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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.

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden, abide with our lawmakers. Teach them to speak the right words at the right time. Make their speech like precious gold set in silver. May they seek to persuade with patient and gentle words. Lord, give them the wisdom to be friends of that which is eternal and abiding. Teach them reverence for the transcendent as You induce them to ascribe all good things to You.

We pray in Your precious 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. HAWLEY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

LAKEN RILEY ACT—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 5, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5) to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to take into custody

aliens who have been charged in the United States with theft, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune (for Ernst/Grassley) Amendment No. 8, to include crimes resulting in death or serious bodily injury to the list of offenses that, if committed by an inadmissible alien, require mandatory detention.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

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

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

NATIONAL PHARMACISTS DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, on Sunday, January 12, it was National Pharmacists Day. I think it is quite appropriate that we pay attention and give reward to the work that pharmacists do.

I would like to extend a warm thank-you to Iowa pharmacists for their dedication and for their service.

While we commonly know a pharmacist as someone who fills our prescription needs and educates us about medications, a pharmacist is typically the most accessible healthcare provider, and that is especially true for rural America. Do you know what? Nearly 90 percent of the U.S. population lives within 5 miles of a pharmacy.

For several Congresses, I have been leading a bipartisan effort that is called the Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act. This bill encourages pharmacists—only where they are licensed and trained to do this—to offer healthcare services under Medicare, such as health and wellness screenings, immunizations, and diabetes management. This is necessary because, for many seniors in rural areas, it is simply easier to get to a pharmacist than it is to get to their nearest doctor.

I also know that it is vital to protect rural pharmacists from greedy pharmacy benefit managers who have

placed unfair pressures on pharmacies in recent years. In fact, I hear from a lot of Iowa pharmacists that if we don't do something about pharmacy benefit managers, we are going to continue to lose pharmacies in the small communities of rural America and particularly Iowa.

So, since 2018, I and about 65 or 70 of my colleagues have been trying to hold PBMs accountable and do that through legislation—about three different pieces of legislation—so that we can lower prescription drug prices and, in turn, keep our rural pharmacies in business. We want to do this through transparency because nobody knows what PBMs do. It is an opaque operation; yet they make up our formularies. Do they help big pharmaceutical companies or do they help the consumer? We don't know, and we need to do that. So I hope this Congress will move on some legislation to make what PBMs do transparent because with transparency comes accountability.

I am going to keep fighting for our pharmacists and our consumers.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 6

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 6) to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit a health care practitioner from failing to exercise the proper degree of care in the case of a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion.

Mr. THUNE. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

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



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The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

LAKEN RILEY ACT

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the Cabinet confirmation process is well underway here in the U.S. Senate. Confirmation hearings began this week with Defense Secretary nominee Pete Hegseth in the Armed Services Committee on Tuesday. Yesterday, we had six confirmation hearings—the most confirmation hearings, I might add, in a single day since 2001—and we have more happening today and tomorrow. By the time President Trump takes the oath of office on Monday, the Senate will have held hearings for 12 of his nominees, and there are plenty more to come.

Once the committees complete their work, the process will move to the floor, and we will move as quickly as possible on those votes. I hope Democrats will provide a level of cooperation that will allow us to quickly fill these positions so these nominees can begin their work for the American people.

One of the nominees being considered this week is a familiar face to us in the Senate. Yesterday, our longtime colleague Senator RUBIO found himself on the other side of the dais in the Foreign Relations Committee for his hearing to be Secretary of State. Members of that committee are well acquainted with Senator RUBIO's expertise in foreign policy. He has been a leading voice on these issues here in the Senate and on the Foreign Relations Committee since he arrived here in 2011, and yesterday, his expertise was on full display. Whether he was discussing China, the Middle East, Russia, our alliances, or anything else, our colleague demonstrated his command of international affairs.

MARCO also clearly laid out the philosophy he will bring to the job. He spoke about peace through strength, restoring American leadership, and advancing America's interests.

Our colleague is ready to step into the leadership void that the Biden administration has too often left on the world stage. In too many instances, the Biden administration has chosen to appease our enemies rather than demonstrate strength.

