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## Senate

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.

Spirit of God, who brought creation out of the void, light from darkness, and order from chaos. You own everything. Lord, use our lawmakers for Your glory. May they daily experience the joy of companionship with You. As they encounter each day—pleasure, pain, and defeat—may they live to honor Your Name. Remind our Senators that no evil can stop the unfolding of Your purposes and providence. Lord, lead them this day with Your merciful hands providing for their needs. Bless all who work to defend freedom. May no weapon formed against them prosper.

We pray in Your holy 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 being permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Iowa.

### FARMERS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, there is real concern in rural America, particularly among family farmers. Farmers know that margins matter. Farmers don't want to see their revenue continue being eaten up by input suppliers.

So we need to do what we can to ensure that competition in seed and fertilizer industries is fair and that markets are transparent to our farmers. That is a very important consideration, at this very time, as the Trump administration and we Members of Congress look to provide aid to farmers.

This is a top concern that I hear from many family farmers. My farmers are concerned that Federal dollars meant to help the farmers will simply get passed on to seed and fertilizer companies.

That concern brings me to my legislation and bringing it to the attention of my fellow Senators. Passing the Fertilizer Research Act is the first step in addressing those concerns. I hope my colleagues on the Agriculture Committee will join me to provide transparency for farmers through this very important legislation that I am offering.

So please take a good look, a very hard look, at the Fertilizer Research Act.

I yield the floor.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

### NOMINATIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I am very pleased to report that, as of yesterday, the Senate has confirmed a total of 314 of President Trump's civilian nominees, and earlier this week, I filed on another nominations package, which,

when passed, will bring our total confirmations to more than 400. That far outstrips total confirmations by this point in President Biden's term and in President Trump's first term, as well, and it is particularly notable that we have managed to beat those first term numbers when you consider the obstacles the Democrats have put up.

I have talked more than once, here on the floor, about Democrats' unprecedented obstruction of the President's nominees this year. And I really do mean unprecedented. For decades upon decades, the Senate has expedited the consideration of large numbers of Presidential nominees, confirming them by unanimous consent or voice vote.

Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton, for example, each had 98 percent of their civilian nominees confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote in the first term of their Presidencies—98 percent. George W. Bush and Barack Obama each had 90 percent.

Now, it is true that Democrats substantially eroded this tradition of bipartisanship during President Trump's first term. All of a sudden, positions that had traditionally gone by unanimous consent or voice vote were now requiring rollcall votes. But even so, both President Biden and President Trump in his first term had more than half of their nominees confirmed by voice vote.

And then there was this year. This year, not one single Presidential nominee has been confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote—not one. Democrats have dragged out the process on every single one of the President's nominations. The Democrat leader tried to justify the Democrats' historic blockade by claiming that the President's nominees have been "historically bad."

The only problem with that is the Democrats have supported a number of the President's nominees in committee and have even voted for some of them on the Senate floor. So either Members

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



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of the Democrat party are supporting historically bad nominees or something else is going on here, and I think we know what that is. That something else that is going on here looks a lot like petty partisanship. Maybe you want to call it Trump derangement syndrome.

Democrats and their base still can't deal with the fact that President Trump won last November, and so they have held up every single one—every single one—of his nominations in revenge. But Republicans have not been daunted. We have just continued plowing ahead on nominations, helping us rack up a historic number of votes, this year, in the process.

And in September, we took steps to restore Senate precedent and codify in Senate rules what was once understood to be standard practice, and that is the Senate's acting expeditiously on largely noncontroversial Presidential nominees to allow a President to get his team in place. Now, both Democrat and Republican Presidents will be protected from some of the partisan excesses that we have seen from Democrats this year.

Mr. President, 2025 has been a long road, but I am very proud to be able to say, at the end of it, that we are well on our way to confirming more than 400 of the President's civilian nominees and that we have virtually cleared the nominations backlog by the end of his first year, in contrast to the situation, at this point, in President Trump's first term and President Biden's.

And when the Senate returns in January, I look forward to continuing to confirm additional members of the President's team so that he can continue to do the job to which he was elected by 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 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### HEALTHCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, I am announcing that Senate Democrats will introduce legislation for a clean, 3-year extension of the current ACA tax credits. This is the bill—a clean, 3-year extension of ACA tax credits—that Democrats will bring to the floor of the Senate for a vote next Thursday, and every single Democrat will support it.

