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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 executive clerk read the nomination of John Phelan, of Florida, to be Secretary of the Navy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I apologize to my colleagues. I am going to give a 1-minute remark on things that probably should have been said on January 21.

In January, Americans celebrated one of its greatest rituals of our Republic; the peaceful transfer of power. I was honored to bear witness to history. I look forward to working closely with President Trump to advance the golden age in America.

As part of the ceremonies, my wife Barbara and I joined the inaugural luncheon in Statutory Hall. We enjoyed a delicious meal featuring food from America's heartland, including Nebraska beef and Minnesota apples.

An Iowa-born artist provided a feast for the eyes at that luncheon. Her magnificent painting hung behind President Trump. It is entitled "American Horizon."

Jane Wilson was born on her family farm near Seymour, IA in 1924. It is the first time a female artist's work was selected for this occasion. She painted American Horizon 25 years ago, 10 years before her death at age 90.

Senator KLOBUCHAR told us she selected the piece for its vast, open landscape, noting how its enduring horizon reflects our enduring democracy.

I am proud to pay tribute to an Iowan whose work became part of history at the 60th inauguration ceremony here in the U.S. Capitol.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we recently completed a 10-week session. The Senate's longest in-session stretch in 15 years. It was a very busy 10 weeks filled with substantial results. We confirmed nearly the President's entire Cabinet—the fastest pace since the administration of George W. Bush.

We laid the groundwork for a transformational investment in border security and national defense. We continued to develop legislation to extend the tax relief we put in place for American families in President Trump's first term.

We passed legislation to ensure that illegal aliens arrested for various crimes are detained instead of being returned to America's streets.

We considered other bills that Democrats blocked—bills to achieve such commonsense goals as protecting Americans and our allies from illegitimate targeting by the International Criminal Court, and ensuring that athletic opportunities for women and girls are not taken away from them by biological males.

In our final week of session, we passed the HALT Fentanyl Act—legislation to give law enforcement a critical tool to go after the people trafficking fentanyl into our country. We also passed legislation to fund the government, by a narrow margin. Ten Democrats voted to allow us to proceed to the bill and fund the government. The rest preferred to filibuster the bill and shut down the government.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord of life, rescue us from the faults to which we all are prone. Keep us from saying one thing and doing another. Keep us from criticizing others for what we allow in ourselves.

Lord, keep us from the reluctance to break habits which we know are wrong. Keep us from trying to please both others and You. Keep us from anything that prevents us from giving all our loyalty, allegiance, and courage to You.

Lord, today, give our Senators a faith that will not shrink though pressed by many a foe.

We pray in Your powerful 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. BUDD). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

• 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 was a double dose of Democrat hypocrisy. Democrats who had campaigned to abolish the filibuster enthusiastically embraced it now that it served their purposes. And Democrats who had decried the evils of government shutdowns now embraced shutting down the government.

One Senator, for example, who just last March called shutdowns “as devastating as they are stupid,” voted for a shutdown 10 days ago.

Another Democrat, who last February noted that “even a partial shutdown could disrupt supply chains, hurt small businesses, risk travel delays, and increase food prices for millions of Americans,” that Democrat also voted to shut down the government.

Democrats are changing their positions so abruptly, it could give you whiplash. The only thing that doesn't look likely to change is Democrats' willingness to change their principles when it suits their political purposes.

A new period of session begins today, and I hope the Democrats will manage to move past the fact they weren't able to shut down the government. But whether they accept their defeat or decide to throw a tantrum about it, we are going to continue to do the job that we were elected and sent here to do. In the next three weeks, we will continue to build out the President's administration by voting on more of his nominees. With the Cabinet almost entirely confirmed, we will be turning to undersecretaries and deputy secretaries as well as ambassadors. And like the White House, this work period will be focused on rolling back burdensome government regulations—in our case, through the Congressional Review Act resolutions.

This week, we will send the President Senator CRUZ's resolution to roll back the Biden administration's digital asset broker rule, which puts at risk the privacy and security of tens of millions of Americans who trade digital assets. We will also look to take up Senator TIM SCOTT's overdraft fee resolution overturning a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau rule that threatens access to credit for individuals and small businesses.

And we will take up a number of other CR resolutions this work period. Finally, as I said, we have been hard at work on legislation to extend the tax relief we passed during President Trump's first term and to make a transformational investment in our border and national security.

And those efforts will accelerate over the next three weeks. Confirming nominations, lifting burdensome regulations, laying the ground work for tax and border security legislation, I look forward to another busy work period ahead.

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 Democratic leader is recognized.

THE ATLANTIC REPORT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, earlier today, The Atlantic magazine released a stunning and alarming report about the accidental leaking of the Trump administration's coordination on classified military operations targeting the Houthis in Yemen. According to the report, a member of the press was somehow added to an unsecured text chain with the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the CIA Director, and other national security officials. The text chain was not a secure conversation. The app used is not approved for discussing classified military operations. Nevertheless, on this text chain, conversations went at length about imminent military operations, including specific targets, weapons, and attack plans. These text messages very likely included classified U.S. intelligence. The entire time, nobody seemed to realize that a private citizen without security clearance had access to this conversation.

This is one of the most stunning breaches of military intelligence that I have read about in a very, very long time. What we have here are senior U.S. leaders, including the Vice President and Secretary of Defense, having classified discussions of military action over an unsecure app.

It is bad enough that a private citizen was added to this chain, but it is far worse that sensitive military information was exchanged on an unauthorized application, especially when that sensitive military information was so, so important.

If these detailed exchanges about coordinating military operations fell into the hands of America's enemies, it could get people killed; it could severely harm our military; it would put America's national security in danger.

This debacle requires a full investigation into how this happened, the damage it created, and how we can avoid it in the future. If our Nation's military secrets are being peddled around over unsecured text chains, we need to know that at once, and we need to put a stop to it immediately. Every single Senator, Republican and Democrat and Independent, must demand accountability.

If a government employee shared sensitive military plans like this, they would be investigated and face very harsh consequences. Again, this kind of carelessness is how people get killed; it is how our enemies can take advantage of us; it is how our national security falls into danger.

If you were up in arms over unsecured emails years ago, you should certainly be outraged by this amateurish behavior.

I ask that Leader THUNE and my Republican colleagues work with Democrats right away to hold a full investigation into why these military operations were coordinated over an unauthorized messaging service instead of the secure communications channels funded by taxpayers.

I want to finish with this: When Pete Hegseth came before the Senate as a nominee, Democrats warned that something like this might happen. These people are clearly not up for the job. We warned that confirming them was dangerous, that they would behave recklessly. Unfortunately, we were right. Now we must have accountability, and both parties in the Senate should investigate how this blunder was even possible.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, now on Donald Trump and Social Security, for 60 days, Donald Trump has waged a campaign of destruction against America's very, very foundations. Each step of the way, Leader THUNE and the Republican majority have enabled his every whim.

In just the last week alone, among many other things that he did that hurt the country, he has, one, created pandemonium at the Social Security Administration, and, two, he has signed an Executive order closing down the Department of Education. Let me discuss each briefly.

When it comes to the Department of Education, of course Donald Trump cannot proceed without an act of Congress. That is the law. Let me be clear. Let me be very clear. If Republicans ever, ever, try to move a bill through the Senate that shuts down the Department of Education, Senate Democrats will halt it in its tracks. It will go nowhere. It will be dead on arrival.

On Social Security, Senate Republicans should do their jobs and stand up to Donald Trump and Elon Musk's reckless behavior. In just a few days, a new policy will be implemented at the Social Security Administration preventing Americans from signing up for benefits over the phone, which they have been able to do for a very long time. Seniors who can't drive themselves or use the internet will be in danger of losing benefits. As the Wall Street Journal says, “Dealing With Social Security Is Heading From Bad to Worse.”

There is no other way to describe this new policy. It is a direct attack from Donald Trump and Elon Musk on American seniors. Just because they are not stopping the checks directly that go to people, they are stopping people from getting them in indirect ways—just as bad when you don't have the money that you desperately need for drugs, for food, for rent. It is all part of DOGE's two-faced efforts to root out fraud within Social Security—the fraud that everyone knows does not exist. In fact, a judge last week called DOGE's fraud hunt little more than a “phishing expedition.”