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Senate

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

HOUSING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT—Motion to Proceed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 6644, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 343, H.R. 6644, a bill to increase the supply of housing in America, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The great Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I have a short statement on history and then a short but very necessary statement of bad news, sad news.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONVENING OF THE FIRST SENATE

Mr. President, as we celebrate America's 250th birthday this year, I want to acknowledge the anniversary of the Senate convening on this day 237 years ago.

On March 4, 1789, the U.S. Senate convened for the first time at New York City's Federal Hall. However, this body didn't reach a quorum, so it couldn't do business until April 6, 1789, when the 12th Member arrived.

The Senate began convening in January instead of March in 1935 because the Congress and the State legislatures ratified the 20th Amendment.

The Senate was designed by the constitutional writers to protect States with smaller populations from being silenced by larger States, so obviously two Senators from each State does that. And remember, until 1913, Senators were selected by their State legislatures.

Now, 237 years later, this body's size has grown to 100, and how Senators assume office—by popular election—has changed, but the role of the Senate as a deliberative body has not changed.

HONORING CAPTAIN CODY KHORK, SERGEANT FIRST CLASS NICOLE AMOR, SERGEANT FIRST CLASS NOAH TIETJENS, AND SERGEANT DECLAN COADY

Mr. President, this is the sad news. Last night, we received sad news and awful news that four Army Reserve soldiers from the 103rd Sustainment Command, based out of Des Moines, IA, were killed in Kuwait amidst Operation Epic Fury. That includes SGT Declan Coady, who was from West Des Moines, IA.

I am deeply saddened to learn of the four's passing. They represent the best of Iowa and the best of America. We should never forget their sacrifice and their service.

Barbara and I are praying for their loved ones in this time of grief, and we continue to pray, as I hope all Americans will, for the safety of all soldiers serving in harm's way.

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. 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 majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3977

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3977) to amend title 11, United States Code, to modify certain bankruptcy eligibility requirements, and for other purposes.

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.

Creator God, alert our senses to Your world. Remind us that You are sovereign and in control of the unfolding events of our planet.

Lord, give our lawmakers the desire to do Your will. Equip them with deeper insight and loftier courage, enabling them to act not only for today but for the coming hour of Your Kingdom. Keep their idealism and dreams of a better world from being crushed by disappointment, doubts, and despair. Show them the way of servanthood which sanctifies every task done for Your glory.

We pray in Your sacred 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. MULLIN). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

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



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Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceeding.

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

HOUSING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY ACT—Motion to Proceed

AFFORDABILITY

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, last week, Leader SCHUMER came to the floor to announce:

Lowering costs will be Senate Democrats' North Star in 2026.

He continued:

Let me repeat that so [that] America and our Republican colleagues hear it: Lowering costs will be Senate Democrats' North Star in 2026.

Well, you have to give the Democrats a lot of credit for their nerve or, maybe, for their case of amnesia, because to hear Democrats speak lately, you would think that they have zero memory of the massive affordability crisis that they created.

Well, let's just review for a minute.

Five years ago this week, Democrats were getting ready to pass a massive \$1.9 trillion spending bill with no offsets—their so-called American Rescue Plan—despite warnings that their bill's excessive spending could cause a serious inflation crisis. They passed it anyway, and it helped unleash the worst inflation crisis in 40 years—an inflation crisis whose reverberations are still being felt today.

And even as inflation rose and rose, again and again and again and again, Democrats either failed to recognize—or tried to minimize—the problem. Worse, they tried to double down on the strategy of excessive government spending that helped set off the crisis in the first place.

So Democrats are going to have to forgive me if it is just a little hard to swallow their sudden interest in lowering costs.

Democrats may talk a good game, but it is Republicans who are actually putting in the work to make life more affordable for the American people. There is no single, silver-bullet solution to inflation, but since we took control of Washington just over a year ago, we have taken a number of actions to help alleviate the burdens on hard-working Americans.

