



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 119th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 172

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JULY 15, 2026

No. 115

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN BARRASSO, a Senator from the State of Wyoming.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, Sovereign over this Nation and Lord of our lives, our desire is to glorify You through faithful service to our country. Grant us an earnest spirit and steadfast purpose in our work today.

Lord, help us to know Your will, and having known it, to desire it above our own. Teach us to say what we mean and to mean what we say, speaking with wisdom, integrity, and praise. Grant our lawmakers resoluteness, intentionality, and courage. Quiet every distraction so that they may listen attentively to Your voice and speak with conviction and compassion.

We pray in Your righteous and holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 15, 2026.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JOHN BARRASSO, a Senator from the State of Wyoming, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BARRASSO thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey T. Kuntz, of Florida, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Florida.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ARMSTRONG). The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, Americans tend to trust Republicans more than Democrats when it comes to national security. And, boy oh boy, do Democrats seem determined to demonstrate why that is the case.

Yesterday afternoon, Democrats voted against the National Defense Authorization Act, the annual bill that authorizes spending for our Nation's

defense. Their ostensible excuse was the conflict in Iran.

Well, in case they were operating under a misconception, I am happy to tell them that this year's National Defense Authorization Act is not an Iran funding supplemental. It is the annual—annual—legislation authorizing the basic needs of our military and the basic needs of our men and women in uniform, needs that exist no matter what is happening in Iran.

Let's just talk about what the Democrats voted against yesterday. They voted against a pay increase for our troops. They voted against quality-of-life improvements for our troops. They voted against the reform of the Pentagon's acquisition process.

They voted against funding for unmanned systems like drones and counter-drone measures, an essential—essential—security need in this day and age. They voted against shipbuilding efforts to strengthen our naval fleet. They voted against measures to maintain our Nation's airpower. They voted against including 38 of their own amendments. I could go on here, but you get the point.

Once again, Democrats are playing fast and loose with our Nation's security. I say "once again" because Democrats have been playing fast and loose with our Nation's security all year.

First, there was their recordbreaking full government shutdown last fall, which affected our military and all of our Nation's security Agencies, to say nothing of the impact that it had on air travel.

Then there was their recordbreaking shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security, which lasted a staggering 76 days.

Then, after that, Democrats refused to reauthorize a critical intelligence-gathering tool, which the Democrat leader himself has described as "a very important tool for ensuring our national security."

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S4093

And now they have blocked the Senate from considering the National Defense Authorization Act. And who knows what is next?

In either a fit of self-delusion or an attempt to distract from their actions, Democrats are trying to peddle the narrative that somehow they can't agree to anything because Republicans are trying to make things partisan. That is right. Well, let me spend just a minute correcting the record here.

The National Defense Authorization Act the Democrats voted against yesterday? Bipartisan. That is right. The National Defense Authorization Act is bipartisan legislation. Four Democrats voted for the bill—for the bill—at the committee markup.

Democrats' recordbreaking full government shutdown in the fall? Well, that was because they wouldn't accept a nonpartisan, short-term, clean government funding extension to allow bipartisan negotiations to continue.

The Democrats' recordbreaking Department of Homeland Security shutdown? Well, that was also because Democrats couldn't take yes for an answer.

Democrats and Republicans had agreed on a bipartisan DHS funding bill. Democrats reneged on that agreement because they wanted to negotiate for more, and Republicans said yes to negotiation.

And then Democrats shut down the Department anyway, even though Republicans were willing to negotiate further—even though the White House repeatedly offered a robust package of reforms.

So as I said, I don't know whether it is self-delusion or deliberate deception, but I have heard few things more ludicrous than Democrats' narrative that they can't agree to legislation because Republicans are being partisan.

Here are the facts: Democrats can't bring themselves to authorize funding for our Nation's security, whether that is security at our border, funding for our military, or paychecks for our troops. It doesn't matter how bipartisan the bill is; Democrats can't bring themselves to support our Nation's security.

Is it politics? Do Democrats think that voting against our national defense and our Nation's military will gain them points with their base or do they simply think they can afford to ignore our Nation's defense needs until some hostile actor takes advantage of our weakness?

I don't know, but I do know that our Nation is less safe because of Democrats' actions.

