

ORDERS FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2026, THROUGH MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2026

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it recess to then reconvene for pro forma session only, with no business being conducted, on the following dates and times: Friday, January 16, at 8:30 a.m.; Tuesday, January 20, at 10 a.m.; Thursday, January 22, at 11 a.m.; further, that when the Senate recesses on Thursday, January 22, it stand in recess until 3 p.m. on Monday, January 26; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each; finally, that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture motion filed today ripen at 5:30 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand in recess under the previous order under the provisions of S. Res. 585 following the remarks of my colleagues.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

#### SENATE PAGES

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, there is something extraordinary that happens when we are here in the Senate. Every cycle, we see numerous young people who come here to—one might call them indentured servants. They are the pages.

I have come to have a lot of respect for KATIE BRITT, but my work with her every year in getting to know the pages—we have a little lunch—it is something I really treasure.

Senator BRITT could not be here now. The schedule—we were supposed to do this earlier in the afternoon. But I want the pages to know that I think she is pretty broken-hearted that she can't be on the floor right now.

She and I together worked to judge the poetry competition. She was very disappointed that she could not be here to read the successful poems. But even more so, I think what she really wanted to do was to express her gratitude to this extraordinary group of young people who are assembled on the Senate floor before us.

So what I want to do is in two parts, with the latitude of the Chair, I am going to talk about the poetry competition and then share some parting words with the pages.

First, they are already annoying me—as they often do—because I cannot

see you guys, all. So the pages who are sitting down and cannot eyeball me, please join the other pages who are standing so we can have a better look. I want to look into your eyes just in case my harsh words make any of you cry.

That is much better. That is much better.

Mr. President, we had a poetry competition. I want you to know this poetry competition was different than all the other poetry competitions we have had with pages. First of all, they were recalcitrant. Very few of them even participated, to begin.

So we did something we never, ever did before. We extended the deadline, and then I bullied and badgered—I admit this on the Senate floor. I bullied and badgered some high school students into complying with the poetry competition, and we got a large number of poems, a large number of participation from the pages.

I am proud, proud of your page participation that has lasted until today.

Now, what I did not expect is for their poems to be so good. I was actually literally shocked. I look at you all, and I just don't expect greatness. But your poems were exceptional. I literally texted Senator BRITT in agony.

I was like, how do we decide on which poems to choose, because in past page classes—I hope they are listening out there in the world. They are just so top class. So it was very difficult.

Katie and I went back and forth. We did a lot of consternation, and we came up with the winners.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all the page poems be—I have never done this before—but all the page poems that were written this time—all of you that wrote poems should be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD with their names because I did not see names. They were all anonymous to me. I don't know which pages they were. I don't know if they were Republican or Democrat. I don't know if they were the pages that told me bad jokes or the pages that told me really bad jokes because there were really just two categories in this class.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

BY LILLIANA GRINBERG

On the rostrum's step I take my place,  
Except my pins and shoes, in navy monochrome.

From the chamber I move with an awestruck face

Through marble halls, the nation's home.

I carry notes through the aisles,

Or on the rostrum I stay put.

I learn that power walks in measured miles  
And history hums softly underfoot

Long hours teach me how to stand so still,

To remain unphased as voices rise and clash.

In the chaos I feel a chill;

This will be over in but a flash.

Here is where I have served, and where I see  
The making of the world that is, and the  
world that ought to be.

BY LILLIANA GRINBERG

“Polarization at an all-time high,”

The newspapers report, day after day.  
My time here has shown me it's not a lie;  
I have seen it in every no and yeah.

This is no longer the way things will go,  
For our generation will pave the way.  
We are through waiting until tomorrow,  
This is our duty; we'll do it today.

The Pages of fall twenty-twenty-five  
Discuss, argue, debate and disagree,  
Our voices echoing with every strive  
To from one another's perspective see.

My fellow Pages across the aisle:  
Let our divide be only by miles.

BY LILLIANA GRINBERG

It's a new day, here in the Capitol:  
Prayer and pledge and now hear the gavel.  
Under these gilded ceilings, then and now  
interweave;

It's where we see what is, and what ought to be.

Joking through the tired and laughing  
through the stress;

Praying that each scramble will turn into  
success;

Voting and speeches and printing amend-  
ments,

Debates and objections and unanimous con-  
sensus.