Republicans have 1 week to decide where they stand: Vote for this bill and

bring healthcare costs down, or block this bill and send premiums skyrocketing.

That is what is at stake when we vote next week. It is going to be one of the most important votes we take because it is showing who is on the side of the American people and lowering their healthcare costs and who is on the side of the big special interests and is going to allow them to raise healthcare costs for America. People back home will be watching what Republicans do, and the American people are running out of time before January 1.

Make no mistake, our bill is the last chance Republicans will get before January 1 to prevent premiums from skyrocketing. Republicans have no hope of solving this healthcare crisis on their own. They have no healthcare plan of their own whatsoever. They are far too divided. Americans can't help but notice that when Leader THUNE came to the podium a few minutes ago, he didn't even talk about healthcare because he has nothing to say. They can't even come up with their own bill.

The only path next week is supporting our bill. While Democrats are united in fighting for the American people, Republicans are too busy fighting amongst themselves. They can't even come up with their own plan. Republicans have spent more time kicking low-income people off health insurance and raising costs for those who stay covered than on doing anything to lower premiums. They have riddled their plan with poison pills that would ban abortion nationwide.

For those Republicans talking about sending checks, how is a one-time check supposed to last the whole year? People are paying more every day for the things they need, and a single check in the mail is cold comfort if you are paying \$1,000 or \$5,000 more a month just for health insurance.

So the reality is this. The reality is simply this: The easiest, most direct way, the simplest way to solve this premium crisis is for Republicans to vote for our bill. Any Republican who claims to care about premium increases on January 1 has only one realistic path, and that is to support our bill for a simple, clean, 3-year extension.

If Republicans block our bill, there is no going back. We won't get another chance to halt these premium spikes before they kick in at the start of the new year. Those insurance premiums in January will land like a hammer blow on the American people. The pain will fall on all Americans but heaviest in the Republicans' own backyards. They don't even care about their own constituents.

As election results have shown in November, this past week, and in many other instances, the American people are beginning to learn Republicans don't care that costs are going through the roof for the average American family.

Americans with chronic illnesses will suffer if we don't extend the credits. Rural communities will be devastated. People who get insurance through their jobs will see their costs go up too. This isn't just affecting ACA people.

We can avoid all of this needless pain if just a handful of Republicans join us in passing our bill—join us in passing our bill. Or are they going to continue the Republican war on healthcare, on reducing healthcare costs, and block getting better healthcare for the American people.

For the last 30 years, Republicans have been fighting, but now this fight is coming to a head because the failure to extend these premiums will hit so hard—harder than anything that has hit the American people in the last while.

Democrats have made clear where we stand. Now that our proposal is out, Republicans have 1 week to pick a side: Join us and prevent premiums from skyrocketing, or block our bill and condemn people, the American people, to financial disaster. The choice is up to the Republicans here in the Senate.

#### SIGNALGATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on Signalgate, today, a Pentagon watchdog will release a new report on Signalgate finding that Secretary Hegseth put the lives of American troops at risk by sharing sensitive operational information on a group chat in flagrant disregard of security proposals. Secretary Hegseth has put the lives of American troops at risk. The conclusion that this report points to is damning. The Secretary of Defense's lack of judgment put the lives of our troops in danger.

Instead of accepting responsibility for his mistakes as any real leader would do, the Secretary has remained defiant, has mocked this incident, and has tried to label this as a witch hunt—as a witch hunt.

Pete Hegseth has a clear MO: He puts himself first at the expense of our men and women in uniform, and when he screws up, he tries to hide the truth. That is his MO—putting himself first and then hiding the truth.

This new report, just like the boat strikes in the Caribbean, points to a growing pattern: When Hegseth has the chance to make himself look good, look tough, he will talk a big game—try to seem tough. He will go on TV and make big speeches. But when he makes mistakes or faces any adversity, he throws others under the bus without a second thought.

This guy does not belong as Secretary of Defense. In the 10 months on the job, Pete Hegseth has demonstrated clear defects of character that we cannot afford in a Secretary of Defense.

I ask my Republican colleagues: How can we trust this man to keep our troops safe when it is clear that he isn't able to even keep sensitive information safe? How can we trust the