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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 12 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2025

The Senate met at 3 p.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.

Move deeply in our hearts today, O Lord, so that we will conform to Your ways. Help us to understand Your purposes and submit to Your providence. Empower our lawmakers to do Your will. Make them thirsty and hungry for Your Spirit and power. Show them Your plans. Teach them Your paths.

Lord, instruct them on how to make our Nation and world better. Open doors of greater opportunity for service as our Senators seek to be instruments for Your glory. May pleasing You become the primary aim of their work.

We pray in Your mighty 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.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only until 5:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Iowa.

NATIONAL BLOOD DONOR MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, January is National Blood Donor Month. Every two seconds someone in the United States needs blood. Yet less than 10 percent of the eligible population donates blood annually.

Blood donations are especially critical for patients receiving an organ transplant, having surgery, premature infants, and those involved in car accidents. Regular blood donations can help your neighbor or a stranger.

Following a natural disaster, we often hear the call for blood donations. Yet we often forget about it when those events pass.

Blood donations are needed all the time. I encourage Iowans—I suppose I should encourage all Americans—who can donate blood to find their local blood center and donate today.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, later today, we are going to have the first set of votes on the nomination of Pam Bondi to serve as Attorney General of the United States. Before we do, I would like to speak in support of her nomination.

Ms. Bondi made history as the first woman elected as Florida attorney general. She served for 8 years and was easily reelected to a second term because she did such a great job.

She fought against pill mills, eliminated the backlog of rape test kits, and stood for law and order.

There is no doubt that Ms. Bondi is highly qualified. She is capable of doing the job well, and she represents mainstream views shared by at least 77 million Americans who voted for change in the 2024 election. This should earn her the same bipartisan support this body gave to Attorney General Garland, including this Senator.

I am disappointed that none of my Democratic colleagues on the Judiciary Committee voted for Ms. Bondi, and I hope the full Senate takes a different approach. If my colleagues won't cross the aisle for this qualified nominee, they will show that their intent on opposing President Trump's picks are for purely partisan reasons.

Ms. Bondi is ready and able to serve our country, and she will work with President Trump to restore faith in the Justice Department. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Ms. Bondi.

Later today, we will be working on the nomination of Christopher Wright of Colorado to be Secretary of Energy. I rise now to speak in support of that nomination.

In his confirmation hearing, Mr. Wright affirmed that he would testify before Congress when called upon. And I would also expect him to answer any questions from me and my colleagues here in the Congress.

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



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I did not have the opportunity to meet with Mr. Wright, but if I had met with him, I would have told him about the importance of whistleblowers and the need to listen to whistleblowers—any of them—in the Department of Energy.

Mr. Wright has spoken of the need to build out domestic energy through the use of multiple sources. I subscribe to an “all of the above” energy philosophy.

Some people only like all of the above the ground—wind and solar, as an example. Others only like all below the ground, like oil and gas. But when I say “all of the above,” I mean all of the above the ground and all the energy that can come from below the ground.

Iowa fits into this philosophy as a leader in alternative energy production. Over 60 percent of Iowa’s electricity comes from wind turbines, which also sustains over 4,000 jobs across the State. Iowa is the No. 1 State for biofuel production. Ethanol and biodiesel contribute nearly \$5 billion to the Iowa economy, often supporting rural communities.

Renewable natural gas is also a growing industry in Iowa, and I am hopeful to have nuclear energy join the generation mix once again as well.

I look forward to working with Mr. Wright to continue supporting America’s energy dominance through an “all of the above” approach.

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. 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

CABINET NOMINATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week, the Senate processed two members of President Trump’s energy team. We confirmed Lee Zeldin to be Administrator of the EPA in a bipartisan vote. Doug Burgum received 79 votes when he was confirmed to be Secretary of the Interior. And, today, we will complete the President’s energy team with the confirmation of Chris Wright to be Secretary of Energy.

