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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Listen to our prayers, mighty God. We look to You with the vibrant expectation that You are willing to do for us more than we can ask or imagine.

Lord, we are grateful that our lawmakers can fulfill Your purposes for our Nation because of the strength they receive from You each day. Show our Senators Your compassion. Give them peace that will provide them with an anchor for life's storms.

Lord, provide them with the wisdom to face life's challenges, believing that nothing is impossible for You.

We pray in Your powerful 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. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 (Mr. WARNOCK). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I will have my remarks, but first I will do a little bit of housekeeping.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2311 AND H.R. 3684

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I understand there are two 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.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2311) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2021, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 3684) to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, in a democracy, no right is more sacred than the right to vote. And yet, across the country, Republican-controlled State legislatures are conducting the most sweeping and coordinated attack on voting rights in generations, fueled by Donald Trump's insidious Big Lie that the election was stolen.

In several States, limits have been placed on voting hours, polling locations, and methods of voting. Barriers have been raised to make voting by mail, absentee voting, afterhours voting, and early voting harder.

Republican legislatures are not only making it harder to vote, they are making it easier to steal an election. They actually believe that. Donald Trump does the Big Lie, everyone knows it is a lie, and now Republican legislatures are acting on that Big Lie and saying we could steal an election. What is happening to our democracy? Stripping independent election officials of power, giving partisan election bodies more control, even firing members of county election boards, this is what Republican legislatures are doing, not for fairness, not for bipartisanship but to jaundice elections.

And if the consequence is Americans of all parties feel that the elections are not fair, what is going to happen to this sacred and wonderful democracy? Republicans are actively dismantling all the barriers that prevented Donald Trump from subverting our elections in 2020. Imagine if they hadn't been in effect. Imagine.

All of these efforts have an Orwellian logic. Under the guise of "election integrity," Republican legislatures are sowing more doubt about our elections through phony audits and fact-free claims of voter fraud, lying claims of voter fraud. They are lying. I just saw on TV this morning how the Trump lawyers are being lambasted in court. And even Rudy Giuliani has lost his license to practice because they lied about the election, that they perpetrated the Big Lie in legal documents. The same thing is happening everywhere. What is happening to this Republican Party? What is happening? When Donald Trump, the biggest liar we have ever had as President, sets the tone and they follow in those lies, repeat those lies, sometimes even embellish on those lies, what is happening to that party, the party of Abraham Lincoln?

Falsely claiming that the election was "stolen," Republican legislatures are making elections easier to overturn, even under the falsest and biggest

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



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of lies. And what happens here? Our Republican friends here in Washington have chosen a path of supine compliance, refusing to stand up to the Big Lie, bowing down before it, bowing down before Donald Trump, the biggest liar that we have ever had as an American President, except when the Capitol Building is literally under siege.

And, by the way, just parenthetically, I commend to my colleagues and to all Americans—the New York Times did a video of the siege. They even had some—they showed the siege; they showed the violence; and they had some Republican Congressmen saying it was like tourists. It was incredible. I recommend everyone should watch this. And I hope—Republican colleagues, just watch it. You were there. Just watch it. I commend the New York Times. They did a great job on it.

Anyway, the effort to fight this wave of voter suppression and Republican election rigging is strong and growing. I want to be very clear about that.

In Texas, where the Republican Governor has called a special session to reconsider one of the most restrictive voting laws in the Nation, Democrats are doing all they can to block the dangerous partisan bill. They are brave. They are bold. They are courageous, and history will show them on the side of right and the Republican Governor—I saw him on TV this morning—on the side of deep, dark, ugly wrong. Many of these lawmakers from Texas have come to Washington. I will be meeting with a group of them today to plot out strategy and to praise them for what they are doing.

President Biden will also address the issue of voting rights in a major national address in Philadelphia, using the bully pulpit to draw the Nation's attention and announce ways in which his administration can defend Americans' fundamental rights.

And next week, Senator KLOBUCHAR—always on the ball on these issues—will lead the Senate Rules Committee to the State of Georgia—your State, I say to the Presiding Officer—for their first field hearing in 20 years. It will be an opportunity to shine a spotlight on the consequences of the Big Lie and show the American people just how far Republicans have gone in order to make it harder—harder—for people to vote in the 2020 election.

The bottom line is this: Democrats will not stop fighting to protect voting rights and defend our democracy. As I said, the vote in June was the opening gun, not the finish line.