We leave this world made of marble and to  
Webster Hall we return;

Where our bodies may rest, but our minds  
will still churn.

We all have no clue what tomorrow will  
bring;

Best and brightest, to this place we will  
cling.

We will cling to the chamber, and the flag on  
its staff.

We will cling to this group, every lesson and  
laugh.

THE SHOES OF THE SENATE

BY STEPHEN JIANG

Gliding across the tiled floors are a hundred  
pairs

Of shoes like loafers and running kicks, we  
discern

From our vantage, but hidden when C-SPAN  
airs

Behold the resolute heels of Senator Black-  
burn!

They've traveled here from Alabama's water-  
falls

Tracking dust from Jersey streets onto the  
blue rugs

Long ago, Webster's boots echoed across  
these halls

Stepping over many tobacco spittoon jugs.

Do I belong here? Could I fill these sacred  
shoes?

Those grand wooden doors swung open for  
you and me

Step in, fear not the faces you've seen on the  
news

When in doubt, we stay grounded on our own  
two feet

We'll push ahead, one foot in front of an-  
other

Across the aisle. . .there's a lot to discover.

O SENATE

BY JACE MILES

Shall I compare thee to a session day?

Divided it is and together they come,

A place vibrant and unique in every way.

Jacks of all trades but mastered by one.

They call it antediluvian,

Some say it is great.

I will admit it is not arcadian,

Because everyone goes to bed pretty late.

To the parliamentarians, clerks, and Sen-  
ator's prowess,

To the Pages and doorkeepers whose faces  
beam.

In the Senate no one engages in Churlish-  
ness,

Because then they would break Rule XIX.  
The Senate has been living for centuries,  
Alive by following our framers' themes.

BY HUNTER COY

Sun rises on the Capitol dome  
Suddenly I don't feel so far from home  
I drove 16 hours to be here  
Becoming a Senate page meant leaving ev-  
erything I held dear.  
30 strangers came together  
Little in common nothing to tether  
Finding comfort in each other  
My roommate soon became my brother.  
Each day our bonds were tested  
Crossing party lines that couldn't be bested  
Making memories on the Senate floor  
Forming bonds that last evermore.  
Becoming a Senate page was never a safe bet  
Looking at these strangers, I'm so glad we  
met.

THE PAGE'S PLEDGE (AND OTHER SENATE  
CONFESSIONS)

BY MAUREEN BAI

I pledge allegiance to the flag,  
And to the republic—it's important, not a  
drag  
For which it stands, through late-night  
votes,  
And endless runs to S-123, boy I sure do  
mope.  
Senator Booker, oh so cool,  
You speak and legislate like you're getting  
A's in school.  
Senator Britt, you carried 66 out of 67 coun-  
ties, clearly many favored you to be  
strong  
While we pages sprint through halls, trying  
not to get in trouble with no bond  
Late nights are long, senators congregate  
like they're in frats  
While the Parliamentarian and Journal  
Clerk chat.  
And before you I stand, in my shoes,  
Dodging my cloakrooms' "urgent" news.  
I may not be Goldilocks, but through your  
heated debates  
I keep your water and lectern coming—al-  
ways just right.

BY EMMA ROSS

I came from quiet roads and open air,  
Where every sunset felt like it knew me.  
But here, the marble glitters cold and bare,  
And I feel lost in all this history.  
These crowded halls move faster than my  
breath,  
Each rushing step reminding me I'm new;  
Some days my confidence feels close to  
death,  
And I miss skies my hometown once let  
through  
I smile, I learn, I try to stand up tall,  
But still my heart aches for familiar ground.  
A porchlight glow, a voice I knew to call,  
A place where I was seen, not just around.  
Yet though I ache, I stay, because I know  
Great dreams are born from seeds we bravely  
sow

BY EMMA ROSS

I dreamed of shaping laws before I came,  
A distant vision held in hopeful hands;  
But here, where marble echoes history name,  
My quiet wish grows fierce with each com-  
mand.  
These halls hum with decisions yet to be,  
With voices crafting futures line by line;  
And as I watch, a fire awakens me,  
A calling clearer now than any sign.  
To serve, to lead, to stand where choices  
rise,  
To guide the course that others will pursue.  
The page life opens my eager eyes,  
Revealing paths I once but faintly knew.  
What once was dream now feels like destiny,  
This place, this work, shapes who I'm meant  
to be.

