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No. 152

Senate

(Legislative day of Tuesday, September 16, 2025)

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, 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, You are holy. We rejoice because we are sustained by Your strength. We receive honor because of the victories You bring to our lives.

Bless our lawmakers. Increase their faith in You. May they receive joy as they strive to follow Your guidance. Renew their lives with Your goodness. Empower them to make our Nation and world better as they receive inspiration by practicing Your precepts. Continue to be their mighty fortress in times of trouble.

Lord, we praise You for Your glorious power. We celebrate Your mighty acts.

We pray in Your marvelous 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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the pending business.

The senior assistant legislative 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

ACCELERATING KIDS' ACCESS TO CARE ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

In the United States this year, over 9,000 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed among children from birth to age 14. While cancer rates and their deaths for children have declined by 70 percent from 1970 through 2020, cancer remains the leading cause of death from disease among children.

Access to timely pediatric care is critical to reducing cancer deaths. Children's hospitals specialize in certain types of cancer care. Unfortunately, gaining access to a children's

hospital across the country or in the State next-door can be a real challenge.

That is why I am the sponsor of the bipartisan Accelerating Kids' Access to Care Act.

Moms and dads seeking lifesaving cancer care for their kids should be able to access care quickly and wherever it is available. Now, sadly, sometimes it takes months for a child to get access to treatment if it is out of State. There is no excuse for that. In fact, it is pure bureaucratic redtape. Families shouldn't have to navigate redtape to get lifesaving care for their child with complex medical needs.

My bill simplifies this process so parents can ensure kids with cancer diagnoses get timely medical care. Our bill is the most cosponsored, bipartisan bill—I want to emphasize “bipartisan bill”—of all the Medicaid bills before the Senate Finance Committee. I look forward to making this bill become law.

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 Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, Speaker JOHNSON and House Republicans released a partisan CR that failed to meet the needs of the American people.

Republicans have been calling their bill a clean CR, but “clean” is the wrong word. It is a partisan bill; it has had no input from Democrats; and, most importantly, because it has had

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



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no input from Democrats, it is a status quo bill. It is a status quo bill.

Americans don't want the status quo. With tens of millions being kicked off of health insurance, with healthcare premiums set to skyrocket next year, with people paying more for groceries, for energy costs, for rent and struggling because of Donald Trump's tariffs, people need help.

That is what they are telling us from one end of the country to the other. They are not happy with the direction America is going. American people want their leaders to address their needs, and that is just what Democrats are fighting for. The last thing the American people want is a status quo bill that continues the chaos and high costs of the last 9 months.

But the Republican bill, not only is it partisan, but it is a status quo bill. It changes nothing. It continues the chaos and high costs of the last 9 months.

Democrats say: No way. We need to answer people's needs. When they tell us prices are going through the roof, when they tell us their healthcare is at risk, they want us to be there. So we need to sit at the table and talk to our Republican colleagues so the American people's needs can be taken into account in a bipartisan negotiation.

But the Republican CR is certainly not the right answer. Republicans are causing a shutdown, creating it by not negotiating and by not being willing to answer the country's needs.

The American people deserve better than the Republicans' failed agenda. They deserve better than keeping the status quo because there has been such, such damage done in the last months.

Soon, Senate and House Democrats will release our own proposal to keep the government open with a short-term extension that properly meets the needs of the American people. Our bill will represent the right path to avoid a shutdown crisis by addressing healthcare costs and cuts, by preventing premiums from going up, by restoring and extending congressional funds for things like NIH that Donald Trump and Russell Vought are illegally halting.

Once both sides put forth proposals—and ours will be coming shortly—Republicans will face a choice: to keep following Donald Trump into a reckless shutdown that he seems to want or to finally come to the table and work with us.

Remember, it takes 60 votes to get anything passed in the Senate. That means Democratic input is a necessity to improve the lives and lower costs for the American people because Republicans are not doing a thing to make things better.

This is not optional; it is necessary. Republicans know that. Yet Donald Trump has told Republicans: Don't even bother. He said "Don't even bother negotiating with Democrats." And they have, unfortunately, dutifully, obeyed.

By not even bothering to talk to Democrats, Republicans are paving the road that leads to a shutdown. That is deeply troubling for the American people. They expect Donald Trump and Republicans to do their jobs and to address their needs and to keep the government open by working like adults with the other side, not just saying: It is my way or the highway, particularly when their way represents a status quo that the American people abhor. Mark my words, the American people will blame Donald Trump if a shutdown happens.

Finally, I will say it again because it is important: Democrats don't want a shutdown, but Republicans cannot shut Democrats out of the process and pretend like the last 9 months have been business as usual.