The first step was putting more money in Americans' pockets, which is exactly what we did with the working families tax cuts. Thanks to Republicans' landmark bill, the American people are benefiting from significant tax relief this year. We prevented a \$2.6 trillion tax hike on working families, with no help—zero help—from Democrats, and implemented a slew of new tax relief. And as Americans file their taxes, they are seeing lower tax bills and significantly bigger refunds. And

because Republicans delivered permanent tax relief, working people can count on having more breathing room in their budgets in the years to come, enabling them to spend, invest, and save more of their money with confidence for the future.

Government regulations can actually have a huge impact on costs, whether they are driving up the cost of new housing construction or driving up the cost of your kitchen appliances. That is why Republicans have also put a lot of effort into untangling the web of costly regulations put in place during the Biden administration.

Much of that has involved reversing Green New Deal-style rules on everything from appliances to the car you drive. Through the Congressional Review Act process here in Congress, we were able to rescind a number of Biden-era rules impacting households and small businesses.

And together, with actions taken by the Trump administration, we took aim at Biden-era mandates to force Americans into costly electric vehicles—rules requiring most new passenger vehicles to be electric in less than a decade and 35 percent by this year, similar requirements for heavy-duty trucks, and the EPA waivers that would have allowed California to impose a de facto electric vehicle mandate on the entire country.

Thanks to President Trump and Republicans, these EV mandates are a thing of the past, and the American people will have the freedom to choose the vehicle that works for their needs and, importantly, for their budgets.

The Biden years were also characterized by a clear hostility to conventional energy production, putting us on a dangerous path to a future with more expensive and less reliable energy. Republicans promised to unleash American energy, and we have made a concerted effort to ensure America's abundant natural resources are used to the benefit of the American people.

The Trump administration has reversed a number of Biden-era decisions preventing energy production in energy-rich regions of our country. Republicans also did away with the Biden natural gas tax—a tax that would have driven up energy prices even further and destroyed jobs in the energy sector.

There is more to do to bring down the cost of energy and to safeguard our energy security, and Republicans continue to work to ensure that the American people have access to an affordable and reliable energy supply for the long term.

Republicans kicked off 2026 by passing a funding bill that included a number of provisions to improve healthcare access and affordability. Among its most important provisions were measures to bring down the cost of prescription drugs at the pharmacy counter, which will complement efforts by the Trump administration to lower the cost of prescriptions.

And, this week, we have begun consideration of the ROAD to Housing Act, the most significant housing bill in at least a decade. We know that a lot of Americans are being priced out of homeownership, and this bill will go a long way toward making buying a home more affordable and accessible for hard-working Americans.

The massive \$1.9 trillion spending spree that Democrats passed 5 years ago helped set off a once-in-a-generation inflation crisis. And while Democrats may talk a good game about lowering costs, it is already becoming clear that, should they again regain the majority in the next election, their strategy will be more of the same—more spending and bigger government—the same things that helped plunge our Nation into an affordability crisis in the first place.

Don't believe me? Well, just this week, the senior Senator from Vermont released legislation that was hailed as a marker for Democrats.

What is in it? More spending and bigger government.

Well, we saw how that worked out the first time. In fact, the country is still cleaning up from how that worked out the first time.

Democrats may have amnesia when it comes to their record on costs, but I am pretty sure that the American people don't, and I very much doubt that they are going to trust the people who caused this affordability problem to solve it. But I guess the Democrats can always hope.

Meanwhile, Republicans will continue to act. We will continue to work to put more money in Americans' pockets and to make life more affordable for American families.

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. 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

IRAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Well, the last thing the American people want or need is another war in the Middle East. But if you listened to Secretary Pete Hegseth's press conference this morning, one thing is crystal clear: America is at war.

In his own words, Hegseth said:

We are just getting started.

You hear that, America? Pete Hegseth says another war in the Middle East is just getting started. He says more of our sons and daughters will be shipped off to fight in a foreign land, more of our taxpayer dollars will be wasted abroad instead of invested at home.

Hegseth also said: