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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, October 17, 2025, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2025

The Senate met at 10 a.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.

O God, from whom all holy desires come, rise mercifully upon our hearts and sustain us in the trench warfare of this government shutdown. Wipe out all our selfish desires so that we may be true instruments for Your glory.

Lord, remind our lawmakers that You are their strength and that those who abandon You cannot ultimately prevail.

Be near to this Nation, O Lord, as we find protection in the shadow of Your grace. Surround us with the shield of Your glory and might.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Iowa.

RURAL EMERGENCY HOSPITAL PROGRAM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, keeping quantity and quality of healthcare in rural America is a constant responsibility of most Senators, because every Senator, even if you come from a high population State, you still have a lot of rural areas.

So one of the things that I have been interested in is keeping hospital services available in rural areas, even if they have a hard time keeping their beds as part of their hospital.

So, in December 2020, I was proud to sponsor and to pass into law the voluntary rural emergency hospital program under Medicare. CMS implemented this program 3 years later, in 2023.

The rural emergency hospital program allows rural hospitals to voluntarily right-size their healthcare infrastructure, while maintaining essential medical services for their rural communities. It gives these hospitals the flexibility to operate without hospital inpatient services, while still retaining a 24/7 emergency department, ambulance services, outpatient services, and more.

Today, 42 rural hospitals in 17 States have transitioned to a rural emergency

hospital model and, hence, are still operating. Some States are still working to establish the necessary hospital licensing flexibility so that they can participate in this program.

Rural emergency hospitals have been beneficial for many rural communities, and I want to give you three examples.

In Friend, NE, going to the rural emergency hospital model has “meant a lifeline” for that community.

In Union Springs, AL, the rural emergency hospital model has allowed their hospital “to remain open instead of leaving a void in the community.”

In Scotland, SD, their rural emergency hospital will “enhance local health services.”

I will submit a longer list of examples of how rural emergency hospitals have benefited rural communities to date.

I look forward to more rural hospitals converting in the near future.

Given it has been 5 years since the program became law, I would like to better understand the challenges rural hospitals and communities face when considering rural emergency hospital programs. So I am pursuing getting that information because I am committed to ensuring the rural emergency hospital remains a viable tool for rural hospitals and their communities.

I recently sent letters to existing rural emergency hospital CEOs and other rural healthcare leaders to get this information. I look forward to their feedback and continuing to strengthen rural healthcare, and I will keep my constituents in Iowa and my Senate colleagues so informed.

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



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I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 168, H.R. 5371, making continuing appropriations and extensions for fiscal year 2026, and for other purposes.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3012

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3012) to appropriate funds for pay and allowances of excepted Federal employees for periods of work performed during a lapse in appropriations, and for other purposes.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard. The bill will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS AND EXTENSIONS ACT, 2026—Motion to Proceed

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this morning, we will offer my Democrat colleagues yet another opportunity to vote to reopen the government—to vote to reopen the government with a clean, nonpartisan CR.

That is right. We are not asking Democrats to swallow any new Republican policies. We are not asking them to swallow any partisan policy riders. We are simply asking them to extend current funding levels for a few weeks, while we work on full-year appropriations.

And you don't have to take my word for it. Everyone from the President of the Teamsters Union to mainstream media outlets has confirmed that the CR Republicans have put forward is a clean CR. But Senate Democrats chose to shut down the government anyway.

Now, Democrats' ostensible reason for their 16-day shutdown is because

they want Republicans to agree to bail out the healthcare mess that Democrats created—first with Obamacare and then passing and sunseting enhanced Obamacare tax credits that were put in place for the COVID emergency, which I think, as we all know, is long behind us.

Despite the fact that we are only in this position because of Democrats' poor policy choices, Republicans are ready for that discussion. I am ready. My colleagues are ready. The Speaker and the President are ready—but only once we have reopened the government.

We are not conducting negotiations in a hostage situation, and we are not going to pay a \$1.5 trillion ransom to get Democrats to reopen government operations.

That is right—\$1.5 trillion. That is what Democrats are demanding. Between their Obamacare bailout and the other partisan policies that they have included, they want a \$1.5 trillion ransom to reopen the government for a handful of weeks.

Now, to put that number in perspective, that is equivalent to almost one quarter of the entire 2024 Federal budget—again, just to reopen the Federal Government for a handful of weeks.

Now, think about that. Their proposal: \$1.5 trillion of new spending, free healthcare benefits for noncitizens to open the government until October 31. That is what their proposal is.

So, literally, the American taxpayer is supposed to pay \$1.5 trillion so that the Democrats can open the government until Halloween, 2 weeks from now—\$1.5 trillion for 2 weeks. That is what we are talking about here.

Now, just imagine this for a minute, what might happen if we pay that ransom and agree to the Democrats' \$1.5 trillion demand. Well, what is going to happen the next time we need a continuing resolution? How much are Democrats going to demand then? Will we have to add another \$1.5 trillion every time we want to fund the government?

And they want to do it for 2 weeks—\$1.5 trillion for 2 weeks. I mean, where does this end?

When taxpayers and our economy have been totally destroyed by Democrats' profligate spending, is that where it ends?

No. While I am more than happy to discuss ways to alleviate Democrats' healthcare mess, we are not paying \$1.5 trillion or a \$1.5 trillion ransom to reopen the Federal Government.

As frustrated as I am with their continued refusal to reopen the government, I do have to say that I have some sympathy for Senate Democrats. While they may claim healthcare is the driver of what they are doing, we all know that the primary reason we are in this mess is because Democrats' far-left base demanded a showdown with President Trump.

Just 7 months ago, the Democrat leader voted with Republicans to keep the government open because he said,

while he didn't like the CR, a government shutdown would be much worse—"far worse." But he caught a whole lot of flak for that decision from the far left, and so now, he is leading the shutdown charge.

He is not the only Democrat who voted to fund the government in March who is now a member of the shutdown brigade. But no matter how much pressure their far-left base is exerting, we still need some Democrats to do the right thing.

It would take just a handful of Democrats to reopen the government—just a handful of Democrats to enable us to resume paying air traffic controllers, law enforcement officers, and all of the other Federal workers; just a handful of Democrats to get the Federal Government working again for the American people.

Later today, Democrats are going to have another opportunity to make the right decision—two opportunities, in fact. They are going to have a chance to vote on the clean, nonpartisan CR which, as I said in the past, sits right there at the desk, which has passed the House of Representatives. We can pick this up, with five more Democrat votes, pass it today and send it to the President. The President signs it into law, and the government reopens.

So they are going to have a chance to vote on that yet again, and they are going to have a chance to vote to advance full-year Defense appropriations legislation, so that if we can't reopen the entire government, we can at least make some progress toward securing paychecks for our troops and for defending our country.

Just last week, the Senate passed the National Defense Authorization Act, which is essential legislation, something that we do every year to authorize defense spending and to authorize a pay raise for our troops. So this is the Democrats' chance to make good on that promise by funding the raise. The authorization bill authorized it. The Defense appropriations bill that we will vote on here later today will actually fund that raise so our troops can get paid.

Now, again, I realize that Democrats' far-left base is rallying in DC this weekend, which puts extra pressure on Democrats, but I hope that they will do the right thing anyway and vote to reopen the government. All we need is five. The bill is right there. It goes to the President, he signs it into law, and the government reopens.

The American people are depending on some—I am hoping—Democrats who are willing to put the interests of the American people ahead of the interests of their far-left base.

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.