BY EMMA ROSS

Each dawn I cross beneath the domed white  
light,  
Its columns towering like a nations pride;  
And every step still fills me with delight,  
As if I walk where history resides,  
I watch the chambers stir before debate.  
Hear quiet murmurs blossom into law;  
The smallest motions shape a whole state's  
fate,  
And I, a page, stand humbled by the awe.  
The shuffle of the papers, pens, and plans,  
The whispered deals that ripple through the  
floor.  
I glimpse the power held in human hands,  
The careful craft of those who came before.  
In every vote, in every echoed call,  
I learn how fragile dreams can guide us all.

BY LILLIANA GRINBERG

Patterns cover the Senate floor:  
The carpets, the ceilings, the frames of each  
door.  
They witnessed the history contained by  
these walls,  
They've heard words that echoed through  
these hallowed halls.  
Patterns of parties and polarization,  
Patterns of freedom and of liberation.  
Phrygian caps and spirals abound:  
Patterns that decorate freedom's play-  
ground.  
From this institution they've led revolu-  
tions,  
They've made resolutions to fight persecu-  
tion;  
But on these same grounds, they've warred  
and they've hated,  
In this same chamber, they've marred what  
was sacred.

Now it has been two-hundred fifty years,  
Since the nation was created from their  
blood, sweat, and tears.  
With every maiden speech and each inau-  
guration,  
I feel my hope grow for the new generation.  
Yes, this place is built on tradition,  
It feeds on its servants' relentless ambition.  
But the marble is malleable, unlike the gold  
throne;  
And progress is the practice to which we are  
prone.  
Though the history of every divide here still  
stands,  
Such fissures are resolved with each shake of  
hands.  
Slowly but surely, little by little,  
They strengthen the bonds that were once  
thought so brittle.  
If I could peel back the wallpaper here,  
Would I hear Clay debate, would Webster ap-  
pear?  
Maybe I could find some anchor or tether;  
Something to hold us through this stormy  
weather.  
Could I find a key, or a code of some kind,  
To break down our limits, to untie each  
bind?  
Maybe I'd recover some halcyon age,  
Where the land of the free is the home of the  
brave.

THE SONG THEY LEFT US

BY ADDISON NORRIS

I hear their boots  
I feel their sound—  
Shots ring out  
and haunt the ground  
I hear their boots,  
Their rhythm cries,  
I see the fear  
Inside their eyes  
I hear their boots,  
A melancholy song.  
I feel the cold  
And shake along  
The wind remembers  
The whistle of lead

The sharp, wet gasp  
Of the newly dead  
The earth still keeps  
Their trembling weight—  
Young shoulders bowed  
Under old men's fate  
Gunfire—  
A savage conductor's hand—  
Wrote the score  
No one could stand  
Yet they still marched,  
However long,  
Stitched skin to soil  
To finish the song  
And I hear it now—  
The song on which America stands—  
Carried by voices  
Of terrified men  
Defending a land  
They hoped would hold  
The peace they'd never  
Get to know  
Their boots beat out  
A brutal hymn,  
A prayer half-screamed  
From dust and limb  
Each step a bargain  
Each breath a plea  
Each heartbeat breaking  
So ours could be free  
And so here we stand  
In the freedom they won—  
A gift paid in blood  
Not easily sung  
They marched in their boots,  
Their head, they held strong  
And we live,  
And we breathe,  
In the echo of that song

