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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.

Gracious and almighty God, source of all wisdom, righteousness, and truth, we come before You with humble hearts, acknowledging our need for Your guidance. Lord, we pray for the Members of this legislative body. Grant them wisdom to discern what is right, courage to do what is just, and humility to seek Your direction in every decision. Inspire them to think Your thoughts, listen for Your guidance, and faithfully serve the people in their care. Remind them that true strength and lasting hope are found in Your sovereign power. Sustain them in Your mighty hand. Bless them with unity, integrity, and compassion. Lord, guide their work for the good of our Nation and the well-being of all people.

We ask these things in Your holy and all-knowing 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. ARMSTRONG). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The Senator from Iowa.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, as the Senate and House are currently

working on the fiscal year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act, it is important—very important—that Congress pass this bill. We need a very strong and capable military, and we need to hold the Pentagon accountable for taxpayer dollars.

For 240 years, the No. 1 responsibility of the Federal Government has been national security. A nonnegotiable tenet of America's national security is "peace through strength." In preventing war, a strong Department of War is also an instrument of peace.

So, to achieve peace through strength, we must invest in our Nation's defense and modernize military capabilities to be best prepared for any threat. Our military ought to be strong enough to deter any aggressor. We have learned from our history that preventing conflicts is less costly and spares more lives.

I support the \$1.1 trillion authorization put forth by our Senate Armed Services Committee. The fiscal year 2027 Defense bill supports our servicemembers, boosts our national industrial defense base and allows for historic investment in our national security.

This legislation also includes important provisions that I back to hold defense contractors accountable. This includes a requirement that contractors provide notification when the price of a product or service increases beyond a predetermined threshold.

While our investments in defense increase, ensuring accountability and fiscal responsibility is very paramount. Companies that work for the government should not be ripping the taxpayers off.

I am also pleased that a provision I worked on is included in the bill that reinforces the notion that Russia's aggression toward Ukraine is unacceptable. This provision prohibits funds being used to recognize Russia's control over any Ukrainian territory that has been forcibly seized by Russia.

I have offered several amendments to this Defense bill to combat crime and support law enforcement, strengthen security provisions and cooperation in the Baltics, and condemn very strongly Russia's abduction of Ukrainian children, which has been in the amounts of tens of thousands of children.

If the Defense bill is passed this year, it will be the 66th consecutive year that Congress has passed this important annual Defense legislation. So I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate to pass a Defense bill that strengthens our national security and best supports our military readiness.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR EN BLOC

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I understand that there are four bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 4952) to combat fraud in Federal programs, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 2347) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income any damages, other than punitive

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



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damages, received on account of any sexual acts or sexual contact.

A bill (H.R. 5334) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow early childhood educators to take the educator expense deduction, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 8469) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2027, and for other purposes.

Mr. THUNE. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV.

SWEARING IN OF DARLINE GRAHAM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, before I begin my remarks this morning, I want to offer a word of welcome to the new Senator from South Carolina.

Later today, we will swear in DARLINE GRAHAM to fill the seat of her brother and our friend Lindsey Graham. I know DARLINE will carry on Lindsey's tireless service for South Carolina, and I look forward to serving with her.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, like many of us, I represent a State with a rich heritage of military service, and South Dakota continues to punch above its weight in our Armed Forces.

Our National Guard is frequently called up for critical deployments at home and around the world, and Ellsworth Air Force Base is a key asset to our national defense. In fact, today Ellsworth is the largest construction site in the Air Force as it prepares to host the first B-21 bombers next year.

During the recent State work period, I was glad to welcome Air Force Secretary Troy Meink—a South Dakota native—to Ellsworth. We met with the base leadership and some of the airmen stationed there, and we saw the progress the base is making as it prepares for its important new mission.

Whether responding to a natural disaster at home or fighting our enemies abroad, the men and women in America's Armed Forces stand ready to answer the call.

They are our most important national security asset, and we have an obligation here in Congress to ensure that they have everything they need for whatever the mission may be. I know Senators on both sides of the aisle take that obligation seriously, and we must.

As I have said so often before, if you don't get national security right, the rest is just conversation.

If we don't make national security a priority here, we run the risk that Americans serving in uniform won't have what they need when they need it.

That is why the National Defense Authorization Act is one of the most important bills that we do each year. It is the bill that helps ensure our military is ready today and prepared for tomorrow, and I am proud that our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee—with the leadership of Chairman WICKER and Ranking Member REED—have reported out a strong National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2027.

For the 66th year in a row, the Armed Services Committee has produced a bipartisan NDAA. And later today, we are going to have a vote to proceed to this important bill.

We have had regular reminders over the last few years that we live in a dangerous world, that America still has enemies—enemies that want to attack us, our allies, and our interests. We have seen too how quickly warfare evolves in this day and age.

This year's NDAA will not only help ensure that America can keep pace with those challenges but also that we can outpace our adversaries.

It puts a heavy emphasis on unmanned systems, especially drones and counterdrone measures. It also continues shipbuilding efforts to strengthen our naval fleet.

As for our airpower, this year's bill will help ensure we maintain a force of at least 1,800 fighters and supports the new B-21 long-range strategic bomber.

There is a lot I could talk about in this bill—from investing in our nuclear deterrent to supporting munitions production—but I will mention just two more important aspects of this year's bill.

First, it builds on efforts in last year's NDAA to reform defense acquisition. That includes allowing multiyear procurement contracts that allow the Pentagon to do business more efficiently with greater predictability and savings for taxpayers.

I need to mention what this bill does for the men and women serving our country and their families who serve alongside them. This year's NDAA supports a 3.6 percent pay raise for our troops, and it invests in a number of quality-of-life improvements for them and their families: investments in education, housing, healthcare, and childcare.

Our colleagues on the Armed Services Committee have put forward a strong bill—a strong bill for our national security and for the men and women who defend our Nation. It is my hope that we will be able to pass this bill out of the Senate soon and begin the process of working with our counterparts in the House and with the White House on a final bill.

Republicans are ready to go. The question is: How will Democrats vote today? Are there enough Democrat Senators who support moving forward with a bipartisan—bipartisan—defense bill?

I see no reason that there shouldn't be. But then again, Democrats have al-

lowed the politics of obstruction to determine so many of their actions for the last year and a half.

I certainly hope that Democrats won't now put politics ahead of support for our men and women in uniform, but that is up to them.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive 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.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, how long will Republicans let Trump's secret police continue to sow chaos and violence in our American streets?

For the second time in less than a week, ICE agents fatally shot someone, first in Texas and again in Maine yesterday.

There are still a lot of unanswered questions about these two shootings, but what little we do know is disturbing, to say the least. Both cases appear to have involved ICE agents who were not wearing body cameras—killing individuals who were not the subject of the agents' warrant.

Why were these two people shot at and killed? We don't know the answers. There are no body cameras yet. There are no body cameras as we would require. The ICE agents in Texas were also riding in unmarked vehicles. If Republicans had passed our bill, there would be body cameras, proper agent ID, warrant requirements, and other commonsense reforms, and these killings might not have happened.

I hope our Republican colleagues are listening. If they had passed our reforms, these killings might not have happened. With those reforms, we would have at least had a better idea as to what exactly happened so that we could have avoided further killings in the future. Instead, Republicans poured tens of billions of dollars into Trump's rogue Agencies with no strings attached—no strings attached. While every other police department in America has rules, our Republican colleagues and Trump said: No rules. Do whatever you want. And look at the results. Look at what has happened.

It is dangerous to give ICE agents free rein when we expect every other law enforcement agency in the country to follow basic codes of conduct. Allowing unidentified Federal agents to roam through American streets, to