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Senate

The Senate met at 11:15 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.

Our Lord and Ruler, Your Name is great, and we see Your glory in the earth, sea, and sky. We are grateful for this Nation and for the deliberative process of lawmaking, with its challenges, setbacks, and opportunities. As our Senators debate the issues that are vital to our liberty, give them wisdom, integrity, and courage for the living of these days. Lord, inspire them to be fully persuaded about the course that will bless our people, Nation, and world. Give our legislators respect for honest differences as they remember their accountability to you. Bless and keep them now and always.

We pray in Your sovereign 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. SHEEHY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The President pro tempore.

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Mr. GRASSLEY. At the start of this new year, one of the dates is coming up that we always honor, but this is a special honor of that day because, on July 4 of this year, the United States of America will celebrate the 250th anniversary of our Nation's founding.

Throughout our history, Americans from all walks of life have shaped our story, including, and most importantly, the 56 colonists who signed the Declaration of Independence. These men—if it were happening today, there would be women in that group. These men reflected profiles in courage, pledging their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor on a piece of parchment paper. As benefactors of their bold commitment to freedom, we must never take for granted the remarkable risk and providential promise that they embraced.

Since July 4, 1776, Americans can trace a shared heritage—a heritage of freedom—to that founding document proclaiming our unalienable rights and self-evident truths: equality, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The Declaration of Independence launched the American experiment that continues from one generation to the next. This experiment is unique in the 6,000-year history of humans.

Earlier this week, the Washington Monument, here on our National Mall, was illuminated to mark keystones in American history: discovery, independence, westward expansion, the Industrial Revolution, innovation, and the future.

Last August, the yearlong Great American State Fair was launched at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines, IA. On this Fourth of July, fair exhibits from all 50 States will be featured on the National Mall, right here in Washington, DC. I encourage Americans of all walks of life to participate in local celebrations across our beautiful country.

I am grateful to celebrate 250 years of freedom and honor all those who served in uniform to keep us free for generations yet to come.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

RURAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, as someone who grew up in rural South Dakota, in the town of Murdo, which has a population of roughly 500—and that would be rounding up—I know firsthand the joys of living in a rural community. I also know some of the challenges.

Everything from package delivery to internet reliability can be more difficult when you live far outside a major city, and access to healthcare can sometimes be a real challenge. More than 100 rural hospitals have closed over the past two decades, and doctors can be few and far between in rural areas.

But thanks to the working families tax cut legislation, however, help is on the way. Republicans' legislation created a \$50 billion Rural Health Transformation Program to address the rural healthcare crisis. Instead of a top-down, Washington-dictated approach, we are giving States the resources and the freedom to find solutions for the particular challenges in their State and to find sustainable ways of ensuring rural healthcare access in their communities going forward.

The response has been robust. Every State in the Union—red and blue, alike—has applied for and been approved for funding from this program. States have big plans.

The Texas Tribune reports:

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



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The state's health care agency said it will use the funds to strengthen rural health care clinics in a variety of ways, including: creating wellness and nutrition programs to rural providers; educating and attracting health care professionals to work in rural areas; and modernizing resources and technology in rural centers.

More specifically, it plans to "add more than a thousand rural health care" positions with the additional funds.

Another news article reports on Ohio, noting that "the state's proposal focuses on addressing barriers to healthcare by building on existing state investments to expand access to care, strengthen the rural health workforce and modernize facilities and technology."

Georgia will be using Rural Health Transformation funding to upgrade technology and invest in its rural workforce. North Carolina will use the fund to, among other things, support more than 400 rural health facilities.

The list goes on.

My own State of South Dakota will be using its funding to invest in a number of priorities, including a major investment in telehealth, which can be a key way to access healthcare for those in rural areas.

South Dakota will also be using its funding to create regional hubs for emergency services and to improve access to maternal and infant health, to ensure delivery of essential medical care.

Back in June, a few months before Democrats tried to repeal the Rural Health Transformation fund, the Democrat leader said:

This little fund to help reimburse rural hospitals is just a fraud.

He should tell that to his State, which applied for the program and received a \$212 million grant. And that is for 2026 alone. When the State announced its application, the Office of New York State Mental Health Commissioner, Dr. Ann Sullivan, stated:

Expanding access to services in underserved communities is an important part of our effort to strengthen mental health care statewide. The Rural Health Transformation Grant will help New York State explore new partnerships, build our health care workforce, and pursue innovative opportunities to expand care in these areas.