BY ADDISON NORRIS

In the beginning,  
God created the heavens and the earth.  
He looked upon His work and said,  
It is good.  
But is it really good  
when we're facing wars,  
when families are waiting  
for unopened doors?  
Is it really good  
when it doesn't go my way,  
when I've lost my job,  
had a horrible day?  
Is it good  
when I can't see the light,  
when there's no clear way out—  
is it good, is it right  
Is He good?  
Is God really there  
when there's no food on the table?  
Does God truly care?  
Yes—He is good,  
though the night feels long,  
though prayers fall heavy  
and the silence feels strong.  
Because goodness was never  
the absence of pain;  
it was God stepping into it,  
bearing the weight, wearing the stain.  
Good looked like a manger,  
not a throne dressed in gold.  
Good looked like mercy  
when the world had grown cold.  
Good had dirt on His hands,  
tears in His eyes,  
a cross on His shoulders,  
Love choosing sacrifice.  
He is good not because  
life bends to our will,  
but because He stays close  
when everything is still.  
When the job is gone,  
when the cupboard is bare,  
when all we have left  
is a whispered prayer—  
He is there.  
Good is the Shepherd  
who walks through the valley,

not shouting directions  
but walking it with me.  
Good is the promise  
that night doesn't win,  
that Sunday still comes  
after Friday's grim.  
So yes, He is good—  
not loud, not rushed, not proved in a day—  
but faithful, and near,  
and already making a way.

## MOMENTS OF SILENCE

BY LUCAS HOGAN

A gunman enters the school planning to  
cause violence  
Students try to pretend they aren't there;  
they pack up their things  
They hold their breath; the school is in a  
moment of silence  
As hard as they tried, new angels still gained  
untimely wings  
At the funerals, they send thoughts and  
prayers to victims of the violence  
Shell-shocked survivors embrace one an-  
other and try to move on  
The next day at school, the victims are hon-  
ored with a moment of silence  
It's impossible for anyone to keep going—  
their friends are gone  
Politicians give stentorian remarks on stage  
denouncing the violence  
Afterwards, they hand off the microphone  
and scurry off to the next speech  
There are no votes on any policies; nothing  
but moments of silence  
Children still march into the place where  
survival is a reach  
There's been enough inaction. There's been  
enough waiting. There's been enough  
sorrow.  
Only moments of silence leaves more chil-  
dren who yearn for tomorrow

BY CECILIA BLEYER

Throughout the vast halls of the Senate,  
Cycles of pages never relent  
Here where history is created  
and notable acts are legislated  
Twenty-eight of us in navy suits  
See Senators in heels and boots  
We observe what many may never see  
Behind the scenes of liberty  
Even though this class' end is near,  
We are grateful for our fall term here  
Throughout votes, runs and UC requests,  
Chaplain Doctor Black makes sure we're  
blessed

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, you will enter all the page poems because they are so good. So for the rest of time, it will be noted in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, in the RECORD of this august body. These poems will be in the RECORD with my comments that they are great poetry, even though you tell very bad jokes. That is now in the RECORD forever.

But we had to choose. There must be winners. I am very happy that we—KATIE and I—through much grueling work, chose some winners. So there are three categories I am going to give you.

There is one honorable mention. There is another one that I chose myself, taking the privilege of being here and present on the floor. Please don't tell Senator BRITT. And then the two that garnered in this body the bipartisan support—these are the two ultimate winners that got both KATIE and me.

So here is the first honorable mention, then the one that really truly moved me, and then the one the two of us agreed on.

First, the honorable mention.

Where is Lilliana Grinberg?

Lilliana, you have been, in so many ways, so kind. I did not know this was your poem until moments ago.

Now that I know it is yours, I am not going to read it. No, I am joking. Here we go. Let's see if you impress the good Senator from Ohio.

It's a new day, here in the Capitol:

Prayer and pledge and now hear the gavel.  
Under these gilded ceilings, then and now interweave;

It's where we see what is, and what ought to be.

Joking through the tired and laughing through the stress;

Praying that each scramble will turn into success;

Voting and speeches and printing amend-ments,

Debates and objections and unanimous consensus.

We leave this world made of marble and to Webster Hall we return;

Where our bodies may rest, but our minds will still churn.

We all have no clue what tomorrow will bring;

Best and brightest, to this place we will cling.

We will cling to the chamber, and the flag and its staff.

We will cling to this group, every lesson and laugh.

Thank you very much. Snapping in the Chamber is against the rules, but you guys are leaving tomorrow anyway. So break some rules.

All right. This next poem I read, and more than one person who read this poem agreed with me. We got very emotional. It was brave and courageous, like some of the other poems I read. So this is a poem unlike any I have ever read from the pages. I am going to read it now. Then I will get to the two Britt-Booker wins.

But this poem is by Lucas Hogan.

Where is Lucas?

