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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord of life, rescue us from the faults to which we are prone. Keep us from saying one thing and doing another; from criticizing others for what we allow in ourselves. Keep us from demanding standards from others which we ourselves make no effort to fulfill. Lord, keep us from the indecision that cannot say "yes" or "no." Keep us from the reluctance to break habits which we know are wrong. Today, keep our Senators from anything that prevents them from giving all their loyalty, allegiance, and heart to You. And Lord, comfort the loved ones of Tyre Nichols. We pray in Your merciful 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 PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. First, Madam President, we will do a little housekeeping, and then I will give my remarks.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 123

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

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 123) to protect American small businesses, gig workers, and freelancers by repealing the burdensome American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 transactions reporting threshold, and to rescind certain funding provided to the Internal Revenue Service under section 10301 of Public Law 117-169.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

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

REMEMBERING TYRE NICHOLS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on Friday, the city of Memphis released the brutal, truly sickening body cam footage of the murder of Tyre Nichols.

I am heartbroken, horrified, and appalled by this heinous murder. This should have just been a routine traffic stop. It never, never should have ended the way it did, in unnecessary violence and bloodshed.

The repetitiveness of unjust murders like Tyre Nichols' is a stain on America. The five police officers who betrayed their oath to serve and protect should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

We should remember Tyre for who he was and for the life he lived. By all accounts, he was a beautiful and gentle soul. He was creative, he was energetic, and he was deeply passionate about the things he loved most: sunsets, skateboarding, and, above all, his family. He was a father, a son, a friend, a talented young man with his whole life ahead of him, and he should still be alive today.

So let us honor his memory by bringing lasting, meaningful change to create a more just and a more fair America, our long-trodden path to try and make this country—this beautiful country—a more perfect place and a more perfect nation.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on the debt ceiling, one of Congress's top priorities this year is ensuring the United States does not default on its debt for the first time in our history. Even approaching a default would be disastrous for American families. The damages will show up on everything from people's credit card bills, their mortgage rates, and when applying for things as basic as a car loan. It risks thousands of dollars lit on fire for millions of American families. Everyone's life in this country will take many steps backward if we default.

Now, Republicans have done a lot of talking about cuts, but when it comes to actually showing us a plan for avoiding default, they are playing a dangerous game. Republicans, it is time to come out of hiding, put pen to paper, and show us your plan. Republicans, show us your plan.

According to some reports, Republicans want significant cuts across the board. But from where? Is funding for our troops safe? We don't know. Republicans, show us the plan.

Is funding for police and firefighters and first responders safe? Republicans, show us the plan.

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



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Is funding for Social Security and Medicare safe, which some in that party, particularly on the MAGA wing, think should be cut? We don't know. Show us the plan.

The silence is unacceptable because the American people have a right to know whether they are going to see crucial services suddenly dry up. And if Republicans don't get their way, Americans have a right to know whether or not the hard-right GOPers are really prepared to lead the House Republican conference to push the United States to default and whether the Republican House, led by MCCARTHY, will follow them over that devastating cliff, sending costs spiking on everything from credit cards to auto loans, to mortgages.

We have seen in realtime how dangerous it is for Speaker MCCARTHY to have empowered the most extreme elements of the GOP to set the agenda in the House. The MAGA wing of the GOP, which has set the rules on how the House should run, has left no doubt that, under their watch, no form of funding, however necessary, is safe.

Democrats, meanwhile, have been very clear about our position. When it comes to the debt ceiling, there can be no brinksmanship, no threats, no hostage-taking. This is simply too important. It has to get done.

Republicans need to show their plan to the American people. The clock is ticking on the debt ceiling every day. We must make sure that a first-ever default doesn't occur. Yet Republicans are making it more and more likely.

GATEWAY PROGRAM

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now, on Gateway, tomorrow is a big day for New Yorkers, as we welcome President Biden to celebrate progress on the most important infrastructure project in America, the new Gateway rail tunnel.

This day has been a decade in the making. The Northeast corridor is the busiest passenger rail line in the country, and the crossing under the Hudson is its most important nexus point. But for far too long, these two single-track tunnels have been badly in need of repairs.

