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## House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, August 1, 2025, at 10 a.m.

## Senate

THURSDAY, JULY 31, 2025

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.

O God, whose spirit searches all things, send us Your truth and mercy.

Lord, guide our lawmakers along a path that leads to the hearts and needs of those on life's stormy seas. Give our Senators a grace that will take away fear and provide them with courage and faith. Increase their understanding of the scope of their tasks as servants of Your kingdom, as You inspire them to stay within the circle of Your prevailing providence. Endue them with understanding and sympathy, as well as with a sense of justice, that they may be champions of liberty and instruments of Your peace. And, Lord, bless our summer pages as they prepare to leave us.

We pray in Your omnipresent 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. SHEEHY). 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 proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Cheryl Mason, of North Carolina, to be Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, throughout my annual 99-county tour of Iowa, I have learned firsthand from patients and pharmacists about the powerful and negative role that pharmacy benefit managers play in our prescription drug supply chain.

I led a 2-year investigation into insulin price-gouging that showed PBMs encouraged drugmakers to spike the drug's list price in order to offer greater rebates. This secured manufacturers' priority placement on covered meds—all at the expense of patients.

I have pressed the Federal Trade Commission, the FTC, to study PBMs. The FTC's two interim staff reports are very helpful, but I am eager to get the FTC's full study.

In April, I held a Judiciary Committee markup that advanced to the

Senate floor my Prescription Pricing for the People Act. The bill will hold the FTC accountable for producing their PBM study in a timely manner. A timely report on PBMs is critical, but we can stop some anti-competitive PBM behavior today. Arbitrary clawbacks and spread pricing are documented tactics PBMs deploy to fill their pockets at the expense of patients and pharmacies. This must stop.

Senator CANTWELL and I worked on the PBM Transparency Act through the Commerce Committee to direct the FTC to stop deceptive and unfair pricing schemes by PBMs and require more transparency.

I have also worked on and supported the Finance Committee's PBM legislation from the last Congress. Iowans are fed up with the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs and reduced access. Americans are fed up. They are eager for Congress to act to put a stop to shady PBM practices. I look forward to making this happen and passing PBM reforms.

We have had about three different approaches to PBM reform, probably co-sponsored by 65 to 70 Senators in the U.S. Senate. I know that Senator CASSIDY of Louisiana is working real hard to bring together one piece of legislation out of these three. I want to encourage him—I have encouraged him—and I said that I would work with him to help accomplish this. And I thank Senator CASSIDY for his leadership in this area, and he is chairman of one of the important committees working on PBM legislation.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

• 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 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.

#### MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 4016

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4016) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes.

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

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

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

##### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, appropriations season is well underway. The Senate Appropriations Committee has, so far, passed six bipartisan appropriations bills, and the Republicans are ready to consider a package of appropriations bills and have a floor process, one that involves serious amendments from both sides of the aisle, amendments designed to improve the bills, not score political points or sink the bills with poison pill measures. And there have been some encouraging signs that some of my Democrat colleagues are ready to come to the table on this. And I hope that will prove to be true and we will be able to finish an appropriations package in the coming days and then work with the House in August to get the legislation ready to send to the President.

We are going to have a lot more appropriations work to do in September, and I will continue to push for a regular order process with debate and amendment on the Senate floor, and, hopefully, my Democrat colleagues will support that effort.

It is in the interest of both parties to have a regular-order, bipartisan process, and at least some Democrats have acknowledged as much. It would be nice to see that attitude prevail in the Democrat Party, generally.

I will say, it was disturbing to see the Democrat leader threaten to shut down the government a few weeks ago, and I hope—I really hope—the Democrats will not embrace that position.

In addition to moving forward on an appropriations package, the other thing we need to get done in short order is a package of nominations. Now, while Senate Republicans have made excellent progress on confirming nominees, we could be a lot further along if Democrats hadn't, so far, decided to slow-walk every single civilian nomination from the President.

I don't need to tell anyone here that it is usual for Presidents to get a percentage of their nominees confirmed quickly here in the Senate by either unanimous consent or voice vote. That has been the practice for decades.

By this point in his Presidency, Joe Biden had had 121 civilian nominees confirmed, and 49 of them had been confirmed by voice vote or unanimous consent—49, or a full 40 percent.

Do you want to know how many civilian nominees President Trump has had confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote? None. Zero. Zero percent.

Now, I think it is important. I have got a chart here just for purposes of informing people about what this looks like as I mentioned over the past several decades.

If you start with President H. W. Bush, 41, 98 percent of his nominees to positions in the Federal Government were confirmed by either unanimous consent or voice vote. In other words, basically, the recognition was that these are people that need to be in these positions. There are important jobs that need to be filled in our government so people can carry out the responsibilities and duties on behalf of our country, and 98 percent of the nominees were confirmed either by unanimous consent or voice in his first term.

So let's go back to a Democrat President, Bill Clinton. Same thing, 98 percent of President Bill Clinton's nominees were confirmed either by unanimous consent or by voice vote; in other words, both sides agreeing, in a bipartisan way, that it is important to have positions in our government filled. So that is Bill Clinton, Democrat President.

Then we have George W. Bush, 43. Ninety percent of his nominees were confirmed either by voice or unanimous consent—90 percent.

Then you get another Democrat President, Barack Obama, 90 percent of his nominees were confirmed either by voice or unanimous consent—90 percent, meaning that pretty much everybody here on both sides of the aisle recognized that there are important positions in our government that need to be filled, most of which, at least many of which—like they are today—are bipartisan when they come out of committee.

Then we move into President Trump's first term. That number dropped down to 65.

And then, of course, the Biden administration, Republicans also started to say: Well, if the Dems are going to

do it, we will too. The number dropped down to 57. But it is still important to point out that even in the last Democrat Presidency with Joe Biden, 57 percent—57 percent—of his nominees to positions within the Federal Government were confirmed either by unanimous consent or voice vote here in the U.S. Senate.

And then you look at the current President, President Trump, second term, zero. This isn't sustainable. We can't keep on this track. This has got to change, and it will change. Either Democrats are going to play ball or we are going to figure out a way to change it. We can't have a Federal Government—by the way, there are 1,100 executive branch nominations—which, in my view, is way too many to start with that have to come through the Senate for confirmation—1,100 of them. Many of whom, at this rate, aren't going to get their jobs before President Trump leaves office.

You just can't do this. This isn't a sustainable practice. So something is going to give. The Democrats are going to start to play ball and do what every other Congress, Republican and Democrat, with every other President, Republican and Democrat, has done when it comes to allowing the President—who won an election fair and square and tens of millions of people voted for him—to be able to put his people into their respective offices so they can do the job for the American people and he can do the job the American people voted for him to do.

So I am just going to say one more time: Zero. Zero. In as recently as the last Presidential administration, Democrat President Joe Biden, 57 percent were confirmed by unanimous consent.

So let me just say there are important jobs in the government that are currently standing empty 8 months now into this President's term because Democrats have dragged out the confirmation process and denied President Trump the courtesy that Republicans and Democrats alike in the past have extended to previous Presidents.

Now, I will say that I do think there are at least some of my colleagues, Democrats on the other side of the aisle, who would like to maintain the kind of courtesy on nominations that prevailed in the Senate before this year. And I am hoping, really hoping, that those more pragmatic Democrats will prevail and pave the way for us to work together for the next few days to approve a nominations package.

We have a lot of bipartisan nominees who are available for consideration right now, and we should be able to quickly approve their nominations. And, again, I hope that my Democrat colleagues will come to the table.

Otherwise, we are going to be spending a whole lot more time here on the Senate floor.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.