Lucas, all I have to say is wow. I am going to read it.

The poem is entitled "Moments of Silence"

A gunman enters the school planning to cause violence

Students try to pretend they aren't there; they pack up their things

They hold their breath; the school is in a moment of silence

As hard as they tried, new angels still gained untimely wings

At the funerals, they send thoughts and prayers to victims of the violence

Shell-shocked survivors embrace one another and try to move on

The next day at school, the victims are honored with a moment of silence

It is impossible for anyone to keep going— their friends are gone

Politicians give stentorian remarks on stage denouncing the violence

Afterwards, they hand off the microphone and scurry off to the next speech

There are no votes on any policies; nothing but moments of silence

Children still march into the place where survival is a reach

There's been enough inaction. There's been enough waiting. There's been enough sorrow.

Only moments of silence leaves more children who yearn for tomorrow

Very, very powerful.

Now, the Britt-Booker choices for the highest senatorial honor given to a teenager anywhere ever. I guess I am exaggerating—but what the heck. Who knows.

Two that I shall read, and first is by Addison Norris—oh, my gosh.

Addison, you are like a Senator. You are very long-winded in your poetry writing. But it is beautiful, nonetheless.

In the beginning,

God created the heavens and the earth.

He looked upon His work and said, It is good.

But is it really good when we're facing wars, when families are waiting for unopened doors?

Is it really good when it doesn't go my way, when I've lost my job, had a horrible day?

Is it good when I can't see the light when there's no clear way out— is it good, is it right? Is He good?

Is God really there when there's no food on the table? Does God truly care?

Yes—He is good, though the night feels long, though prayers fall heavy and the silence feels strong.

Because goodness was never the absence of pain; it was God stepping into it, bearing the weight, wearing the stain.

Good looked like a manger, not a throne dressed in gold. Good looked like mercy when the world had grown cold.

Good had dirt on His hands, tears in His eyes, a cross on His shoulders, love choosing sacrifice.

He is good not because life bends to our will, but because He stays close when everything is still.

When the job is gone, when the cupboard is bare, when all we have left is a whispered prayer— He is there.

Good is the Shepherd who walks through the valley, not shouting directions but walking it with me.

Good is the promise that night doesn't win, that Sunday still comes after Friday's grim. So yes, He is good— not loud, not rushed, not proved in a day— but faithful, and near, and already making a way.

Fantastic.

The last page poem—prodigiously, purposefully, powerfully plain—I said less alliteration. I lied. Here is the last page poem. I do want to say, there was another poem—I didn't even ask whose name it was—that heralded KATIE BRITT and me. I admired the obsequious nature of that poem. The sycophantic excellence was powerful. I mean, to drop my name into the poem, I was weak. I wanted to choose the person who praised me, but I felt like I wouldn't get away with it before the Presiding Officer. He might rule XIX me or something like that.

So here is the final bipartisan poem that gets our most highest honor here in the Senate, and it comes from Emma Ross.

Emma.

You can snap for Emma before the poem, but shouldn't you wait to hear what she wrote first? Gosh, premature "snap-ation" is a bad thing.

Here we go. From Emma Ross.

I came from quiet roads and open air,  
Where every sunset felt like it knew me.  
But here, the marble glitters cold and bare,  
And I feel lost in all this history.  
These crowded halls move faster than my breath,

Each rushing step reminding me I'm new;  
Some days my confidence feels close to death,  
And I miss skies my hometown once let through

I smile, I learn, I try to stand up tall,  
But still my heart aches for familiar ground.

A porchlight glow, a voice I knew to call  
A place where I was seen, not just around  
Yet though I ache, I stay, because I know  
Great dreams are born from seeds we bravely sow.

I am impressed with this class. I have to say, as much as I tried to diss you and disrespect you, you guys showed such specialness, I will never forget this page class.

So I am going to do two things. One, as the Presiding Officer knows that you lead by example, so, of course, I wrote you a poem, and I am going to share it.

Then I will say some final words, and I will let the Presiding Officer close the Senate for the recess.

So, first, a poem before my final words. This is a Booker original, written hastily over the last 24 hours. You can do things at the last minute and still make it in life. I think I am a testimony to that. You can procrastinate. But I actually wrote this after reading through your poems a second time.

