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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TIM SHEEHY, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, as we begin this new day, filled with great responsibilities and complex challenges, we are drawn into Your presence by the magnitude of Your love. We come at Your invitation, longing to know Your will, encouraged by Your even greater desire to lead, direct, and inspire those who seek You.

Lord, in the quietness of communion with You, may the tightly wound springs of pressure and stress within every lawmaker be gently released, and may a deep and abiding peace settle upon their hearts and minds. Give them clarity of thought, steadiness of purpose, and humility of spirit as they carry out the trust placed in their hands.

We pray in Your magnificent 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 executive clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 16, 2026.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TIM SHEEHY, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

CHUCK GRASSLEY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SHEEHY 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 executive clerk read the nomination of Kara Marie Westercamp, of Virginia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

AMERICA 250

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, we recently celebrated the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence—the 250th birthday of our country.

On July 4 in 1776, the Continental Congress formally adopted the Declara-

tion. The document laid out the causes which impelled the colonists' separation from Great Britain. But more than that, it laid out the political beliefs that would govern a new nation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That in order to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Unalienable rights—rights inherent in man, given by God; rights that exist before government; and that it is the job of government to protect—government not by divine right or military might, but by consent; a government that represents the people, not the will to power.

A revolutionary document—pun intended. Many of the ideas in the Declaration, of course, were not new. It was a document built on the wisdom of the ages, on the tradition of British common law, on the inheritance of Christianity, and the colonists' own experiment in self-government in the colonies.

Jefferson himself, writing in 1825, said of the Declaration:

Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion.

All its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, in printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, etc.

While many of the ideas in the Declaration were not new, the document was nevertheless, as I said, revolutionary because the Declaration marked an event essentially unique in human history.

There had been philosophical treatises on laying out principles of government, but this was not a philosophical treatise. It was the founding

● This “buller” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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of a government, of a new nation, based on philosophical principles—a nation inaugurated not by conquest but on a set of ideas.

And what ideas: All men are created equal. Where before in the history of governments do we find that? All men are created equal. No one is given special dignity by nature; no man has a divine right to rule over any other. No, all men are created equal—created equal and endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights, rights that cannot be taken away, rights that are not the gift of government but of nature and of nature's God, rights that government must defer to and defend.

As everyone knows, the United States is currently hosting the World Cup. The media has been filled with stories on how much visitors to this country are enjoying the United States. They are encountering the American character: generous, optimistic, big-hearted, friendly. And they are embracing it.

And it occurs to me that that American character almost unquestionably has a lot to do with our founding principles. When you believe that all men are created equal, when you believe that they have God-given rights and dignity—well, that has consequences.

All men are created equal. There is no class of divinely appointed rulers, no hereditary aristocratic class, no barriers set to prevent you from rising. Those principles have consequences.

So I don't think it is surprising that Americans are generous and big-hearted and optimistic and friendly. I think it is the natural consequence of the principles that we espouse.

Every Fourth of July is a day of celebration, but this one—marking 250 years—was particularly special. South Dakota was honored to welcome President Trump to our fireworks at Mount Rushmore—a truly spectacular event. There is no better place to reflect on the majesty of this great country.

It is fitting too, though, that along with the celebrations—along with the fireworks and the parades and the hot-dogs and the hamburgers—that July 4 be a day of thanksgiving for the Declaration of Independence and the Nation it founded, for the blessing of liberty, and for all those who have pledged their lives to its defense, from the founding of our country to the present day.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his “Concord Hymn,” referred to the opening shot of the battles of Lexington and Concord as “the shot heard round the world.” If I may borrow his phrase, I think it is fair to say that the Declaration was the “statement heard round the world.” It is still—still—heard round the world to this day, and I pray it will be heard until the end of time.

May God bless our beloved country and keep us faithful to the principles for which we stand.

I yield the floor.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

ELECTION SECURITY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, Donald Trump's election speech tonight is not about the election Trump lost 6 years ago; it is a threat against the election he is afraid to lose this November.

