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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.

O God of grace, awaken the Members of this body to the opportunities of this day. Help them to hear Your call to move forward and accomplish great things for Your glory. Lord, enable them to discover unused resources among themselves that they can mobilize dreams that have yet to be dreamt, talents that have yet to be awakened, and commitments that have yet to be made. Kindle a divine light on the altar of their souls that will guide them in the pursuit of Your wisdom and truth. May they confidently face their duties knowing that You are their sufficient shield and defense.

We pray in Your glorious 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 (Mrs. MOODY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session and resume consideration of the en bloc nominations provided for under the provisions of S. Res. 377.

The Senator from Iowa.

NATIONAL STILLBIRTH PREVENTION AND AWARENESS DAY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, September 19 is National Stillbirth Prevention and Awareness Day. This day is set aside to recognize the tens of thousands of families in the United States who have endured a stillbirth.

More than 21,000 pregnancies in the United States end in stillbirth each year. Sadly, this exceeds the top five leading causes of death among children under 15 years of age. It is critical that we raise awareness and take action to improve this grave statistic.

I am proud to have been a cosponsor of the Maternal and Child Health Stillbirth Prevention Act that was signed into law last year. The law clarifies that resources like Count the Kicks can be deployed for stillbirth prevention. Count the Kicks is a simple and free tool that helps pregnant moms count their babies' movements during the third trimester. The results speak for themselves. In the first 10 years of the Count the Kicks campaign in Iowa, the State's stillbirth rate went down 32 percent while rates in the rest of the country remained static.

My work to improve maternal and child health doesn't stop there. I have introduced the bipartisan Healthy Moms and Babies Act. This bill is a comprehensive approach to addressing our maternal mortality crisis. Through community-based efforts, improved support for rural labor and delivery units, and increasing the use of technology like telehealth, we can prevent maternal and child mortality regardless of the ZIP Code.

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 (Mr. MULLIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last night, we found the answer to the question of how serious Democrats are about funding the government, and the answer is not at all.

For years, the Democrat leader talked about the importance of passing clean continuing resolutions. In fact, we did 13 of them while the Democrats had the majority the past 4 years with a Democrat in the White House.

The Democrats' CR proposal this time is the exact opposite. It is not clean; it is filthy. It is packed full of partisan policies and measures designed to appeal to Democrats' leftist base: funding healthcare for able-bodied adults who refuse to work; ensuring that noncitizens go back on the Medicaid rolls; removing Republican-passed measures to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicaid and free up resources for the people who need Medicaid the most.

Even while Democrats are ensuring that noncitizens and able-bodied adults who refuse to work are getting government-funded healthcare, they are attempting to eliminate a historic investment in home- and community-based services for Americans with disabilities. Where exactly do their priorities lie?

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



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They are also trying to ax Republicans' transformational, once-in-a-generation investment in rural healthcare designed to improve the way that we deliver care to those who need it.

Republicans have advanced a clean, nonpartisan CR to keep the government funded while we continue bipartisan work on regular annual appropriations funding bills.

Democrats—well, Democrats are threatening to shut down the government if Republicans don't agree to last night's laundry list of partisan demands. I think that tells you all you need to know.

I expect the House to advance a clean CR tomorrow, and I hope—I really hope—that Democrats will come to their senses and join us in passing it. The ball is in their court.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, later today, the Senate will vote on its slate of 48 lower level nominees to the executive branch of our government—the first package of nominees we will consider this year.

Normally, confirming a slate of non-controversial, lower level nominees like the ones in this package wouldn't merit a lot of discussion on the floor of the Senate. They would normally be confirmed in a few moments by unanimous consent or voice vote.

In fact, previous Presidents have had most of their nominees confirmed this way. George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton in their first terms each had 98 percent of their civilian nominees confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote. George W. Bush and Barack Obama had 90 percent in their first terms in office. Then came President Trump's first term. Democrats injected a healthy dose of partisanship into the process, and all of a sudden positions that used to go by voice vote or unanimous consent were now requiring roll-call votes.

Still, both President Biden and President Trump in their first terms had more than half of their nominees confirmed by voice or unanimous consent.

Then there is this year. This year, Democrats fully broke the confirmation process here in the Senate. For almost 8 months now, Democrats have dragged out the confirmation of every one of President Trump's nominees. He is the first President on record not to have a single civilian nominee confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote—not one.

Democrats have said that they are doing this because these are "historically bad" nominees. Historically bad? Many of the President's nominees are getting Democrat support when they come out of the relevant committee of jurisdiction. Democrats are even voting to confirm them. But despite this, Democrats have still slowed down the process literally to a halt. It is delay for delay's sake, I suppose, so they look like they are fighting.

Last week, Republicans put a stop to this and restored the Senate's long-

standing practice of confirming nominees expeditiously in batches, the way it was always done prior. That is what we are going to be doing here today.

This slate of nominees, as I said, consists of noncontroversial, lower level positions in the executive branch. Many of these positions have been filled by unanimous consent or voice vote in each of the last three incoming administrations. Almost all of them have been filled that way at least once since President Obama. So the positions themselves aren't controversial. Well, interestingly enough, neither are the nominees.

Every one of these 48 nominees was reported out of committee with bipartisan support—every single one. A significant number of them were supported by a majority of Democrats on their representative committees.

Under any other President, these would be exactly the type of nominees that we would confirm in a batch by unanimous consent or voice vote.

Democrats' obstruction is not about the quality of the nominees. Let's just put that to rest, pure and simple. It is about Democrats' utter inability to accept the fact that the American people elected President Trump.

President Trump came into office with a mandate. And like every President before him, he needs his team in place to enact his agenda. But Democrats' obstruction would have denied him that team. It would have denied the American people the change that they voted for last November, and it would have prevented the Senate from doing important work.

So far this year, we have cast more than 500 votes here in this Chamber. That is more than any Senate in recent history at this point in a Congress. But just to finish the nominees in the pipeline today would require another 600 votes if we considered them all individually, which is what Democrats have been forcing us to do since this President took office—600 more votes.

We have cast more than 500 up until now. We would have had to cast another 600 in the 3½ months before the end of the year just to get through the current pipeline. That doesn't even consider the hundreds of additional nominees who will be added to that pipeline in the coming weeks and months.

If the Senate had continued at the pace that we have been proceeding at through the month of July, there would still have been hundreds of empty desks in the executive branch on President Trump's last day in office in 2029. Think about that.

Republicans have fixed a broken process and restored the Senate's precedent that applied to previous Presidents, and that is allowing a majority of a President's nominees to be confirmed expeditiously.

I have talked a lot about allowing a President to assemble his team, but of course restoring Senate precedent isn't just about ensuring that a President

can get his team in place; it is also about making sure that the Senate is able to spend sufficient time on legislative work.

First and foremost, the Senate is a legislative body, and Democrats' historic obstruction has made it substantially more difficult for the Senate to spend adequate time on legislation. By restoring Senate precedent on confirmations, we have helped ensure that the Senate is able to fulfill all of its responsibilities.

Today is the first slate of nominees. There will be more to come. And we will ensure that President Trump's administration is filled at a pace that looks more like those of his predecessors and that this government can deliver for the American people.

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 Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President yesterday, Democrats released our bill to extend government funding and meet the needs of the American people. The contrast between the Republican bill and the Democratic bill is glaring.

The Republican bill is more of the same failed status quo of Donald Trump's failed policies: more high costs, healthcare cuts, and premiums up.

Democrats have a different option. We address the crises Americans face in healthcare, in Medicaid, in inflation, and in higher costs.

The House is expected to vote on their partisan, status quo bill either later today or tomorrow. If the bill passes the House, the Senate should take up the issue immediately afterward. We could do it quickly so we don't interfere with anyone's travel plans to Arizona.

We would ask for limited debate and just two votes: the House status quo bill, which delays any sort of healthcare relief; and the Democratic alternative, which would lower healthcare costs for millions of Americans.

I urge Republican leaders to speed up these votes.

One of the oldest sayings in politics is from the great Abraham Lincoln. He said that "public sentiment is everything." That is certainly true in this debate. The American people will look at what Republicans are doing and what Democrats are doing, and it will be clear that public sentiment is on our side.

Public sentiment will be on our side for at least three reasons:

First, the American people want both sides to work together. We have made