Let me repeat that.

The Rural Health Transformation Grant will help New York State explore new partnerships, build our health care workforce, and pursue innovative opportunities to expand care in these areas.

That doesn't sound like fraud to me.

Perhaps the Democratic leader would have preferred his State to miss out on these resources.

Perhaps he would disagree with the Democrat Governor of Hawaii, who said:

As a relatively small State, this will help us a lot to keep our hospitals open, to make sure there are providers available to have telehealth available.

Mr. President, the Democrat leader can spread all the disinformation he wants. The Rural Health Trans-

formation Program is in effect, and every State in the Union is benefiting. Republicans will continue to work to make healthcare more comfortable and accessible for American families.

I want to thank Dr. Oz and his team at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for their tireless work to get this program up and running on an expedited timeline. I look forward to seeing all the ways this program will help transform healthcare in rural America.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

VENEZUELA

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I rise today having just come out of a secure briefing about the arrest of Nicolas Maduro.

Our country has carried out one of the boldest law enforcement operations in decades, and we should be very proud. We should celebrate it and be proud of the men and women in uniform who made sure this was successful. This administration had the courage to do what was right, what needed to be done; and America, Venezuela, and the world are much safer as a result of it.

Operation Absolute Resolve was conducted for one reason: to bring to justice a murderous dictator and an indicted drug trafficker. Maduro is an outlaw, and he is now in custody. The Trump administration indicted him in 2020 on drug trafficking charges. President Trump put a \$15 million bounty on him. The Biden administration agreed, and they actually increased that amount to \$25 million. Neither the first Trump administration, nor the Biden administration, nor the current administration recognized Maduro as the legitimate leader of Venezuela.

Now, we are not alone in that view. Many of our allies around the world have taken the same position, hold the same belief. Yet only America had the resolve and the resources to bring Maduro to justice. No American lives were lost, as we learned in our briefing and as we have seen, and it was a textbook example and demonstration of peace through strength. The message to the entire world is clear: If you poison and kill the American people, you are going to be held accountable.

Arresting Maduro also advances America's national security. Maduro's allies and enablers are united in their commitment to undermine our Nation: China, Russia, Iran, Cuba, even Hezbollah. Communist China was buying half a million barrels a day of oil from Venezuela—day after day, after

day. In exchange for that oil, the Chinese Communist Party loaned Venezuela over \$100 billion. Just hours before his arrest, Maduro was meeting in Caracas with officials of the Chinese Communist Party. This axis of aggression is weaker now because President Trump has taken decisive action, and our men and women in uniform were able to carry it out.

All around the world, people are seeing dictatorships failing. That is why Venezuelans are celebrating in the streets today. It is also why Iranians are uniting today across their country to protest the suppressive dictatorship. They have good reasons to demand their freedom.

Yet, today, there are Democrats in this Chamber—some may come to the floor later today—who are using the arrest of Nicolas Maduro not to advance American interests, no. They are using it to attack President Trump. This week, they are going to force a vote on another War Powers Resolution to tie the hands of the President. Let me be clear about what that resolution does and what it does not do. It does not reassert Congress's powers. It does not make America stronger. It makes America weaker and less safe. It will weaken the President's legitimate constitutional authority.

This body, the U.S. Senate, is being asked whether the President of the United States has the authority to arrest indicted criminals. Of course he does. Democrats want to weaken the President's ability to enforce the law of the land. That is the wrong message to send to hardened drug traffickers and to dictators.

It is interesting because, for years, Democrats were for holding Maduro accountable. Senator CHRIS MURPHY, a Democrat from Connecticut, tweeted in 2019 that "getting rid of Maduro is good for the United States." That is one of the Democrats who are opposing what the President of the United States has done. He called for it in the past.

Senator CHUCK SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, who will be on this floor in a few minutes, came to this very floor in 2020 and complained about President Trump, saying President Trump "hasn't brought an end to the Maduro regime."

Senator CHRIS VAN HOLLEN from the Foreign Relations Committee, a Democrat from Maryland, told MSNBC just last year—he said:

[T]he United States needs to work with its partners and allies in the region to ratchet up the pressure [on Venezuela].

Democrats know absolutely that President Trump did the absolute right thing. They won't admit it on this floor. They prefer to play politics instead. Within the last several days, Senator SCHUMER called arresting Maduro "reckless." What a change and reversal in tune. Senator VAN HOLLEN said it was an illegal "act of war," a complete reversal of his previous positions.