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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BERNIE MORENO, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

As we come into Your presence today, O Lord, we, like Isaiah of old, need to experience reverential awe. With the mighty seraphim who surround Your throne, may we cover our faces and cry "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's armies!"

Lord, use our lawmakers so that their actions will help provide for the security and well-being of all people. Sustain our Senators with the protection of Your providence, and give them Your peace. Provide them also with the spirit of unity and with the wisdom to have respect, one for the other. Lord, thank You for the redemption You provide Your people.

We pray in Your awesome Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant executive clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 16, 2025.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable BERNIE MORENO, a Senator from the State of Ohio, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MORENO thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2296, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2296) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2026 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Wicker/Reed Amendment Modified No. 3748, in the nature of a substitute.

Wicker (for Ernst) Amendment No. 3427 (to Amendment No. 3748), to require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on casualty assistance and long-term care programs.

Thune Amendment No. 3863 (to Amendment No. 3427), relating to the enactment date.

Thune Amendment No. 3864 (to the language proposed to be stricken by Amendment No. 3748), relating to the enactment date.

Thune Amendment No. 3865 (to Amendment No. 3864), relating to the enactment date.

Motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Armed Services, with instructions, Thune Amendment No. 3866, relating to the enactment date.

Thune Amendment No. 3867 (to (the instructions) Amendment No. 3866), relating to the enactment date.

Thune Amendment No. 3868 (to Amendment No. 3867), relating to the enactment date.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I want to be very clear about something. When Donald Trump goes on FOX News and says to Republicans "Don't even bother to deal with Democrats," when he says out loud that he doesn't need or want our votes, that means Donald Trump wants a shutdown—make no mistake about it.

Trump can say a million times he doesn't want a shutdown, but he is acting as if he absolutely wants one. His words say one thing, but his actions say another. He is ordering Republicans not to even bother working with Democrats. He is telling Republicans to "fight back" against "the radical left democratic demands." He is telling them to vote yes on a partisan CR that fails to meet the needs of the American people and had no Democratic input.

These are the kinds of actions a President takes when he wants a shutdown: closing negotiations; forcing partisan votes; ignoring the needs on healthcare, on costs, and on so many other issues of the American people.

It is the same story with Leader THUNE and Speaker JOHNSON. They are doing exactly what Donald Trump wants. They say they want a vote on a partisan CR as soon as possible here in the Congress, but they have refused even to sit down at the table with Leader JEFFRIES and me, despite repeated requests.

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



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So, look, our Republican colleagues can say whatever they want, but it is clear as could be that they want a shutdown. They can say they don't; they are acting as if they do. They can try to play the blame game, but their actions tell a different story. Their actions show clearly they want to shut things down because they don't want to negotiate with Democrats.

And it is more than that. It means Republicans don't want to help the American people with the crisis they have created, raising people's costs, particularly their healthcare costs. They don't want to do anything about the crisis they have created for their hospitals despite the outcry from hospitals, hospital workers, and patients from one end of the country to the other. They don't want to do anything about the fact that people's premiums are going to shoot through the roof. They don't want to stop the rampant and illegal abuses of Donald Trump when he steals or cancels congressional-approved funding for medical research—medical research—or other things.

By refusing to sit down with Democrats, Republicans are telling the American people that they are happy to help Donald Trump burn this country down; they are happy to let the government shut down.

The American people don't want Republicans to shut the government down. The American people expect Republicans who are in charge to sit down and negotiate, as any responsible leaders would do. They expect Republicans to do their jobs.

On Friday, Donald Trump said on "Fox & Friends" that he all he needs is Republican votes. He is wrong. He doesn't know how to count. It takes 60 Senate votes for anything to pass. That means you need Democratic votes. That is a plain fact. To get those votes, he needs some input from Democrats. We particularly want to talk about people's high costs—particularly in healthcare—created by the Republican Big Beautiful Bill. Those are the plain facts.

If Donald Trump says no negotiations at all, then it is Donald Trump's shutdown.

WELCOMING ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
BARTHOLOMEW

Mr. President, now on a happier note—His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I. I would like to welcome this morning to Washington His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the spiritual leader of all the world's orthodox Christians. It is an honor to have His All-Holiness with us this week in our Nation's Capital. He is a great example not only to the world's Christians but to people of all faiths and to everyone who seeks peace, justice, and unity in a world in desperate need of all three.

I particularly commend the patriarch for his legacy as an advocate for protecting our planet, for interfaith dialogue, and for justice for every corner of the Earth.

We welcome Patriarch Bartholomew I to Washington this week. We thank him for his leadership, and we wish him the best during his stay here.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2805 and S. 2806

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I understand that there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title for a second time en bloc.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2805) to provide for the designation of the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism.

A bill (S. 2806) to provide for automatic continuing appropriations.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I am going to speak in just a moment about the border, but just to kind of set the stage a little bit on sort of where things stand, you just heard the Democrat leader talk about their willingness to fund the government—something he said repeatedly in the past. In fact, in the past, as I used quotes on the floor yesterday, he said that he likes clean CRs—clean CRs—and that we need to keep the government open for all kinds of reasons, including people who are served by the VA hospitals, for example.

I agree with him. I think that is important. I don't think anybody benefits from a government shutdown, which is why we are trying to advance a clean CR—a CR that incorporates anomalies that have been requested by his side of the aisle, some on ours, things that we normally incorporate into a continuing resolution.

But the objective in all this would be to fund the government into the foreseeable future. What is being talked about is somewhere in the November timeframe—pre-Thanksgiving, per-

haps—which would give us, after the end of the fiscal year on September 30, another 6 to 7 weeks to consider individual appropriations bills and to fund the government the way it is supposed to be funded: under regular order, where the committees are doing their work and where we are doing our work on the floor.

As the Chair knows, earlier this year, we already passed three appropriations bills across the floor of the Senate—something that hadn't been done before the August recess going back as far as 2018, I believe. So it has been a long time since we have enacted under regular order appropriations bills, and that ought to be the goal. The goal here should be to fund the government the way it was intended to be funded—through the normal appropriations process.

Now, I realize that is a little out of the ordinary, given the past few years under the Democrat leadership or the Democrat leader's leadership here in the Senate, where these issues, a lot of times, got decided behind closed doors in his office. That seems to be what he wants to have happen again.

He is suggesting that he would like to have conversations about this. Well, he knows my office is right down the hall. He knows my phone number. I haven't heard from him.

All we are simply doing is asking for the very thing that in the past he has said he wants, and that is a clean funding resolution to fund the government. That is what we are proposing here. That is what I hope we will have the votes to pick up later this week.

If the Democrat leader chooses to oppose it, that is his prerogative, but I would hope there would be Democrat Senators who would give us the requisite number of votes to get to 60 in order to keep the government open. That is my objective in all of this.

I would say that we have, I think, a process whereby the Appropriations Committee and our chair Senator COLLINS have been working with the ranking Democrat, Senator MURRAY, and with their House counterparts on funding the government in this way, in this fashion. Those discussions, to the degree that they are occurring, are occurring because we allow them to have those conversations and don't get in the way of that.

I think what the Democrat leader is suggesting is that he wants to interject himself into those discussions and perhaps even instruct his ranking member not to participate. I hope that isn't the case.

But my expectation is that we will proceed to fund the government in a way that keeps it open for that foreseeable time period. I think right now what they are talking about in the House of Representatives is somewhere in the November 21 timeframe. That would give us an additional 6 to 7 weeks in which to move individual appropriations bills, which is the way we should be funding the government and