



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 171

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2025

No. 15

## 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.

Holy God, who calls out to us, help us to listen. May we hear Your voice in the beauties of the Earth and the glories of the skies. Whisper Your messages in the glory of a sunrise and the splendor of a sunset. Remind us of Your sovereignty in the orderly transition of the seasons.

Speak, Lord, for we wait to hear Your voice. Speak to our Senators. Teach them Your plans and priorities. Show them Your paths. Remind them of the power of unfettered faith, hope, and love, as You awaken their sympathy for those who live without joy.

We pray in Your Holy 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. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

### 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 legislative clerk read the nomination of Peter Hegseth, of Tennessee, to be Secretary of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### MARCH FOR LIFE

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, today is the 52nd annual March for Life right here in the Nation's Capital. Folks from all over the Nation and world are in Washington to offer a joyful witness to the beauty and dignity of every human person. They will march in the cold in solidarity with babies in the womb. They will march in solidarity with mothers who deserve better than abortion—mothers who deserve love, support, and encouragement. They will march with a hope that the day is coming when all people will see babies as the blessing they are, the day when abortion is unthinkable. The signs the marchers carry reveal the hearts of each one.

A popular sign each year reads "Love them both." The pro-life movement desires to affirm and restore the bond between mother and child. This sacred bond exists even before a baby is born.

So I say thank you to the pro-life marchers. I say thank you for your faithful example of what it means to be pro-life. God bless you.

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.

#### NOMINATION OF KRISTI NOEM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, over the next couple of days, the Senate will consider two more of the President's nominees: Kristi Noem to be Secretary of Homeland Security and Pete Hegseth to be Secretary of Defense.

A former House Member and current Governor of the great State of South Dakota, Kristi brings both experience and commitment to her new role.

One of the biggest challenges facing the Department of Homeland Security right now is securing our Nation's border. Four years of recordbreaking illegal immigration at our southern border has left our country vulnerable to a whole host of security concerns, from terrorist entries to cross-border criminal activity, like drug trafficking.

Fixing this crisis and restoring respect for the rule of law is one of President Trump and Republicans' top priorities, and it is going to require a decisive and committed leader at the Department of Homeland Security. I believe Kristi has everything it takes to undertake this task.

#### NOMINATION OF PETER HEGSETH

We are also considering the nomination of Pete Hegseth to be Secretary of Defense. A veteran of the Army National Guard who served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mr. Hegseth will bring a warrior's perspective to the role of Defense Secretary and will provide much needed fresh air at the Pentagon. Gone will be the days of woke distractions. The Pentagon's focus will be on warfighting. Mr. Hegseth will concentrate on restoring American strength and repairing the deficiencies in our readiness.

As our first President said more than 200 years ago, "To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace." In a world that has grown increasingly unstable over the past few years, our priority has to be ensuring that the U.S. military is prepared to meet and defeat any threat.

• 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 will continue to ensure that the Senate works as quickly as possible to get President Trump's team in place.

#### MARCH FOR LIFE

Mr. President, before I close, I also want to mention the March for Life, which will be held today in Washington, DC. As they do every year, tens of thousands of Americans from all across the country will flood the streets of Washington to witness the goodness and value of every human life.

The March for Life is just one small facet of the pro-life movement, but it is a key facet because we need this public witness. Abortion happens behind closed doors, and so it can be all too easy to forget that it is happening, to forget that every day in this country, babies are being killed by abortion.

The pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute reports that there were more than 1 million abortions in 2023 alone—1 million. That is a lot of lives lost, it is a lot of love lost, and we need to be reminded of this.

So I am tremendously grateful for the tens of thousands of marchers in Washington, DC, today who are here to remind us of the terrible cost of abortion and of the infinite value and worth of every human being. I am looking forward to addressing the March for Life in person later today. I want to give a special shout-out to those who have traveled from South Dakota to be here in Washington.

To all pro-lifers, those here in Washington today and those around the country, I want to say thank you. There is no greater work than standing up for those who cannot stand up and defend themselves. I am grateful for everything you do for moms and for their babies.

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

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

#### CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, a few days ago—I think you were in the chair, and I was here—we saw the minority leader stand at that podium and pledge to cooperate with Republicans when nominees, he said, were highly qualified and bipartisan. It took less than 72 hours for the minority leader to violate that pledge.