Trump may control the microphone tonight, but he will not control the verdict in November. The voters will have the last word, and Senate Democrats will rebut Trump's lies every day. We will fight like hell to make sure Trump can't silence voters.

Trump's prime-time speech tonight isn't simply about relitigating his overwhelming defeat in the 2020 election; it is about undermining the 2026 election before a single vote has been cast. Trump won't expose anything of substance about 2020; he will just echo the same stale, baseless, pathetic lies he has repeated for 6 years.

Donald, you have been trying this shtick for 6 years. Only your little coterie of sycophants still believes these lies—no one else.

You can say it tonight, Trump. You can say it tonight. You can say it tomorrow. You can say it every night until election. No one believes you. The election was not stolen.

Trump keeps chasing his tail, going round and round and round in circles so many times, he has left a rut in the ground. Every time he tells a lie, he digs himself deeper into the hole. Trump's fixation on these conspiracy theories reeks of desperation.

Trump knows he can't defend Republicans' disastrous record—his disastrous record as well—so he is trying to discredit the voters who will judge it in November.

Hey, Donald, the reason your numbers are so low is because you are obsessed with BS like this instead of what Americans actually care about.

The American people are fed up with Donald Trump. Americans are fed up with the chaos in their streets, fed up with the corruption in their government, fed up with sky-high costs in every part of their lives because of this administration's policies. Voters are sick of forking over their tax dollars to line Trump's pockets and to fuel his failed war in Iran.

Trump has given up on winning over hearts and minds. Now he is focused on rigging rules and purging voter rolls. Instead of changing course on their deeply unpopular agenda, Trump and the GOP have launched a coordinated, multifront campaign to subvert the 2026 election.

But don't worry, America, it will fail.

Trump has called for Republicans to “take over voting in 15 states in the country.” That is what he said. Trump said:

We want to take over. We should take over the voting. . . . Republicans ought to nationalize the voting.

It is in his own words.

Trump has issued unlawful Executive orders to try to kill vote-by-mail. The administration is packed to the rafters with election deniers, including key election oversight positions. MAGA loyalists like Todd Blanche and Kash Patel have used the DOJ and FBI to torment election officials and foment lies with politically motivated investigations designed to sow doubt and instill fear. Trump's Republican allies in Congress keep pushing the SAVE Act, the most devious voter-suppression legislation Trump has ever dreamed up.

Donald, when it comes to the SAVE Act, the courts have rejected it, Congress has rejected it, and even members of your own party have rejected it. Give it up. The SAVE Act isn't going anywhere.

There is no way we are letting this administration feed Americans' personal data into an algorithm Donald Trump, Elon Musk, and Russell Vought created and let it pick who gets to vote.

Donald Trump made life harder and more expensive for the American people, and now he wants to make sure the American people can't hold him accountable at the ballot box. That is what Trump's speech is about tonight. But in America, voters choose their leaders; leaders do not choose their voters.

Senate Democrats are going to fight like hell to make sure our elections belong to the voters, not to Donald Trump.

The country does not belong to Donald Trump. The ballot does not belong to Donald Trump. The verdict does not belong to Donald Trump. It belongs to the American people. And this vote in November, they will deliver it.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT

Now on Republican inaction on ICE, two more people have been gunned down in the street by Trump's ICE agents, and all Republicans have done is shrug their shoulders and point fingers. Senate Republicans know full well they were the ones who abandoned commonsense reforms to rein in ICE on multiple occasions.

Yesterday, Senator COLLINS of Maine tried pinning the blame on Democrats even though she voted against an amendment requiring ICE to wear body cameras just last month. Absolutely shameless. Absolutely shameless.

If Republicans had accepted our proposal for body cameras, warrant requirements, use-of-force standards, training, and other basic reforms used by every law enforcement agency across the country, these killings could have been prevented. Instead, Republicans jammed through a partisan bill