



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 171

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2025

No. 150

Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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.

Eternal God, who fulfills the desires of those who have reverence for Your Name, let Your will be done today on Capitol Hill. Lord, give our Senators a clear understanding of Your providential purposes so that they will not deviate from Your desired plan. Inspire them to seek Your guidance and depend on You to bring them through the myriad challenges of our time. Infuse them with the spirit of reconciliation that will break down divisive walls, bringing harmony and cooperation. Strengthen them for this day's journey as Your Spirit empowers them to faithfully honor You. And, Lord, bring peace to our Nation and world.

We pray in Your majestic 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.

AUTHORIZING THE EN BLOC CONSIDERATION IN EXECUTIVE SESSION OF CERTAIN NOMINATIONS ON THE EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of S. Res. 377, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

An executive resolution (S. Res. 377) authorizing the en bloc consideration in Executive Session of certain nominations on the Executive Calendar.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

WELCOMING ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, this week, we are privileged to welcome Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Washington, DC.

He is the spiritual leader and the first among equals of Orthodox Christianity worldwide. The patriarch is coming to receive the Templeton Prize, a very prestigious award in religion and science. I know many Orthodox Americans hold him in very high regard and will be very excited to have him visit our country.

Now, because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, I really appreciate the fact that he has used his spiritual authority to ensure that Orthodox believers in areas of Ukraine, formerly dominated by Russia, have the opportunity to practice their Orthodox faith through institutions that do not answer to the Kremlin as the Russian Orthodox Church has since Stalin's time.

On behalf of Greek Orthodox Iowans, such as those who attend the St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Des Moines, IA, I welcome Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the United States.

May God bless his ministry.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill 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.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the September 30 government funding deadline is rapidly approaching, and Republicans will be putting forward a continuing resolution to fund the government until mid-November and give Congress time to complete additional work on appropriations bills, and I hope my Democrat colleagues will work with us to quickly pass this legislation.

We will be putting forward a clean resolution to ensure there is no reason for Democrats to oppose this bill and delay passage. My hope would be that we can get this done as soon as this week and then continue bipartisan work on appropriations bills.

But I have some concerns because incredible as it may seem, Democrats seem to be looking to shut down the government. That is right. At least a portion of their base seems eager to pick a fight with the Trump administration and congressional Democrats—or at least congressional Democrat leadership seems to be following along.

I can't imagine what Democrats think they are going to gain from this. Do they think that hard-working Americans are going to thank Democrats for shutting down the government? Apparently, Democrats think "that it's perfectly fine to have VA offices close or to endanger nutrition programs that help seven million moms and kids or suspend disaster aid for farmers."

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S6585

Oh, wait. That last line wasn't actually mine. That is a quote from the Democrat leader just last year. He was deeply concerned about the consequences of shutting down the government then. But now? Well, apparently, VA offices and nutrition programs and disaster aid for farmers can be sacrificed when Democrats want to make a political point.

During a funding debate in 2023, the Democrat leader had this to say:

If we are going to keep the lights on beyond this Friday, our Republican colleagues will have to work with Democrats in a bipartisan way to pass a clean extension.

"To pass a clean extension"—well, that is exactly—exactly—what we are offering Democrats, a clean extension.

Two years ago, that seems to have been the standard for CRs, according to the Democrat leader. But today? Well, today, the Democrat leader is ready to hold the CR hostage and shut down the government over extraneous policy measures.

It really is amazing how the rules change for Democrats depending on their perceived political advantage; although, again, it is hard to imagine what Democrats think they are going to gain from doing this. The Democrat leader is not the only Democrat who has spoken at length about the negative effects of a shutdown on the American people. Democrats' far-left base might be enthusiastic about a shutdown, but I don't think Democrats should expect a lot of thanks from mainstream voters—the very same voters the Democrats lost in the last election.

I have spoken many times about my commitment to restoring regular order in the Senate and, in particular, regular order on appropriations bills. We have made progress on that this year, passing a package of three bipartisan appropriations bills before the August State work period—the first time that has happened, literally, in years. And just last week, the House passed a motion to go to conference on that package. And I intend for the Senate to do the same so that we can pass these bills into law. But we need more time to consider the 2026 bills, which is why we are considering this short-term continuing resolution—this short-term, clean continuing resolution for just 7 weeks.

