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No. 10

Senate

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

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.

Gracious God, You have blessed us beyond our deserving, enabling our Nation to continue to strive to be the land of the free and the home of the brave. Remind us once more that freedom isn't free.

Inspire our national leaders to be people of diligence, integrity, and prayer. May they claim Your promise in II Chronicles 7:14: that if they humble themselves, pray, repent, and seek You earnestly, You will hear their prayers, forgive their transgressions, and heal our land.

And, Lord, guide the fall 2025 page class in all of their tomorrows.

We pray in Your magnificent 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.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE; ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT; AND INTERIOR AND ENVIRONMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2026—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 6938, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6938) making consolidated appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Thune amendment No. 4208, to change the enactment date.

Thune amendment No. 4209 (to amendment No. 4208), of a perfecting nature.

Thune motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Appropriations, with instructions, amendment No. 4210, to change the enactment date.

Thune amendment No. 4211 (to the instructions (amendment No. 4210)), of a perfecting nature.

Thune amendment No. 4212 (to amendment No. 4211), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The good Senator from Iowa.

MEDICAID

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, Medicaid is intended to provide healthcare for the most vulnerable, including the disabled, the elderly, and low-income women and children.

Recently, the Department of Health and Human Services' inspector general published an audit that found millions of dollars were paid out from State Medicaid Programs to managed care organizations for deceased enrollees.

State Medicaid Programs hire insurance companies in the form of a managed care organization to manage the claims and care of patients. States pay the insurance company a per-member, per-month fee. However, it is the responsibility of each of the 50 States to have an accurate enrollment list,

which you can probably figure out. Otherwise, it will give the insurance company money for a patient who is no longer eligible for Medicaid or, in some cases, no longer alive.

The Health and Human Services' inspector general found that, since 2016, Medicaid agencies improperly paid \$289 million for deceased enrollees. In the inspector general's audit, the audit sampled 100 payments. Of those payments, 49 percent were improperly paid or the dollars were only clawed back after the inspector general raised concerns to the respective State.

The report found that Medicaid agencies continued to pay for deceased enrollees because they didn't have access to death data, failed to check or use the data, or didn't check the data often enough.

The Working Families Tax Cuts law, signed by President Trump on July 4, puts an end to this fraud, waste, and abuse in the Medicaid Program. It establishes solutions to stop sending payments out for deceased enrollees and providers.

I look forward to ensuring that HHS implements this part of the law quickly and effectively so that we don't read more inspector general reports about this issue.

WORKING FAMILIES TAX CUTS ACT

Mr. President, I will just mention the Working Families Tax Cuts law that the President signed on July 4. I think there is a lot of misunderstanding about that law. So I want to say something in addition to Medicaid's wasting of money.

The Working Families Tax Cuts Act prevented a \$4.7 trillion tax increase that would have automatically happened on December 31, when we would have gone back to the old tax laws prior to the 2017 tax bill.

For Iowans, I have seen two different figures. One study showed that that would have meant a \$2,300 increase for families in Iowa if we had not stopped that tax increase. Another study

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



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showed that it saved Iowans \$3,100. Either way, \$2,000 or \$3,000 is money that Iowans could not afford to pay in additional taxes.

But this bill does not include just taxes. It is a very comprehensive piece of legislation that increases support for family farmers. It has energy policy that has brought down gas prices tremendously since President Trump signed the bill. It has improvement in education programs. It has health issues in it. And it has law enforcement issues in it.

I am not sure I have named all of the parts of the bill, but I hope people who are filling out their tax forms in 2026, and who don't have to pay additional taxes, will understand that that tax bill has done a lot for many segments of the economy that the President ought to be complimented for. Those of us in the Senate who voted for it could, likewise, let them know that we were worried about the tax increase.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE
CALENDAR—S. 3627

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. 3627) to require institutions of higher education to disseminate information on the rights of, and accommodations and resources for, pregnant students, 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. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

COMMERCE, JUSTICE, SCIENCE;
ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOP-
MENT; AND INTERIOR AND ENVI-
RONMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT,
2026

VENEZUELA

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today, we expect a vote on a resolution to direct the removal of U.S. forces from hostilities in or against Venezuela, even though—even though—the United States is not currently engaged in hostilities in or against Venezuela. That is right. We have no troops on the ground in Venezuela. We are not currently conducting military operations there. But Democrats are taking up this bill because their anti-Trump hysteria knows no bounds.