There is nothing business as usual about kicking 16 million people off healthcare. There is nothing business as usual about Donald Trump illegally stealing and canceling Federal investments approved by Congress, even for NIH research, which may save the lives of children with cancer. There is nothing business as usual about Donald Trump tearing up budgets, ignoring the law, picking winners and losers for things as vital as disaster relief.

Republicans know that these abuses can't just continue as if everything is just fine. Everyone knows that Americans are frustrated with the status quo, frustrated with costs going up and up and up, frustrated with Donald Trump injecting so much chaos into their lives. And Republicans think that that is OK, no questions asked, no negotiation or discussion? Give me a break.

In the Senate, it takes 60 votes. So that means Republicans will need to work with us. If they can't even bother to have a conversation with Democrats, it is Republicans, then, the American people will know, are causing the shutdown in 2 weeks. We still have some time. I pray it doesn't happen.

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. 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, Republicans continue to move forward on funding the government through a short-term CR, something that is routinely done around here in order to allow for more time for the Appropriations Committee to report bills out and for us to consider them on the floor and to fund the government in the way it should be funded.

And Democrats—well, Democrats seem intent on shutting it down. For

what reason I cannot imagine do they actually think that hard-working Americans are going to thank them for shutting down the government.

I understand that Democrats' far-left base is desperate to pick a fight with President Trump, but really, I don't think Democrats are going to win the next election by shutting down the government over a short-term, clean nonpartisan funding measure.

It is particularly hard to understand Democrats' determination to shut down the government when we are simply asking for a few more weeks to complete bipartisan—bipartisan—appropriations work.

I made it very clear from the moment that I became the leader that I wanted to fund the government through regular order, a process that gives voice to Members of both parties. That means taking appropriations bills through the committee process, where they have a chance to be discussed, debated, and amended, and then bringing them to the Senate floor for more debate and amendments.

We made a very good start on this before the August State work period, passing three appropriations bills by robust, bipartisan margins—something that hadn't been done here since 2018.

The reason we are considering a short-term, clean continuing resolution is to allow this process to continue so that we can fund the government the way it should be funded, under regular order. Regular order is good for Members of both parties, and it is good for the American people. I think a lot of Democrats, as well as Republicans, know that.

I could stand here on the floor for a long time and read quotes from the Democrat leader and other Democrat Senators on the many problems with shutdowns and what they cost Americans. I won't do that today, as I think the costs to the American people are pretty well established.

But it is incredible to me that Democrats are ignoring these very real costs and continuing to push ahead with shutdown threats over this clean continuing resolution.

As I said on Monday, I do not think it is likely that mainstream voters—the same voters that Democrats lost in the last election—are going to be thanking Democrats for shutting down the government over a short-term, clean nonpartisan CR—a short-term, clean nonpartisan CR with, I would remind my Democratic colleagues, much needed funding for Member security.

Democrats, of course, have decided to try and deflect blame by complaining that we are looking at a partisan CR—a partisan CR. Give me a break.

Republicans have deliberately chosen to keep the CR clean to ensure that there can be no possible reason for Democrats to object to funding the government. We are not looking at a vehicle for new Republican policies; we are looking at nothing more than a continuation of the status quo when it comes to funding the government.

Do the Democrats think that by calling this a partisan CR that they can somehow make it so? We all know Democrats have a sometimes Orwellian relationship with language, but really I don't think Democrats are going to get very far with this one because there really is no possible way to call this a partisan CR with a straight face. Everyone here on Capitol Hill and well beyond is abundantly aware that we are not looking at a partisan funding measure.

So Democrats have a choice to make. They can work with Republicans to pass this clean, short-term, non-partisan measure to fund the government while we continue work on the 2026 appropriations bills or they can shut down the government, with all that will mean for the American people.

And just to be clear—I heard the Democratic leader get up again today and talk about how there are no bipartisan discussions—there have been bipartisan discussions for months. The appropriations committees have been meeting, passing reported bills out to the floor. We picked up three of those bills in the month of July and passed them on the floor, something that hadn't been done since 2018. And the Republicans and the Democrats on the Appropriations Committee continue to work together on bipartisan appropriations bills that they can report to the floor so that we can consider more of them and fund the government in regular order, which is the way it is supposed to be funded. That is what this debate is really about.

Now, the Democratic leader is accustomed to a different business model. That is where they go in his office behind closed doors and make all these decisions there instead of putting bills on the floor.

We passed appropriations bills at this point in the year for the first time since 2018. We are consulting in a bipartisan way with Democrats through this entire process. So that is just flat wrong. It is just not telling the truth. Those discussions have been going on for months. And this is, for the first time in a long time, a normal appropriations process where Democrats and Republicans sit down at the committees, where it should happen, work together on bills that they report to the floor—most of them by big bipartisan margins—and then we pick them up. We have done that with three already, and there are a bunch more we ought to do.