After Hurricane Sandy devastated New York and the experts said there is limited time in which they will be operable, fixing the tunnel became one of my greatest passions, a labor of love, because I love New York and, without it, New York's economy would come screeching to a halt. For years, I worked hard, bringing together public and private partners from New York, New Jersey, and Amtrak to get everyone on the same page on Gateway. We met a lot of resistance along the way.

When President Trump was in office, he tried to freeze progress on the Gateway project altogether, going as far as holding it hostage in negotiations over the border wall. Still, I was proud that, even during the Trump administration,

I was able to double, triple, quadruple, and, in one case, increase tenfold the funding for various Federal spending accounts pertaining to Gateway because I knew that one day—one day—President Trump would no longer be in office.

Now, thanks to our bipartisan infrastructure bill and with great help from President Biden, Gateway is moving forward. Under our infrastructure law, tens of billions of more dollars have been dedicated to Federal accounts, which will support Gateway and many, many other large projects in the country, and this is something I am very, very proud to celebrate.

I will have more to say in New York tomorrow, but, today, I want to affirm once again that progress on Gateway is a very important example of how our infrastructure bill is making life better for millions of everyday Americans. Building two new tunnels and updating the existing tunnels will lead to work with good-paying union jobs—tens of thousands of jobs—and lead to a burst of economic activity for decades to come.

I want to thank President Biden for making the trip to New York tomorrow, and I am happy to say that, after a lot of hard work and a lot of stubborn persistence, our efforts are finally paying off.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

Mr. SCHUMER. On a final note, Madam President, last Thursday, I announced the slate of committee members for the 118th Congress on the Democratic side. I want to thank every one of my colleagues for their continued good work and readiness to make life better for the American people. I expect that, by the end of this week, we will have the full slate of all the committees fully locked in, enabling us to move forward on the important work we have before us.

We got a good deal—a tremendous amount—of bipartisan work done last year, and I am optimistic and hopeful that we can likewise continue this year in a productive, bipartisan spirit whenever possible. I look forward to having all committee memberships announced in full really soon.

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. MCCONNELL. 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 PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

AMERICAN ENERGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the new Republican House of Representatives has already done more to protect our Nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve than the single-party Democratic government did in the last 2 years.

First, House Republicans passed legislation that would ban the Federal Government from selling energy from the SPR to benefit our Nation's No. 1 strategic adversary—the Chinese Communist Party. Then, last week, the House followed on by passing H.R. 21, a bipartisan bill that would require the Department of Energy to offset any nonemergency drawdowns of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve by expanding access to America's abundant domestic energy on Federal lands. Speaker MCCARTHY and Chair CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS were right to make American energy security a top priority for their new majority.

It is too bad that it is even necessary to protect our Nation's emergency energy reserves from our own Commander in Chief and his party, but unfortunately the Biden administration has proven that it is necessary.

Last year, with his party hurting at the polls, President Biden released more than 200 million barrels, leaving America's strategic reserve at its lowest level since 1983. To make matters worse, this political gamble didn't just leave America less secure, it directly benefited China. President Biden's Department of Energy hadn't just sold off critical supplies; they sold some of them—listen to this—directly to a Chinese refining company.

Last year, Senate Republicans put every Democrat on the record with an amendment to clamp down on selling our strategic reserve to China. Senate Democrats blocked it. The Democratic Senators from States like West Virginia, Montana, and Ohio voted on party lines to let the Biden administration continue to sell our reserves to the CCP.

Democrats' recklessness with our energy reserves actually predates this particular administration. Remember back when oil prices were at historic lows during the early days of the COVID pandemic? We Republicans tried to refill the SPR to the top. We could have totally replenished our stockpile at bargain-basement prices. But the Senate Democrat leader blocked it and bragged about blocking it. Our colleague crowed that his party had stopped a "bailout for Big Oil." Of course, what he really blocked was a win-win for national security as well as the American taxpayer.

Washington Democrats have been dead wrong on how to handle our strategic reserve literally for years. This is just one symptom of their deep misunderstanding about energy, about the importance of American energy dominance and the way to achieve it.

Across the Atlantic, war in Ukraine has brought the vulnerability of Europe's dependence on Russian energy