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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. 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.

Most Holy and gracious God, who turns the shadow of night into the glory of morning, shower our lawmakers with Your mercy this day. Lord, calm troubled thoughts and guide their feet in the way of peace. Let Your strength be more than sufficient to meet and manage their challenges. Make them instruments of Your grace and goodness as You renew in them the joy of belonging to You.

Lord, make them ever grateful to You for burdens lifted, suffering assuaged, sin forgiven, life renewed, and hopes restored.

We pray in Your gracious 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. MULLIN). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Stephen Feinberg, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

IRAN

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, last Tuesday, I released a committee report. The committee report was about my investigation about the Obama-Biden administration's obstruction of FBI law enforcement efforts against Iran. My report was based in large part on whistleblower disclosure and FBI records. The FBI records show that the Obama-Biden administration blocked arrests of indicted Iranian terrorists in 2015 and 2016.

Now, I know, to my constituents and my fellow Senators, that is history, but it is history that we don't want to repeat. The records show that interference was done against our own people to score political points for what ended up being the failed Iran nuclear deal. Specifically, then-Secretary of State Kerry actually stopped the FBI from doing its job, and the purpose of that interference was to appease Iran.

One FBI agent emailed:

We're all beside ourselves on asking the field to stand down on a layup arrest, however, as it stands right now we all have to sit back and wait until all the US and Iran negotiations resolve themselves.

The Obama-Biden administration made our country less safe. We don't want history to repeat itself.

So, as you might expect, none of this changed until President Trump took office in his first term. Records show international banks stopped financing projects in Iran because of the incoming Trump Presidency. Whistleblower disclosures show the Trump administration brought criminals to justice when the Obama-Biden administration did not bring those same criminals to justice.

So now we are in a new Trump administration. I encourage President Trump and his new Director of the FBI, Patel, to take heed of the positive impact in the first Trump term and let the FBI line agents do their jobs without political rot getting in the way.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I have spoken a lot about it being a new day in America. It is also a new day in the U.S. Senate. When I became leader, I promised we would do things differently around here. I think the last 10 weeks show I was serious about that.

Unfortunately, today, our business is cleaning up from the old way of doing things. We are voting on yet another continuing resolution today because last year's Democrat majority pushed off full-year appropriations again and again.

Last summer, the Appropriations Committee reported out 11 of its 12 bills with bipartisan support. Six of those bills passed out of the committee unanimously. But month after month, Leader SCHUMER found something more important to do than fund the government, and not 1—not 1—of those 11 bipartisan bills ever came to the floor.

So, today, we are trying to finish up last year's work so that we can begin to do this year's work. To be clear, Republicans aren't thrilled about another CR, but it is our best option to make sure that last year's failure by Democrats doesn't interfere with this year's appropriations process.

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



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I am hopeful that enough Democrats will reject their party's threat of shutting down the government and get this bill passed today. As I said yesterday, it is time to move on, and moving forward, appropriation bills are going to be a priority in the Senate.

When the Appropriations Committee sends a bill to the floor, my goal is to bring it to the floor for consideration, and I hope that my Democrat colleagues will cooperate in that effort. We are going to have a debate, consider amendments, and vote; and we are going to try to avoid the end-of-year pileup in continuing resolutions that I know we are all tired of.

Another continuing resolution—another CR—was nobody's first choice, but I can tell you this: The next time the Senate votes on an appropriations bill, it won't be on the eve of another shutdown.

So I appreciate my colleagues' support for this continuing resolution, and I look forward to a much better process for fiscal year 2026.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, well, as everyone knows, government funding expires at midnight tonight. As I announced yesterday, I will vote to keep the government open.

I believe it is the best way to minimize the harm that the Trump administration will do to the American people. Clearly, this is a Hobson's choice. The CR is a bad bill. But as bad as the CR is, I believe allowing Donald Trump to take even much more power via a government shutdown is a far worse option. A shutdown would allow DOGE to shift into overdrive.

Let me repeat: A shutdown will allow DOGE to shift into overdrive. It would give Donald Trump and DOGE the keys to the city, State, and country. Donald Trump and Elon Musk would be free to destroy vital government services at a much faster rate than they can right now and over a much broader field of destruction that they would render.

In a shutdown, Donald Trump and DOGE will have the power to determine what is considered essential and what is not, and their views on what is not essential would be mean and vicious and would decimate vital services and cause unimaginable harm to the American people.

Making matters even worse, in a shutdown, there is no check on their determinations, Trump and DOGE's determinations on what is essential and what is not. In fact, on February 26,

OMB, led by Russell Vought, told Agencies to work with DOGE to create a list of nonessential workers so that they could reduce staffing even faster in a shutdown.

They are already preparing for a shutdown. Musk has told everybody he wants a shutdown because he knows it will help him achieve his horrible goal of just decimating the Federal Government from one end to the other. In other words, if government were to shut down, DOGE has a plan in place to exploit the crisis for maximum destruction.

In a shutdown, American families would be hurt in ways they almost have never been. It could disrupt regional Veterans Affairs offices, curtail mental health services, and accelerate plans to slash staff at Social Security offices. The list goes on and on and on of the damage—the severe damage—they could do, virtually unchecked.

They can stay in a shutdown as long as they want. There is no off-ramp unless they decide to take that off-ramp, and they won't because this is their best tool for achieving their goal: slash government, slash spending, and use that money for tax breaks for billionaires.

So a shutdown would be the best distraction Donald Trump could ask for—distraction from his awful agenda. Donald Trump owns the chaos in government. He owns the chaos in the stock market. He owns the damage happening to the economy. But he knows that if government shuts down and all the fighting is over which Agencies should be kept and which shouldn't and Republican Senators and Congressmen in just obeisance to Trump keep putting bills on the floor to decide that, it will totally distract from the most important fight of all: fighting Republicans for eviscerating Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid while giving trillions in tax cuts to the ultrarich. That is the fight American people must know about. A shutdown will be a costly distraction from this all-important fight.

Finally, I want to close by reminding everyone it was Republicans who pushed this false shutdown choice. Their inability to govern has led us to this precipice. Our caucus Members have been torn between two awful alternatives, and my colleagues and I have wrestled with which alternative would be worse for the American people. Different Senators come down on different sides of this question, but that does not mean that any Senate Democrat supports a shutdown.

Whatever the outcome, our caucus will be united in our determination to continue the long-term fight to stop Donald Trump's dangerous war on our democracy and on America's working families.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. PETERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the Feinberg nomination.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 35, Stephen Feinberg, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense.

John Thune, Tim Sheehy, Cynthia M. Lummis, Rick Scott of Florida, Kevin Cramer, Ted Budd, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Lindsey Graham, Markwayne Mullin, Marsha Blackburn, Thom Tillis, Tommy Tuberville, John R. Curtis, Chuck Grassley, James Lankford, John Barrasso, Todd Young.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Stephen Feinberg, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE), the Senator from Missouri (Mr. HAWLEY) and, the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Wyoming (Ms. LUMMIS) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER) and, the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) are necessarily absent.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 56, nays 39, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 125 Ex.]

YEAS—56

Banks	Ernst	McCormick
Barrasso	Fetterman	Moody
Blackburn	Fischer	Moran
Boozman	Graham	Moreno
Britt	Grassley	Mullin
Budd	Hagerty	Murkowski
Capito	Hoeven	Paul
Cassidy	Husted	Reed
Collins	Hyde-Smith	Ricketts
Cornyn	Johnson	Risch
Cotton	Kaine	Rounds
Cramer	Kennedy	Schmitt
Crapo	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Lee	Scott (SC)
Curtis	Marshall	Shaheen
Daines	McConnell	Sheehy