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. 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

TODD BLANCHE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, anyone who can represent a known pathological liar like Donald Trump can have no integrity and should never be Attorney General.

We all know lawyers are supposed to represent their clients, but when you represent a client who just lies and lies and lies, pathologically, you should never be Attorney General.

The only thing today's hearing will confirm is that Todd Blanche represents one client alone, Donald Trump, and he will continue to represent that lying client when he is Attorney General. There will be no integrity. There will be no real basis of fact. He will just do whatever Trump wants. We know that.

But the central question today, at this hearing and on into the process, is not of what Trump wants but what Senate Republicans will do. Let me repeat that. The crucial question today is not what Trump wants, but what Senate Republicans will do.

Where are the Senate Republicans? Are Republicans really going to go to the mat for Blanche, after he aided Trump in his corruption every step of the way? Do Senate Republicans have no issue with Blanche masterminding Trump's MAGA slush fund, arranging Trump's sweetheart deal from the IRS, and refusing to release 3 million pages of the Epstein file? Come on, Republicans, you have no shame? Is there no bar that can block you from, prevent you from, putting a man like this as Attorney General?

Republicans have set the bar so low for our Nation's top law enforcement official that you have to dig for it. The American people don't trust Todd Blanche. Neither should Senate Republicans, plain and simple.

SAVE ACT

Now, let me talk a little bit about the SAVE Act. Republicans keep screwing around in reconciliation with Trump's voter suppression SAVE Act. Republicans should know by now that it ain't going to fly with us, with the courts, or with the American people. I will say it as many times as it takes: The SAVE Act is dead on arrival here in the Senate.

I don't care how Republicans try to package their plan to resurrect the old ghost of Jim Crowe. We will kill it.

Trump's blatant effort to strip Americans of their voting rights is withering in the courts, too. Yesterday—just yesterday—Trump lost his 14th and 15th cases trying to demand state voter rolls.

Hey, Donald, what you are doing is illegal and unconstitutional, and the courts are making that very clear.

Rightwing Republicans like the Senator from Utah can bluster all they want, but the SAVE Act is not going to become law. Trump will have to face all the voters, not just the ones he wants, in November.

And the mess the Republicans find themselves in right now won't go away until they realize just how futile this effort to disenfranchise millions of Americans is.

Instead, Trump has bragged on national TV that he plans to force a shutdown if he doesn't get his way on the SAVE Act. Trump said: Republicans have to pass SAVE, otherwise we are going to have a shutdown in November.

Hear that, Republicans? You hear that, Americans? You hear that, voters?

Trump says he is going to shut down the government to take away Americans' voting rights. Are Republicans going to go along with that?

I remind Donald again—as I did yesterday—last time you bragged about shutting down the government with Nancy and me in the Oval Office didn't come out too good for you, Donald. This one will come out even worse.

So I hope Republicans hear this. Trump says he is going to shut down the government so he can take away Americans' voting rights. How do you think that is going to go over in this country?

Democrats aren't saying we want a shutdown; Trump is. Republicans ought to do themselves a favor and bury the SAVE Act once and for all.

IRAN

Now, on Iran, the hole Donald Trump keeps digging himself into has turned into a chasm. Trump continues to escalate his asinine war of whim with Iran.

Yesterday, Trump renewed his threat to bomb Iran's civilian infrastructure—something that was criticized across the board the last time he lashed out.

Democrats voted unanimously against the NDAA—unanimously—because the belief of our caucus is wide and deep: Congress cannot continue business as usual on the annual Defense bill when Trump is actively escalating one of the worst national security disasters in American history. That is what he is doing.

Trump can't launch a directionless war, defy Congress' bipartisan demands that it end, refuse to level with the American people about the cost, and then expect Democrats to follow quietly and vote all the money he wants to continue this absurdity.

We will not act like a rubberstamp when our servicemen are in harm's way abroad and Americans are getting crushed financially and at the gas pump here at home. No way. Democrats have not and will not go along with this war.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

On the ICE shootings, there's so much that mounts up: The cost, chaos, and corruption in this Trump administration is unfathomable.

On the ICE shootings, we continue to see the painful consequences of the Republicans' refusal to make common-sense reforms to ICE.

We recently learned that the ICE agent behind the shootings in Maine was a new recruit, only getting the job