This is the way it is supposed to work, but it takes consent. It takes cooperation. Obviously, it takes 60 votes to pass anything here in the Senate, which means that Democrats are going to have to help fund the government on a clean, bipartisan funding resolution to give the Appropriations Committee and all of us as Senators, on both sides of the aisle, an opportunity to consider more appropriations bills on the floor and fund the government the way it

should be funded, and that is the old-fashioned way: through the appropriations process.

And I would remind my colleagues that under the Biden administration and Democratic majorities here in the Senate, there were no fewer than 13—13—continuing resolutions, short-term funding measures to fund the government, and 96 percent of the Democrats in the Senate voted for all 13—13 continuing resolutions. When they had the majority and a Democrat in the White House, 13 continuing resolutions to fund the government for a short term, and 96 percent of the Democrats voted for all 13 of those funding resolutions.

So I don't know what has changed. At that time, they made all the quotes. I said I could quote them, and I can quote them. There are lists that go on infinitely of all the things that they said about funding the government and what a terrible thing it would be to have a government shutdown. And here we are offering them a short-term funding resolution that is bipartisan, that funds the government through November 21, in order to allow us to continue the work of funding the government through the appropriations process, which is the way this place ought to work in the first place. That is all this is about—nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. It is whether or not they want to work with us to fund the government in a bipartisan way and help keep the government open or block that funding resolution, not help get us the 60 votes that are necessary to pass it out of here and, therefore, shut the government down. That is the choice.

This isn't President Trump. This isn't about President Trump. There is nothing in here about President Trump. This is a clean funding resolution, bipartisan funding resolution, short term, to allow the Appropriations Committee to do its work. There is nothing partisan about it. There is nothing in here that they haven't—things that we agree on, both sides agree on. This is a short-term funding resolution, and it should be a very straightforward vote. Both sides should do what they did 13 times when they had the majority, and that is vote to keep the government open and to allow us, for the first time in years, to actually have a normal appropriations process.

And I will tell the Presiding Officer because you have probably heard this, too, from Members on their side of the aisle, they would like to have that too. They would actually like to have an appropriations process that works, where they get an opportunity—not only in the Appropriations Committee but here on the floor of the Senate—to have some input into and have an opportunity to vote on amendments that reflect the wishes of the people they represent in their States.

We should do that. We can do that. And it is going to be entirely up to the Senate Democrats as to whether or not we 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. 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.

WAIVING QUORUM CALL

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to waive the mandatory quorum call with respect to the en bloc nominations provided for under the provisions of S. Res. 377.

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

NOMINATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, today is Constitution Day, September 17. So I think it is a perfect day, today, to restore the Senate's constitutional duty of advice and consent because when a President is elected, he needs to put a team in place, a team in place to run the government. When a President wins, he gets to pick the team. Modern Presidents have over 1,000 positions to fill.

There is a role in the Senate for advice and consent, but Senate Democrats have done everything you can think of to prevent President Trump from putting his team in place. He needs to get these people on the job.

And let me be clear. Democrat obstruction ends today. This week, Republicans in the Senate will break the blockade and move America forward. Now, we are going to begin to confirm this backlog of President Trump's qualified nominees.

Historically, the Senate, acting as a body of the whole, has considered nominees pretty quickly after they have come out of the vetting in the committees. Most are confirmed right here on the Senate floor by voice vote or unanimous consent. In President Obama's first term, 856 nominees were confirmed that way; in President Trump's first term, 553. In Joe Biden's only term as President, the number was 530. Here we are in President Trump's second term—September of that second term—and that number confirmed that way is zero.

Well, why? Why has not a single nominee been confirmed by voice vote or by unanimous consent? Look, we know why, and it is the Democrat obstruction. Our country has never seen anything like this. Senate Democrats are freezing the Senate floor, freezing the Federal Government, and freezing our Nation's progress, and they are doing it intentionally. This harms our Nation's safety. It hamstring the President and the voting people's agenda.

This is what people voted for. They elected President Trump. He won all seven battleground States. Yet the Democrats have done everything they can to stop him from making progress. Democrats are currently holding up

more than 150 qualified nominees who have already been successfully approved through Senate committees. These nominees are critical to our Nation's future, our Nation's success, our Nation's progress, as well as our safety and security.

So let's take a look at some of the important roles that the Democrats have said: Nope, we are going to filibuster all of them. One is the Principal Deputy Administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration. Another is the inspector general for the Central Intelligence Agency. Many are Ambassadors to our NATO allies. Then there is the Deputy Trade Representative. Even the Director of the National Counterintelligence and Security Center is being frozen out by Democrat obstruction. Every one of them is qualified because every one of those individuals has received bipartisan committee support, Republicans and Democrats voting for them after their hearings in the committee. Yet CHUCK SCHUMER, the Senate minority leader, is blocking critical nominees because he opposes President Trump, and he has done it at every step along the way.