Senate Democrats seem to be back to their old, tired habits of obstructing and opposing. Look at the confirmation process that we finished yesterday for the Central Intelligence Agency Director, John Ratcliffe.

Senator MARK KELLY of Arizona, a Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, gave Director Ratcliffe a ringing endorsement. Director Ratcliffe “is qualified for the job. He’s

a serious guy, and he’s got the background. I’ve got confidence he’ll do a good job.”

Yet Senator SCHUMER held up the confirmation process for 2 solid days.

Despite the delay, the Senate overwhelmingly confirmed this highly qualified Director—Director Ratcliffe—by a vote of 74 to 25. Twenty-one Democrats voted in favor of his confirmation, yet a 2-day delay.

I want every American to know what is happening here in the Senate. The far-left Members of the Democrat caucus are intentionally delaying the confirmation of President Trump’s national security team. It is not advice and consent. It is the Democrats’ playbook for trying to deny President Trump his Cabinet.

The Senate is preparing to vote this weekend on more highly qualified nominees. One of them is South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem.

Governor Noem is the nominee to be Secretary of Homeland Security. She will secure the border.

In the first 3 days of the Trump administration, illegal encounters dropped nearly 35 percent compared to the final 3 days of the Biden administration. Nearly 4,000 illegal immigrants tried to cross in President Biden’s final days in office. Under President Trump, the numbers plummeted, and they will continue to plummet. The impact of the Trump policies is real, and this is only the beginning.

Working with Kristi Noem, the Senate is going to secure the border. Governor Noem understands what is needed to tackle the border crisis. As she said in her hearing, she will ensure our Border Patrol agents and our Immigrations and Customs Enforcement group have all the tools, the resources, and the support that they need to carry out their mission efficiently and effectively.

As Governor, she sent South Dakota National Guard troops to Texas to help secure the border—Governor, National Guard troops to help in Texas. Oh, she is going to be aggressive in her mission to stop this flood of illegal immigrants.

I believe she is an excellent and well-qualified choice. After a thorough vetting process, Governor Noem received bipartisan support in the Homeland Security Committee. There are 15 members of the committee. Thirteen voted in favor of her; only two opposed. That is overwhelming and bipartisan.

Senator GARY PETERS of Michigan—he is the lead Democrat on the Homeland Security Committee—he voted yes. Will Senator SCHUMER needlessly slow down a confirmation vote that his lead Democrat supports, just to obstruct President Trump?

When it comes to confirming Governor Noem, there is no time to waste. Few Agencies are more important to this Nation, to our safety, and to our security than the Department of Homeland Security. Any delay denies our country a Homeland Security Secretary at a time when open borders en-

danger every American in this country today—potential risk to their safety as well as their security.

Here in the Senate, Senate Republicans are working around the clock to confirm qualified nominees like Kristi Noem, like Scott Bessent for Treasury, like Sean Duffy. We will be in the Senate voting as long as it takes. How long it takes in the Senate is up to the Democrats to decide.

Our committees are approving additional nominees on a bipartisan basis and at a rapid clip. We need to confirm them on the Senate floor without delay, and that is what Republicans intend to do.

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 Democrat leader is recognized.

#### CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Well, Mr. President, yesterday, 51 Republican Senators voted to advance one of the most erratic, unqualified, and unfit Cabinet nominees we have ever seen in modern times. Pete Hegseth is possibly just a few hours away from becoming the next Secretary of Defense, overseeing the greatest military in the world. He has neither the character, the experience, or the judgment required by the job.

If there is one word that should never describe a Secretary of Defense in this important position, it is “erratic,” but that is the one word that describes Mr. Hegseth best.

Before we vote today, I hope my Republican colleagues think carefully, one last time, about the risks to the American people and, particularly, to the men and women in our Armed Forces, of confirming somebody like Mr. Hegseth. I hope my Republican colleagues understand the danger of entrusting our military to someone whose background has not been fully vetted.

We know much of his past remains uninvestigated. We know Mr. Hegseth refused to meet with Democrats on the Armed Services Committee, save for the ranking member. How can that be? It is such an important job and he is afraid to meet with Democrats on the committee? He is going to have much tougher adversaries than that in places like China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea. How could he avoid that?

We know that new allegations keep coming up—as recently as last night—compounding the word “erratic” when it describes his behavior.

This is not the way to vet a nominee in such an important position as Secretary of Defense. When you are the one responsible for leading our Armed