

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, the House has just passed a short-term, clean, nonpartisan continuing resolution to fund the government for a few additional weeks while we continue bipartisan work on appropriations bills, and, today, we will be voting on that clean, nonpartisan CR as well as on the CR the Democrats introduced Wednesday night.

On the floor yesterday, the Democrat leader said: The contrast between the Republican bill and the Democrat bill is glaring.

Well, he has got that right. The contrast between the Republican bill and the Democrat bill is glaring. The Republican bill is a clean, nonpartisan, short-term continuing resolution to fund the government to give us time to do the full appropriations process, and the Democrat bill is the exact opposite. It is what you might call not a clean CR—a dirty CR—laden down with partisan policies and appeals to the Democrats' leftist base.

When I became majority leader, I made it very clear that I wanted the Senate to return to the regular order consideration of appropriations bills. I was not and am not interested in funding the government through last-minute, backroom deals. The right way to fund the government, whenever humanly possible, is through regular order here in the Senate. That means taking appropriations bills through committee, where Republicans and Democrats alike have a chance to make their voices heard, and then bringing those bills to the Senate floor for more debate and amendment. That process is good for Senators of both parties, to say nothing of being best for the American people.

But Democrats can't take "yes" for an answer, so instead of working with Republicans to fund the government through a clean, nonpartisan continuing resolution so that we can get back to bipartisan negotiations on appropriations, Democrats are yielding to the desires of their rabidly leftist base and are attempting to hold government funding hostage to a long list of partisan demands.

The kind of clean CR Republicans have put forward used to be something Democrats embraced. In fact, Democrats voted in favor of clean CRs no fewer than 13 times during the Biden administration. Yet, now that Republicans are offering a clean CR, it is somehow a no-go. It is funny how that happens.

The Democrat leader has tried to defend his party's double standards by suggesting that this is a special case. Really? Really? Why is it always a special case with Democrats?

The truth is, the only thing special about this case is that Democrats can't stand the fact that the American people elected Donald Trump. So we all have to live with their endless temper tantrum, which apparently may now include shutting down the government.

I could spend some time talking about the measure Democrats put forward yesterday. I could talk about how it would allow noncitizens and able-bodied adults who won't work to stay on the Medicaid rolls, while at the same time ripping away the historic investment in home- and community-based services for Americans with disabilities. I could talk about how it would eliminate a transformational investment in rural healthcare, dilute Medicaid resources for those most in need, and a whole lot more. But suffice it to say that it is a fundamentally unserious proposal designed to appease Democrats' liberal base, and it has zero chance of making it through Congress. And they know that.

I can't stop Democrats from opposing our nonpartisan continuing resolution. If they want to shut down the government, they have the power to do so. But if they think they are going to gain political points from shutting down the government over a clean, nonpartisan CR—something they voted for 13 times under the Biden administration—I would strongly urge them to think again.

The ball is in the Democrats' court. They can vote with the Republicans on a clean, nonpartisan CR to fund the government and allow the Senate to complete additional appropriations work or they can vote for their own partisan CR and move the country one step closer to a shutdown. For the sake of the American people, I hope they will choose to vote with us.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, all of America can see the glaring contrast between Republican and Democratic priorities, as shown by the bills each party introduced late yesterday.

Senators will have to choose to stand with Donald Trump and keep the same lousy status quo and cause the Trump healthcare shutdown or stand with the American people, protect their healthcare, and keep the government functioning.

Today, we have a rare moment in the Senate where two bills come to the floor that truly crystallize the contrast between the two parties.

On the Republican side, Americans will see more of the same high costs, especially on healthcare, more of the same failures of the last 9 months or, instead, Republicans can vote to undo the destruction Donald Trump has inflicted on American healthcare and instead work on a bipartisan bill—the only bipartisan bill that can win—to keep the government open. That is what Democrats offer the American people. The choice is clear.

Our Republican colleagues seem to think Americans are happy with the direction of this country. They are voting like they think the status quo is good enough even though they have heard from so many of their constituents about the fear of hospitals closing, of healthcare being diminished, of premiums going way up, hundreds of dollars each month. They have heard that from their constituents, but they stick with Donald Trump, who doesn't give a hoot about them.

Republicans are voting like the status quo is good enough. They are wrong. Americans are tired of the status quo. They are tired of Donald Trump's chaos and inflationary policies.

By not even negotiating, by trying to make this partisan, Donald Trump and Republicans are shutting the government down.

People are paying more for groceries, more for their electric bills, more for rent. Even a cup of coffee every morning has gotten more expensive under Donald Trump.

Healthcare in America has been plunged into crisis. Fifteen million Americans will lose their healthcare. Premiums are set to go through the roof—hundreds of dollars each month, thousands of dollars each year. The American family—average family—can't afford that.

Republicans—what do they say? Well, let's kick the can down the road. Republicans say: Let's put it off. Let's do it later. But for Republicans, "later" means "never."

We should solve this healthcare crisis now. People are already getting letters in the mail saying their premiums are about to go up next year by \$300, \$400, \$500—God forbid, even more.

A new report today showed that if we extend these tax credits, the vast majority of the benefits will go to the working- and middle-class families—the families who need help. That is what Democrats want to do here today.

Also, hospitals from Virginia to Nebraska, from Maine to California, are shutting down right now—not next

year; now. You know what that means. If you live in rural America, the closest hospital to you might be hundreds of miles away. You might not be able to see a doctor. Even if you can, you are going to pay more to see the doctor.

If you are an adult with parents who live in a nursing home, what is going to happen if that nursing home closes due to budget cuts? Hundreds—hundreds—of nursing homes will close because they depend on Medicaid, which has been slashed. Most people, most average families, can't afford to take their parents in, and there is no way they could provide the same care and expertise that a nursing home could.

I have talked to long-term care centers—in Republican districts no less—where doctors and nurses and healthcare workers and parents are frustrated or worried—worried their jobs are imperiled and worried even more that their patients are imperiled. They cannot understand how Donald Trump and Republicans are so OK with cutting their funding. In short, it is a betrayal. That is what the status quo looks like under Donald Trump.

Also, let me speak to my own colleagues here in the Senate who care about this institution and who, in normal times, would love to work together with the other side to make good things happen for the country. Donald Trump and his little minion Russell Vought have made a total mockery of the congressional appropriations process. He has trampled over Congress's power of the purse. He has illegally frozen, canceled, and redirected—unilaterally misappropriated—hundreds of billions in funding.

Why the heck should the Senate vote on a budget if Russell Vought single-handedly, with Donald Trump's support, can undo it all? And that includes NIH research. It includes public broadcasting and so much else. It is all illegal. It cannot be tolerated. Why pass a budget if Russell Vought can unilaterally rescind it? Every Senator should not stand for it, including our Republican colleagues. Democrats will certainly not stand for it. Will Republicans?

Republicans cannot expect that another take-it-or-leave-it extension of government funding that fails to address healthcare costs is going to cut it for the American people. What we should do instead is move forward with our Democratic proposal to work to keep the government open, to lower people's premiums, to protect people's healthcare.

Finally, both sides should at least talk. Donald Trump does not want to talk. He has said to Republicans: "Don't even bother" to deal with Democrats. That is Donald Trump saying he—he—wants a shutdown.

You have to have two parties to pass a bill. If you say "Don't deal with Democrats," you are saying you want a shutdown. That is what Trump has said. He either doesn't know the Senate procedure, where you need 60

votes—that is obvious—or he doesn't know math, because he only has 53.

Donald Trump is saying he wants a shutdown, and Leader THUNE and Speaker JOHNSON should resist Trump's bullying. They know the only way to pass a budget is with bipartisan negotiation. In the 4 years when we Democrats had a majority, there was never a shutdown. Why? We talked to our Republican colleagues and created bipartisan proposals. We sat down and talked, which was normally what happened, except our Republican colleagues—Leader THUNE and Speaker JOHNSON—are too afraid to buck Donald Trump.

Well, the American people won't stand for Donald Trump's status quo. They don't like the Republican partisanship. They expect both sides to come together and address the real needs they face, from healthcare to the cost of living. This is what Democrats offer the American people with our bill today if Senate Republicans heed their call.

#### FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I must speak for another moment about the FCC.

We are in a moment of peril—dire peril—in America because yesterday Donald Trump said he intends to put a dagger through the heart of what America is about when he said that he doesn't believe in free speech, that maybe the licenses and ability to speak of people and broadcast companies that disagree with him should be taken away.

When Donald Trump says the FCC should consider revoking licenses of networks with shows and hosts who are "against me" and who "give me only bad publicity," he is talking about a dictatorship. That is what dictatorships do—they shut down anyone who has any disagreement with them. But that is what he is threatening to do today through Brendan Carr. He said:

I would think maybe their licenses should be taken away. It will be up to Brendan Carr.

That is censorship. It is disgusting. It is a violation of the First Amendment. What Trump is doing comes right out of Xi and Putin's playbook. He is launching in broad daylight a naked attack on perhaps the most basic freedom in America: free speech. For hundreds of years, America has been proud to be a land of free speech, and Donald Trump is the first President who really attempts to put a dagger through its heart.

Where are our Republican colleagues? They know this is wrong. Silence; obedience to Donald Trump's destruction of free speech and democracy. He is launching in broad daylight an attack on one of the most basic freedoms in America, which is free speech, and it is being challenged through his flack at the FCC, Brendan Carr, who coerced ABC to suspend Jimmy Kimmel for his

comments that he or Trump didn't like.

Donald Trump's attack on free speech is despicable. It is anti-American. It is the road to dictatorship. And it is not the first time Donald Trump has done this. He is launching investigations into companies to bully them into submission. And it is not just late-night talk show hosts; Donald Trump and MAGA have said they will try to silence others.

When Carr goes on a podcast and says the FCC "can do this the easy way or the hard way" to make sure Kimmel is silenced, that is an attack on every single media outlet, whether it is traditional or digital. That is an attack on every single American.

So today I am, with Senators MARKEY and LUJÁN, calling on Chairman Carr to demand to know how the FCC defines "public interest" under Carr, which networks must adhere to; to ask Carr did his staff communicate—he or his staff—with Disney, ABC, or their affiliates.

We all know the murder of Charlie Kirk was abhorrent and evil, plain and simple, but it is repulsive that the Trump administration is exploiting this tragic death as an excuse to go after anyone they don't like politically, including by silencing free speech.

While Donald Trump tries to take away people's freedoms, Republicans in Congress are bowing in obeisance to his throne because they are too scared to stand up to him. They know he will cast retribution on them, as he has on networks and people in the press.

In conclusion, freedom is as fundamental as it gets in America. Everyone knows that. Republicans know that. Conservatives know that. For the longest time, everyone—Ronald Reagan on down—has defended free speech. But if you lose freedom of speech, it is the road to autocracy.

Mr. Carr is one of the greatest threats to free speech in American history. He must resign immediately, and if not, Trump should fire him.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

#### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026—Continued

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the pending business.

The 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