wondering whether the lights are actually going to turn on when they hit the light switch.

Then there are the national security implications. If we are not producing enough conventional energy here at

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



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home, we are going to have to make up the supply from abroad, most likely from hostile nations or volatile areas of the world. As European countries learned the hard way after Russia invaded Ukraine, relying on hostile nations for your energy supply is not a winning proposition.

Plus, foreign production can be far less environmentally friendly than producing oil and gas here at home.

One of the best things that we can do for our national security is to ensure that we have a stable, reliable, and affordable domestic energy supply.

Fortunately, the Biden administration is being supplanted by the Trump administration, and I know that President Trump is committed to reversing President Biden's anti-conventional energy policies and unleashing American energy production.

Hopefully, it will be possible to undo much of the damage that President Biden has done and set us up for a secure energy future. But it is worth reflecting on what might have been—and could be again—if we don't have a Congress and a President committed to conventional, as well as renewable, energy development.

I hope that future administrations—Democrat, as well as Republican—will make American energy security a priority.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, the Senate began holding hearings for the President-elect's nominees to serve in his Cabinet.

This morning, the Senate Armed Services Committee heard testimony from Pete Hegseth to serve as Secretary of Defense. Few nominees will face the kind of troubling questions that Mr. Hegseth faced going into today's hearing. He is, by outward appearance, woefully unfit for a job like Secretary of Defense. Unfortunately for Mr. Hegseth, his testimony thus far has failed to address the disturbing questions that plague his nomination. It appears Mr. Hegseth's strategy is to follow the five d's of dodgeball: dodge, duck, dip, dive, and dodge.

Mr. Hegseth failed to explain, for one, why someone with his lack of qualifications should be entrusted to lead our Armed Forces. Why should

America entrust our military to a television personality who has never led any large organization? It is a huge organization, DOD. He hasn't come close to having any of that kind of administrative experience. We didn't hear any good answer to that question.

Mr. Hegseth also failed to answer for his deeply flawed history of financial and organizational mismanagement. Why should he be the one entrusted to manage the Pentagon's budget? Again, no good answer.

When asked about his comments as recently as 2 months ago, when he claimed that "we should not have women in combat roles," he had no good answers.

Finally, Mr. Hegseth failed to assure us he has the temperament for the job. His history of excessive drinking is troubling for someone seeking to lead our military, and his reflexive defiance against the allegations regarding sexual assault undermines his credibility.

If Mr. Hegseth had nothing to hide about his past, then it shouldn't be a problem for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee to allow all committee members to review all FBI background documents, but today, Chairman WICKER rejected this reasonable request by Ranking Member REED to let committee members review Mr. Hegseth's past. Again, if there is nothing to hide about Mr. Hegseth, why is the chairman hell-bent on keeping all relevant information out of the hands of his colleagues? To dismiss the allegations against Mr. Hegseth but then reject full transparency is odd at best, dangerous at worst. It reeks of something hiding in the dark.

Being Secretary of Defense demands discipline, character, and restraint. Mr. Hegseth's history shows he is deficient in all these qualities, and so far, his hearing has not changed that.

Mr. President, now on the noms tomorrow, Mr. Hegseth is not the only nominee testifying this week who must answer for a disturbing record. The number of people with disturbing records who have been nominated—some of them are good nominees, but the number with disturbing records and histories—I don't think I can remember a time in history when we have had that many.

Tomorrow, we will hear from a large collection of nominees, but let's focus on two: Russell Vought to serve as Director of OMB and Chris Wright to serve as Secretary of Energy.

Let me begin with Russell Vought, a key figure in the first Trump administration and one of the chief architects—one of the chief architects—of Project 2025. This man is not just a bystander who supported it; he helped put it together.

No administration on Earth can claim to be pro-worker and then nominate someone like Russell Vought to oversee the Federal Government's budget. Again, you can't be pro-worker and be for Russell Vought. He has spent years—years—pushing for trillions in

cuts to America's social safety net—something that would cause immediate and severe harm to tens of millions of American citizens.

We all know Mr. Vought's history very well. We know his awful and radical record from the first Trump administration. Even after leaving government, Mr. Vought was the go-to authority for the most radical elements of the House GOP, advising them on budgets that punished America's families, seniors, kids, law enforcement, and others with draconian—draconian—budget cuts. His budget cuts weren't just snipping at the edges; they cut to the deep.

Tomorrow, when Vought testifies before the committee, Americans will be reintroduced to his outlandishly extreme agenda. If Project 2025 caused your stomach to turn during the election, Mr. Vought would be a nightmare scenario. If you are among America's working class or from low-income families or from middle-class families working hard to make ends meet, Mr. Vought would be disastrous. If you rely on programs like Medicare or nutrition assistance, Mr. Vought would put those services in danger. On the other hand, if you are among the wealthiest of Americans in this country, Mr. Vought is a wave of good news. He is a staunch advocate of tax cuts for the ultrarich and deregulation for America's mega corporations, even if that means adding trillions to the deficit.

As we will all see tomorrow for ourselves, confirming Mr. Vought would be a disaster for America's working- and middle-class families.

Finally, I would like to say something about President Trump's nominee to serve as Secretary of Energy, Mr. Chris Wright. There is a lot—a heck of a lot—in Mr. Wright's background that should trouble Americans who care about affordable energy and creating good-paying, clean jobs.

Mr. Wright is one of America's wealthiest fossil fuel executives and has a history of sounding like a climate change skeptic. He once said, "There is no climate crisis" and "We have seen no increase in the frequency . . . of hurricanes, tornadoes, droughts, and floods." What on Earth is this man talking about? Is he such an ideologue that he doesn't see the truth of the world around him?

Mr. Wright, look over at California right now and say that we haven't had increases in these kinds of problems.

Tomorrow, Mr. Wright must answer for his background and his comments. It is like putting a fox in the henhouse. If you believe in clean energy, you couldn't have a worse nominee.

If confirmed, will Mr. Wright fight to lower costs for American consumers or will he fight to help the bottom line of polluters and oil companies? Will Mr. Wright push policies that build on the progress we made in the Inflation Reduction Act that has created hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of good-paying, clean jobs or will he kill those