I spoke last week about our energy needs and about implementing an “all of the above” energy strategy. I spoke of an abundance of resources and the need to leverage those resources for our country’s energy security.

One of the most important resources is America’s ability to innovate—the knowledge and capabilities we have to

expand the realm of possibility. Some of that work is being done in my State at the Sanford Underground Research Facility in Lead, SD.

Other great work is being done by the private sector and at universities, often in partnership with the Federal Government. It is a big part of the work of the Energy Department, and it is what Chris Wright has spent his life doing.

Mr. Wright calls himself “a science geek turned energy nerd turned lifelong energy entrepreneur.” And if he is confirmed, Mr. Wright will be notable among Secretaries of Energy for his depth of experience.

He has experience in nuclear energy, solar, geothermal, wind power, oil, and natural gas. He has worked on innovations in technology that have reshaped the energy industry, and he has seen what energy can do to improve human lives, bring people out of poverty, and remake entire societies.

Chris Wright is passionate about energy. He knows it is one of our most important assets, and he is ready to get to work.

Our colleague Senator HICKENLOOPER has known Chris Wright for many years, and he described him not only as a successful entrepreneur but as “a scientist who is open to discussion and someone who has that ability to assess what is possible and what isn’t.”

Chris Wright will be an asset to President Trump’s energy team, and I look forward to seeing what he can accomplish for our country’s energy future.

The Senate will also soon vote on the nomination of former Congressman Doug Collins to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Caring for the men and women who have served our country is an important obligation and one that President Trump takes very seriously.

Veterans are a top priority for the Trump administration, just as they were in his first term. To carry out this important mission, President Trump has tapped someone with a servant’s heart.

The son of a Georgia State trooper, Doug Collins just couldn’t shake the feeling that he had a duty to serve. After college, he served in the U.S. Navy. Still feeling called to ministry, he went to seminary and began pastoring a church. But after the attacks of September 11, he knew his country needed him again. He joined the Air Force Reserve in 2002 and is still proudly serving our country as a colonel and chaplain.

In 2005, Mr. Collins began law school. Within a few months of graduation, his unit was called up to go to Iraq. As a flight line chaplain at one of the largest U.S. bases in Iraq, Doug Collins met and prayed with troops who were on the frontlines of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He spent time in the hospital visiting injured servicemembers, praying with them, and giving them companionship in their recovery.

Turning to public service, Mr. Collins brought that same servant’s heart to

Atlanta and Washington, representing his native North Georgia. So when President Trump asked him to serve as VA Secretary, it is no surprise that he once again answered the call to serve.

There was a moment in Mr. Collin’s confirmation hearing that struck me. He said:

The VA does not exist in and of itself. It exists for the veteran.

Doug Collins has comforted wounded soldiers. He has taken calls from servicemembers contemplating suicide. He understands what it means to serve the veteran. I look forward to confirming him in this role and working with him to uphold our Nation’s commitment to those who have served.

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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, before our very eyes, an unelected shadow government is conducting a hostile takeover of the Federal Government.

Friday night, the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, led by billionaire Elon Musk, gained access to the Treasury Department’s entire system of payments, including Social Security and Medicare benefits and Americans’ tax refunds. I will say more on this in a moment.

But that was not all. This weekend, DOGE staffers also executed what can only be described as an illegal seizure of the U.S. Agency for International Development or USAID. We don’t know who these DOGE staffers are. We don’t know if they have security clearances. We don’t know what legal authority they have to access USAID facilities, if any.

But we do know a few things. First, we know USAID has been completely ripped apart. Its offices are closed, its contracts have been broken, funding for its programs which protect American interests around the world have been halted, and Secretary Rubio said in an interview that he has been named the acting administrator and that they are “reviewing and potentially reorganizing USAID.”

But who is he kidding? There is virtually nothing left of USAID to review. Even the lifesaving assistance he claims are exempt are not moving.