This should be an easy bipartisan vote. We should pass this bill on a bipartisan fashion and then get back to work on the fiscal year 2026 appropriations bills and the other essential work here in the Senate.

I hope that Democrats will think better of their shutdown plans and join us.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is in crisis. Tomorrow will be the first time the Director, Kash Patel, will come before the Senate Judiciary Committee as Director to be questioned about his management of the Bureau.

In just the first weeks of this administration, we witnessed the unprecedented and forced removal of dozens of senior FBI officials—decorated career professionals who spent their lives protecting this country from terrorism, espionage, and cyber attacks. These patriots swore an oath to defend the Constitution and served Republican and Democratic Presidents alike.

They were shown the door for one reason: political retribution. Don't take my word for it. Just last week, former Acting FBI Director Brian Driscoll filed a Federal lawsuit accusing Director Patel and other Trump officials of orchestrating the politically motivated purge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Those who are familiar with the history of this Agency know that we went to great lengths to depoliticize the ranks of the FBI, the Director having a 10-year term, which meant that he or she would outlast any single President.

Time and again, we have set standards for the FBI that were above and beyond those across the ranks of government. There was a time when an FBI agent had to either have a law degree or a degree in accounting to qualify to be an FBI agent. It was a professional operation. There were questions raised about J. Edgar Hoover and other in the past, but basically the FBI has enjoyed the reputation of being one of the best law enforcement Agencies in the world.

According to Driscoll, though, Mr. Patel said:

The FBI tried to put the President in jail, and he hasn't forgotten it.

It makes sense. And no one up and down the chain of command has been spared from his retribution at every level of government. All six of the FBI's Executive Assistant Directors—gone under the Trump administration. At least 18 special agents in Chicago of major field offices—gone. As many as 5,000 nonpartisan career public servants—gone.

This brain drain at the FBI took place under Patel. It represents thousands of years of institutional knowledge wiped away in the blink of an eye. And when the FBI Director is so clearly ill-prepared to lead when under pressure, this deliberate razing of law enforcement expertise from his organization is even more shocking and dangerous for national security.

Brian Driscoll dedicated his professional life to serving his country. For nearly two decades, he held some of the Bureau's most demanding and sensitive assignments—serving on a SWAT team, leading the elite Hostage Rescue Team,

and serving as Tactical Section Chief for the Critical Incident Response Group. For his bravery under fire during tactical operations, Mr. Driscoll was awarded both the FBI Medal of Valor and the Shield of Bravery—among the highest honors the Bureau can bestow.

Mr. Driscoll was forced out after he resisted Patel and the White House's demand that he produce a list of thousands of FBI personnel who worked on investigations related to the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Keep the record straight in your mind. On January 6, an insurrectionist mob crashed into this building and drove Congress away at time when we were actually counting the ballots for the electoral college to determine the next President.

President Trump had rallied these demonstrators down on the Mall, and they marched up here, crashed through the windows, beat up on our police, and actually came into this Senate Chamber, aping themselves around here, sitting in the chair of the Presiding Officer. It was a sad and embarrassing day in the history of the United States.

I will just draw an analogy. If we heard that a mob crashed through the doors of Parliament in the House of Commons in London, what would we think? My goodness. What has happened to that great country?

Well, it happened here. I was an eyewitness to it, as were hundreds of others—driving out the Senators and the Vice President of the United States, Vice President Pence, from that chair that the Presiding Officer is sitting in.

That was the reality. Over 140 Capitol and DC police were injured in the process. Several gave their lives as result of it.

It was a serious moment. It was an embarrassing moment in our history. And now there is an effort to whitewash it. The first stop was with the FBI.

When the FBI prosecuted these mobsters who crashed into this building and sent some of them to jail, there was a steady beat from Mr. Patel and others that it was unfair. He even went so far as to organize those who had been arrested and prosecuted successfully or pled guilty into a choir. Yes, that is right—a singing group. He had them making some kind of musical selection from time to time, trying to diminish the seriousness of the charges against them.

So what happened when Mr. Patel—totally unqualified—became head of the FBI? He went out looking for FBI agents who investigated those mobsters and those insurrectionists. That is what was behind Mr. Driscoll's decision not to cooperate with him—so that those agents who were simply doing their duty and handing out successful prosecutions would not be penalized.

Mr. Driscoll's removal deprived the FBI of a leader whose expertise, courage, and judgment were forged over