As yesterday made clear, we can expect Senator RUBIO to bring a moral clarity to foreign policy that has been sorely lacking in the last 4 years. That is important—moral clarity—and it has never been a challenge for MARCO RUBIO.

Take our relationship with China. The senior Senator from Florida has been a leading voice on the Chinese Communist Party's malign intentions and their implications for the United States. He has been clear-eyed about what the United States ought to do to outcompete China in this century, and

he has been outspoken in calling attention to China's human rights abuses. He was a leading voice on China's repression of its own people in Xinjiang, and he led the charge on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in the U.S. Senate. And he didn't stop once it became law; he made sure the legislation was being implemented properly. He called out companies suspected of using forced labor, and he advocated for the Biden administration to do a better job of vetting imports.

All of us here in the Senate know of MARCO's unwavering commitment to freedom. He has been a strong supporter of freedom fighters in Hong Kong, and he has been outspoken in his support for Taiwan as the Chinese Communist Party has grown more aggressive.

He is also a fierce defender of democracy and human rights in Latin America. His family watched their native Cuba deteriorate under a communist dictatorship, and it was conversations with his grandfather about Cuba's plight that drew Senator RUBIO into public service. So it is no surprise he is one of the strongest defenders of the rights of the Cuban people.

He is also a strong voice for democracy and justice in Venezuela. MARCO has been outspoken in his criticism of the Biden administration's appeasement of the Maduro regime, and he was a clear voice in defense of democracy as the country suffered through Maduro's corrupt election last year.

As we heard in his testimony yesterday, our colleague is focused on advancing America's interests. As he said, "Every dollar we spend, every program we fund, and every policy we pursue must be justified by the answer to three simple questions: Does it make America safer? Does it make America stronger or does it make America more prosperous?" I think that is what the American people should expect from a Secretary of State and from their government, and anybody who watched his hearing yesterday knows that is what we are going to get from MARCO RUBIO as Secretary of State.

I will have more to say about MARCO and other nominees for the Trump administration as they move through the process here in the U.S. Senate, and I look forward to hearing from each of the President's nominees in the near future.

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. 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.

PRESIDENT BIDEN'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, President Biden delivered his

farewell address, reflecting on his 4 years in office, which will be remembered as one of the most productive periods in modern American history. Working alongside President Biden for the American people was the honor of a lifetime.

When President Biden took office, America was in crisis. The pandemic was surging. The economy was reeling. Our democracy was under assault. But President Biden, with good help from Senate Democrats, got right to work, and together, I am proud that we achieved one of the most ambitious legislative agendas in decades.

Working with President Biden, we created nearly 17 million new jobs, the most in a single term. We passed historic legislation, like Chips and Science—that was a baby that I nurtured—the bipartisan infrastructure law, and the Inflation Reduction Act. We lowered the cost of prescription drugs for tens of millions of Americans. We passed the first gun safety law in 30 years. We enshrined marriage equality into law. We confirmed 235 well-qualified and historic judges to lifetime appointments—more judges than any majority has confirmed in decades—and so much more.

President Biden also left America with a somber warning in his address—one that every American should listen to. He cautioned that "an oligarchy is taking shape in America of extreme wealth, power, and influence" that will threaten all the progress our country has made in the last 4 years.

President Biden is right. An oligarchy is beginning to take shape in America, and you can see it by looking at the incoming Trump administration.

Donald Trump has not even taken office yet, but many of his top advisers and Cabinet picks are extremely wealthy people with deep ties to corporate special interests. Many of these Cabinet picks seem to see the world through the eyes of a very rich and privileged individual—a very limited vision indeed. And the agenda they are pushing—tax cuts for the ultrawealthy and draconian cuts to the working class—is narrow and only furthers inequality in America.

Donald Trump's agenda would precisely benefit the oligarchy class that President Biden is warning about. The progress we have made under President Biden's leadership—lower taxes for families, more affordable healthcare, investments in infrastructure and energy—should not be undone only to assuage the desires of a limited few.

We Democrats will continue the legacy that President Biden created, continue fighting for working families, and make sure that everyone in America—not just the uberwealthy—has a fair shot.

TIKTOK

Mr. President, now on TikTok, the 170 million Americans who use TikTok are rightfully asking the same question: What will happen to the app after the ban enters into effect next week?