Here are the facts. Nicolas Maduro is a narcoterrorist who helped lead the

so-called Cartel of the Suns. He advanced large-scale drug trafficking, armed an illegitimate militia, solicited arms for a terrorist organization, presided over unfree and unfair elections, targeted political opponents, and oversaw the killing of thousands, as a U.N. report outlined, to name just a few—just some of—his crimes. The United States did not recognize him as the legitimate leader of Venezuela. Neither did the European Union. And he was a fugitive of the U.S. justice system.

Back during the first Trump administration, Democrats were calling for the ouster of Maduro and for U.S. assistance in Venezuela and were criticizing the President for not going far enough in opposing the Maduro regime. President Biden raised the reward for information leading to the arrest or conviction of Maduro to \$25 million. But then President Trump directs an isolated Special Forces raid in support of a valid warrant to capture Maduro so that he can be tried for drug crimes, and Democrats are falling all over themselves to criticize the seizure and arrest of this international criminal. Talk about Trump derangement syndrome.

It is funny; I don't remember Democrats trying to tie the President's hands when Democrat Presidents took far more extensive military action that involved thousands of troops or airstrikes over weeks and months in Libya, Bosnia, Serbia, and Haiti. Most recently, in 2024, they locked arms and voted to turn a blind eye toward a monthslong deployment of troops for President Biden's disastrous floating aid pier to Gaza, even while Biden's own Defense Department called it an active war zone and the pier was fired upon twice.

They said those troops were not engaged in hostilities and therefore not subject to the War Powers Resolution, and yet today they are claiming the opposite for a couple hundred troops who were in Venezuela for a matter of mere hours and who have already returned to their bases in the United States or on U.S. Navy ships in international waters. But with President Trump, Democrats are incapable of deciding on the merits. They reflexively oppose anything he does or says, even when it contradicts or is in tension with their own prior opinions.

Whatever the outcome of this process, I trust that the Trump administration will continue to work to combat the terrible scourge of illegal drugs and to keep our Nation and our communities safe.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. President, 2025 was a year of hard legislative work in the U.S. Senate. We passed once-in-a-generation legislation, the Working Families Tax Cut bill, which is currently putting more money in hard-working Americans' pockets. But we didn't just make the headlines legislatively. In addition to a packed legislative schedule, we consid-

ered and confirmed 417 civilian Presidential nominations—more than were confirmed in the first year of President Trump's first term or President Biden's. And while 417 would be an impressive number all on its own, it is particularly remarkable given the historic level of obstruction the President's nominees faced. I said "historic," and I mean historic.

When you look at this term, President Trump remains the only President on record—the only President on record—in American history not to have had a single nominee confirmed by unanimous consent or voice vote. Compare that to Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, who 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. And while Democrats substantially eroded this tradition of bipartisanship during President Trump's first term, both President Trump in his first term and President Biden each had more than half of their nominees confirmed by voice vote. So the Presiding Officer can see what I mean by historic obstruction.

Democrats, of course, attempted to justify themselves by claiming, in the words of the Democratic leader, that "historically bad nominees deserve a historic level of scrutiny." The only problem with that argument, of course, is that a lot of these supposedly historically bad nominees received Democrat votes. So either Democrats were supporting historically bad nominees or this wasn't about historically bad nominees at all, which, of course, it wasn't. The real reason Democrats were dragging out nominations for Assistant Administrator for the Office of Solid Waste and Director of the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement was nothing more than petty politics—because as we see with Venezuela and as we have seen with Presidential nominations, Democrats are incapable of fairness or nuance when it comes to President Trump. They can't deal with the fact that he was elected President, and so they reflexively oppose anything he does or says, even when it is something they might otherwise support.

The virulent partisanship Democrats have injected into our politics is deeply regrettable, but Republicans, of course, have not let it stop us from achieving things for the American people, whether that is passing the Working Families Tax Cut bill or confirming 417 Presidential nominees in the face of historic Democrat obstruction. And we are right back at it this year, confirming four nominees the first week of 2026.

The American people elected President Trump, and Republicans remain committed to ensuring that he has his team in place so that he can do the work the American people elected him to do.