Democrats failed to defeat President Trump in November at the ballot box, so instead they are trying to sabotage his team right here on the Senate floor. When Democrats filibuster nominees, they don't even bother to debate their qualifications—simply delay for the sake of delay and obstruction.

Our Senate committees have done their jobs on all of these nominees. Every one of these nominees that is being held up here on the Senate floor, every one of them has appeared at hearings in committee; they have answered a barrage of questions from Senators; they passed FBI background checks; they cleared Senate ethics investigations; and they have passed out of committee; many and every one that we are going to be voting on in this group this week had bipartisan support.

Let's be clear what that means. Democrats here on the floor, CHUCK SCHUMER, are blocking nominees whom Members of their own party already said: Yes, these are qualified; let's get them on the job.

This is unprecedented, and it is wrong.

Now, Democrats are free to vote no on nominees. That is OK. But an all-out obstruction weakens our country and wastes the Senate's time.

Don't take my word for it. Let's listen to what one of the Senators on the other side of the aisle said in 2013 when Barack Obama was President. That was Senator ELIZABETH WARREN from Massachusetts. She came to this very floor, stood over there at that very desk, and said:

Without a government that was staffed, justice would not be established, our common defense would be threatened, and the blessings of liberty [that] we hoped to secure through our laws would go unfulfilled.

That was 2013 and a different President. Well, what changed? Well, what

changed is that in November, Americans voted to get America back on track, and they elected Donald Trump as President to do it. Democrats' response was to shut down the Senate nomination process and to stop Senators from doing the people's business.

Today, Republicans are taking decisive action, and we are going to start voting on that in a few minutes. We are going to break the Senate's procedural logjam. We are returning to the long-established traditions and principles of the Senate.

Tomorrow, the Senate will vote on 48 nominees together in a single group. Each and every one of them has received bipartisan support in Senate committees. We are not going to stop there, though. Over 100 more nominees will be ready for confirmation by the end of this week—get that process moving.

It is time for the Senate to clear the nominations backlog and clear it quickly, and so we will. That way, the Senate can get back to the work of legislating, of working on behalf of the American people. We have important legislation to consider. We have appropriations bills. We have the National Defense Authorization Act, the farm bill, legislation to make our cities safe from violent criminals.

Senate Republicans are going to continue the work of the American people. We are going to continue to work to get America back on track.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SHEEHY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, and the provisions of S. Res. 377 (119th Congress), do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Executive Calendar Nos. 89, 105, 107, 121, 122, 123, 124, 132, 133, 135, 136, 137, 139, 141, 142, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 161, 177, 180, 185, 251, 276, 277, 278, 279, 283, 285, 289, 290, 297, 298, 303, 305, 324, 344, 346, 352, 356, 362, 365, 149, 286, 302, 350, en bloc. John Thune, Bernie Moreno, John Kennedy, Roger Marshall, Pete Ricketts, Mike Crapo, Bill Cassidy, Shelley Moore Capito, Jim Banks, Roger F. Wicker, Mike Rounds, John Cornyn, Tim Sheehy, Kevin Cramer, Eric Schmitt, John Barrasso, Cindy Hyde-Smith.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the mandatory

quorum call under rule XXII has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the en bloc nominations provided for under the provisions of S. Res. 377 shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO: The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE).

The yeas and the nays resulted—yeas 51, nays 48, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 522 Leg.]

YEAS—51

Banks	Fischer	Moran
Barrasso	Graham	Moreno
Blackburn	Grassley	Mullin
Boozman	Hagerty	Murkowski
Britt	Hawley	Paul
Budd	Hoeven	Ricketts
Capito	Husted	Risch
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Collins	Johnson	Schmitt
Cornyn	Justice	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cramer	Lankford	Sheehy
Crapo	Lummis	Sullivan
Cruz	Marshall	Tillis
Curtis	McConnell	Tuberville
Daines	McCormick	Wicker
Ernst	Moody	Young

NAYS—48

Alsobrooks	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Baldwin	Hirono	Sanders
Bennet	Kaine	Schatz
Blumenthal	Kelly	Schiff
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Schumer
Booker	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Slotkin
Coons	Lujan	Smith
Cortez Masto	Markey	Thune
Duckworth	Merkley	Van Hollen
Durbin	Murphy	Warner
Fetterman	Murray	Warnock
Gallago	Ossoff	Warren
Gillibrand	Padilla	Welch
Hassan	Peters	Whitehouse
Heinrich	Reed	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Lee

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 51, the nays are 48.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn not having voted in the affirmative, the motion is rejected.

The motion was rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

VOTE ON MOTION TO RECONSIDER

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE) and the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS).

Further, if present and voting: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. TILLIS) would have voted "yea."