Last month, all 50 Senate Democrats united for the first time this Congress to move forward on a strong voting rights bill. Shamefully, shamefully, Republicans refused to even allow debate on voting rights legislation, hiding behind some of the exact same States' rights arguments, and very similar arguments, that southern Senators used in the 1960s to oppose the Voting Rights Act. How do you feel about that, Republicans and Repub-

lican leadership? How do you feel about using the same arguments that were used by some of the arch segregationists to stop voting rights in the Senate in the 1960s?

Last month, as I said, the vote represented the starting gun, not the finish line, in the fight to protect voting rights. As majority leader, I reserve the right to bring back voting rights and democracy reform for another vote on the Senate floor.

CLIMATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, on another issue, infrastructure and climate. Over the past few weeks, we have seen an awful heat wave hit Oregon and Washington. Those States in the beautiful Northwest, always known for their cool summer breezes, had temperatures like 115 degrees. It was just astounding, not just a little temperature bump but dramatically unusual.

Temperatures in the Pacific Northwest climbed so high that power cables melted and roadways cracked in two. At the same time, in the American Southwest, the lack of rainfall and depleted reservoirs have led to a historic lack of water. According to the National Drought Mitigation Center, more than 77 percent of the great State of New Mexico is in a state of severe drought.

As climate change continues to worsen, extreme weather like this, unfortunately, is only becoming more common, putting our agriculture, our infrastructure, our economy, and our people's health at grave risk.

That is why I have made addressing the climate crisis in a bold way a primary focus of our upcoming debate on infrastructure. We are working with great urgency to make this happen. And we are going to do it in two ways:

First, climate change has forced us to repair and rebuild our infrastructure in a way that takes into account our new reality. Our infrastructure must become more resilient to extreme weather. In New York, I insisted that the Hurricane Sandy aid, for which New York and New Jersey got \$60 billion, focus on resiliency. And as we rebuild from Hurricane Sandy using those Federal dollars, we have done it in a way that makes flooding in downtown New York City and Long Island less likely. We need to repeat that effort across the country to deal with heat waves, droughts, wildfires, more powerful hurricanes and even more.

But, second, we must use infrastructure investment to combat climate change itself, not just make ourselves more resilient. If it keeps getting worse, resiliency goes up, global warming gets higher—resiliency goes up. We need to have this go down. That is so, so important.

And what are we doing? In President Biden's proposal and in the proposals Democrats are putting forward, we are investing in green infrastructure, clean

and renewable power, electric vehicles and charging infrastructure, and retrofitting our economy to reduce carbon emissions and slow climate change in both urban, suburban, and rural areas. Investing in both elements—resiliency and green infrastructure—that will create thousands upon thousands of good-paying union American jobs in the process.

So as discussions continue on both a bipartisan infrastructure bill and a budget resolution, Senators of both parties must understand that the issues of climate change and infrastructure cannot—cannot—be separated from one another.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 3 months ago, President Biden announced his intention to completely withdraw U.S. forces from the ongoing fight against terrorists and terrorist enablers in Afghanistan. I said then this was a shortsighted decision, and sure enough—sure enough—a reckless rush for the exits is becoming a global embarrassment.

Just take the reports that our forces slunk away from the strategically vital Bagram Air Base in the middle of the night without plan for our Afghan partners to secure the base or even to keep the electricity on. But President Biden remains defiant. He has rejected warnings that the government in Kabul will fall to the Taliban. He is ignoring the truth unfolding before our own eyes: Afghanistan is unraveling.

Since April 13, the Taliban has retaken administrative districts all across the country at a truly alarming pace. With military victory in reach, the group is hardly even pretending to seek a negotiated solution. It has wasted no time dragging large swaths of Afghanistan back under its repression, but President Biden appears unmoved. He says he bears no responsibility for the plight of the Afghans who fought with us.

Back in 2019, when his predecessor was contemplating a quick withdrawal from Syria, then-Candidate Biden called that notion “the most shameful thing any president has done in modern history in terms of foreign policy.”

Well, look where we are today. The Taliban is hunting down the U.S.-trained pilots who helped defend the Afghan people. It has wiped out scores of special forces resisting its advance. As the Taliban moves toward threatening Kabul, the Biden administration seems to have no plan to efficiently process special visas for the Afghans who helped us and no plan to get those people safe passage to our Embassy or, for that matter, even out of the country.