You inspired me, so here is the Senate page poem dedicated to you all.

One hundred Senators—confident, accomplished, successful

Elected leaders projecting excellence in times so stressful.

They may seem like giants and you may feel a bit small.

But, dear God, don't buy it—don't believe that at all.

For every Senator you hear roar on this hallowed floor,

There are shadows, stumbles, wounds—times they collapsed and wept before.

You witness speeches, polished, practiced, refined.

What you don't see are the staffs who write drafts, fix flaws, and make sure we arrive on time.

And if we sound wise—sagacious on camera or TV shows—

The true heft we carry wasn't born from our highs,

But was forged through our lows.

So dear Pages, a truth not often shared in this place,

To the young people who carried our water and opened our doors with such grace:

Greatness isn't achieved when you reach the highest ground.

Greatness is forged when you get knocked down and despite it all, rise, and rebound.

You may have become curious how someone climbed so far, they must be better than

we are. But if you want to know the real story, perhaps the best question to ask us is: Tell me about your scars?

But maybe this is a story you already know so well . . .

Because these last months of your life here in the Senate . . .

You all went through hell.

You worked humbling, demanding jobs full-time,

Then carried a full course load—every class, so much work assigned.

And what moved me most—what I admire in you—is that somehow, still, you became one of the kindest Page classes I have ever known or knew.

Maybe that's the lesson you offer us today: That despite the world's pressure, its chaos and fray,

You met stress, struggle, exhaustion, and so much, too much labor—

Yet you still lived the most sacred refrain of all:

To love your neighbor.

I say this because you've impressed me, you really have, every single day.

Look, your jokes really sucked, but your kindness was your way . . .

So I leave you now with this final reminder: God, this world needs to become a lot kinder.

So, when angry, when joyful, when weary or mad.

When soaring with hope, or aching and sad.

When lost, when certain, or when unsure of your way—

When life makes no sense at the end of the day—

Choose again. Decide again.

Make it your very spine:

Resolve, in all moments, to always be more kind.

Because in my life the best people I've ever met—without question, what has been and is their principle?

It is that they center their lives on cultivating a kindness, that is invincible.

Very true. You guys disappointed me time and time again. From the day you arrived, I asked for jokes. I haven't asked much. I asked you guys just to be funny, and you are not. You are really going to have to work on that in life. I mean, you have got to have a sense of humor.

But what you lacked in humor, I was blown away by just how good people you are, and this world is yearning for more good people.

You have seen this place split along the aisle. You have seen the tribalism grow in our country. You are going to return to your phones very soon, which I think this is probably going to be looked back upon as one of your better periods when you weren't scrolling and weren't doing social media. In many ways, you were liberated from that toxin, which feeds in our society so much hate and so much disagreement.

These are corporations actually that feed us through their algorithms things that make us more enraged on each other. If there is any great threat to America, it is no other country. They can't beat us tank for tank or warship for warship. The greatest threat to our country isn't from without, it is from within. In fact, you will study history, and if you look at the decline of nations, it has not necessarily been from external threats. From the Roman Empire to the Soviet Union, they fall be-

cause of internal corruption and failing to live up to their virtues.

If there is any virtue that you all have been amidst every single day for America to make us successful, it is the one over the Presiding Officer's head. It is "E pluribus unum."

But I was blown away in this session. You heard the speech. One of my colleagues researched where that speech came from. I never thought of the origins of "E pluribus unum." I have been saying that phrase from a dead language. And he found the origins of it from a great philosopher that is actually the end of a sentence. The sentence talks about that value that you all showed me through your kindness. Whether it was in the train or passing in the hallway, you all seem to always have a smile, a generous word. Even on the days you were haggard and weary, "E pluribus unum"—the beginning of that sentence is, if we are to be a great people, we must love one another, we must love our neighbors and become one out of many. That is the secret.

So if there is any parting word I can give you on behalf of Katie and myself, who have forged a friendship in this place—I have come to love and respect her deeper because I see her struggle in the most important way. The greatest struggles in our lives are not necessarily the next career ladder we are going to grab; the greatest struggle in life is often just to manifest every day, to show up every day and evidence the most important virtues in our lives. And I think of no greater virtue than to love one another.

So I will end by telling you a short story about my scars, about times I have failed, because the truth of the matter is, the best lessons I have been gifted have been through the most difficult times. You guys just went through difficult times, and I hope you look back and say that there was something about the hardship and the challenge that forged something with you that you will take with you for the rest of your life, that you look back at this page experience and value and remember two things: One is the friends you made, and the other is the grit that you gained to be the best version of yourself to show up.

Whatever you do, whatever you do, I hope you do like I have seen you do in this place, is just litter this world with small acts of kindness, decency, and love.

So the embarrassing story, which I hesitate to tell before the Presiding Officer—it might show up in my campaign this year in ads used against me. So I hope I can have a public promise that you won't use this story against me, sir. Is that without objection?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection.

Mr. BOOKER. Thank you very much, sir.

So three blocks from my home in Newark, NJ, is this place—you guys are from all over the country. I don't know if you have this place, but three blocks

from my home is this place called McDonald's.

Now, I have a guy who has driven me since I was a mayor. He was on my protective detail. He was a detective in the Newark Police Department. His name is Kevin Batts. From 2006 until now, he has been driving me around. And we have such a great friendship. We know each other so well that when I jump in the back of the car, I am often doing work, pounding away on texts, on the phone, so we don't even have to talk. He has learned to read my mind. Telepathic powers have emerged between us.

So as we are driving past that McDonald's, he looks in the rearview mirror and immediately turns into the drive-through. He looked at me and read my mind. Maybe he didn't read my mind; he just saw weakness in my soul. I needed to have some McDonald's french fries.

Now, at this point in my life when this story takes place, I was not a plant-based man. I did not know that McDonald's to this day—this is not libelous—they soak their french fries in some kind of beef product. I don't know what it is. But still I love McDonald's french fries. I get two large french fries.

Now we are driving out of the drive-through, and I see a guy in a trash can rooting around, and I don't say a word. Kevin knows me. I look in the rearview mirror, our eyes meet, and he immediately stops the car. I roll down the window. He knows that I am going to want to try to see what is going on here three blocks from my home. I am trying to live my values.

I say, "Hey man, you all right?" and he sort of waves me off. But, immediately, I realized my tone wasn't right. This is a man with equal dignity, God's creation made in God's image, and I said—my words weren't respectful enough.

So I lowered my tone, and I said: Excuse me, sir. I am sorry to bother you, but do you need anything?

He turns around and looks at me, and he goes: I am hungry.

Now, I have talked to a lot of you. A lot of different faiths. We have a lot of different faiths for Senators here. It is more diverse than it has ever been. But in my faith, I think Jesus said something like, if you have two McDonald's french fries and your neighbor has no McDonald's french fries—I think it was the sermon on the Mount. Yes. The Parliamentarian can fact-check that. I think that is what the Bible said. But if I have two McDonald's french fries and my neighbor has none, I think Jesus said: Give one of your McDonald's french fries.

So I reach into my bag, and I hand the man one of my treasures. I mean, before that, I was holding them like that movie, "The Lord of the Rings." My precious. My precious. But now I go into my bag, and I hand him one of my fries. He takes the fries. He seems happy. I feel satisfied that I showed up

in that moment. And he looks at me, grateful, steps away from the car, and then steps back to the car, and he goes: Excuse me. One more thing. Do you have any socks?

Now, all of us who have done any voluntary work in homeless shelters or worked with folks who are experiencing homelessness, you know if he is asking, there must be an urgent need for him. So I felt bad. I sort of vainly looked in my car left and right. I don't carry extra socks in my car.

I said: No, sir. I am sorry, I don't have socks.

He shook his head and stepped back and raised the fries to me like saying: Cheers. Thanks for the fries.

I whipped my head around, looked in the rearview mirror, giving him all the telepathy I could. I need to get home. I need to turn on the British baking show—I should say the American baking show, American baking shows. And there is nothing worse than cold McDonald's french fries. But Kevin doesn't move the car. I stare harder—more telepathy. Move the car. He doesn't move the car.

Suddenly, what he does is he puts the car in park, and he reaches between the steering wheel and his legs, kicks off his shoes, and takes off the socks he is wearing. He folds them as neat as he can and offers them up to the man, who then takes the socks like he just received a bar of gold and steps away from the car and says: Thank you.

I am a U.S. Senator, and I talk about kindness all the time, but in that moment, I failed to use my moral imagination to see how I could show up. I am three blocks from my house. I have socks in my drawer. Some of them, I don't even wear anymore. But I didn't think about taking off my socks.

Pages, you all are special. I tell you, I really have come to have a lot of affection for you. I am going to miss you. This place is going to miss you. I hope if I see you out and about, you don't pretend like you don't know me and I can tell you what an honor it was that we served together in the U.S. Senate.

I think I speak for 99 other people in telling you how grateful we are.

If there is one request I have, it is to just remind you that our Founders knew about this country, that we needed improvement. They wanted this in every generation of us to make this a more perfect Union. If I could prescribe one great need our country has, it is you. This country needs your heart and your spirit; it needs your brilliance and ideas; it needs your grit and hard work; but most of all, it needs you to be kind. Those seeds are in you. I see it.

I hope that as you go out into the world and encounter challenges and stresses, that you can always show up with your heart and your kindness and your love. And that perhaps you remember better than I do that sometimes in life, you got to take off your socks.

RECESS UNTIL 8:30 A.M.  
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the provision of S. Res. 585, the Senate stands in recess until 8:30 a.m. on Friday, January 16, and does so as a further mark of respect to the late Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a former Senator from the State of Colorado.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 4:59 p.m., recessed until Friday, January 16, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

## NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

### IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

#### To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. BRIAN W. GIBSON

### IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

#### To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. B. MARK PYE

### IN THE MARINE CORPS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

#### To be lieutenant general

LT. GEN. CALVERT L. WORTH, JR.  
LT. GEN. ROBERT C. FULFORD  
LT. GEN. JAMES H. ADAMS III  
LT. GEN. MELVIN G. CARTER  
LT. GEN. ANDREW M. NIEBEL  
LT. GEN. BENJAMIN T. WATSON  
LT. GEN. JOSEPH A. MATOS III

### IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12211:

#### To be major general

BRIG. GEN. DEREK L. ADAMS  
BRIG. GEN. JAIME A. AREIZAGA  
BRIG. GEN. MATTHEW M. BACON  
BRIG. GEN. JONATHAN P. BEDDALL  
BRIG. GEN. MATTHEW P. BELLPUSS  
BRIG. GEN. LAVETTA L. BENNETT  
BRIG. GEN. LELAND D. BLANCHARD II  
BRIG. GEN. TIMOTHY M. BROWER  
BRIG. GEN. MARLENA A. DECELLE  
BRIG. GEN. MICHAEL D. EVANS  
BRIG. GEN. TOD M. PENNER  
BRIG. GEN. SEAN M. FLYNN  
BRIG. GEN. MICHAEL M. GREER  
BRIG. GEN. JAMES B. HAYNIE  
BRIG. GEN. MURRAY E. HOLT II  
BRIG. GEN. MICHAEL A. IZZO  
BRIG. GEN. DAVID L. KAUFFMAN  
BRIG. GEN. MICHAEL J. LIESMANN  
BRIG. GEN. JUSTIN L. MANN  
BRIG. GEN. WILLIAM F. MCCLINTOCK  
BRIG. GEN. CRISTINA MOORE  
BRIG. GEN. CHARLES W. MORRISON  
BRIG. GEN. ROBERT J. PAYNE  
BRIG. GEN. TRACEY L. POIRIER  
BRIG. GEN. ERIC J. RILEY  
BRIG. GEN. CHRISTOPHER J. SAMULSKI  
BRIG. GEN. MICHAEL T. SCATES  
BRIG. GEN. JEFFERY M. SMITH  
BRIG. GEN. MATTHEW J. STRUB  
BRIG. GEN. WILLIAM E. TEMPLE V  
BRIG. GEN. KENDRICK D. TRAYLOR  
BRIG. GEN. TANYA R. TROUT  
BRIG. GEN. DANIEL R. WATERS  
BRIG. GEN. BRIAN F. WERTZLER  
BRIG. GEN. MATTHEW S. WOODRUFF

THE FOLLOWING NAMED ARMY NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12211:

#### To be major general

BRIG. GEN. DIANE L. DUNN

### IN THE MARINE CORPS

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS TO THE GRADE