



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 118th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 169

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2023

No. 149

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Shepherd of love, as we begin today's legislative session, we pause to acknowledge Your sovereignty. You are a God of might and miracles, and we are sustained by Your mercy. Today, lead our lawmakers beside still waters and replenish their spirits with Your power. As they grapple with the challenges of our time, give them a faith that will not shrink though pressed by many a foe. Lord, provide them with the wisdom to hear Your voice and the courage to obey Your precepts. Let Your hand rest on our Nation and lead it to a greatness that glorifies You.

We pray in Your powerful 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 (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 14, 2023.
To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK 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.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 4366, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 198, H.R. 4366, a bill making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

AI INSIGHT FORUM

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, yesterday, Senators from both sides of the aisle participated in one of the most informative and historic discussions ever held in the Congress.

Many of us came out of our first AI Insight Forum exhilarated. The debate was illuminating; the discussions, candid and unvarnished, and direct.

I want to thank Senators ROUNDS, HEINRICH, and YOUNG for joining me in leading the discussion. They helped make yesterday an all-out success.

I want to thank every Senator who attended. We had great turnout. I am told about 70 Senators from both parties attended, and I think we all left with a greater understanding and appreciation of AI's importance and complexity.

By the end of the day, everyone in the room did reach a consensus on a few important points.

First, Congress must play a role—must play a role—in regulating AI. One of the most striking moments at the forum was when I asked all of the participants—the critics, the experts, the developers alike—to raise their hands if they agreed that government had to be involved, and we had universal support. Not one person had their hand down.

Second, most everyone agreed that the government must also play a role promoting what we call transformational innovation. Bill Gates talked about AI's potential for combating hunger worldwide. Eric Schmidt talked about the way AI could help doctors do their job. Senator ROUNDS, in a touching moment, talked about losing his wife to cancer, which hit home to a lot of people in the room, as it does with millions and millions of Americans. And it led to a conversation about how AI can be used one day to model never-before-seen drugs to do the unthinkable: cure cancer.

But at the same time and with equal vehemence—maybe even more—we had a consensus on the need for guardrails for a sustainable innovation, because just as AI can be used to design cancer cures, it could also, if things went wrong, be used to make terrible bio-weapons or other dangers.

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



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I think everyone at the forum agreed that if we don't do anything on AI, then the lowest common denominator can occur: Racial bias that is in our society would be enshrined in AI; massive job displacement and even more unthinkable doomsday scenarios. So we talked about the need for not only transformational innovation that does the positive but for sustainable innovation, where the government installs guardrails to minimize these risks.

It is called sustainable because AI won't be able to go forward if we don't have guardrails to prevent the very serious downsides. And we agreed that only the government can fill the hole of creating and enforcing these guardrails, because even if a good number of private companies do the responsible thing and regulate themselves, there will always be outlier companies that don't, and that brings the lowest common denominator way down.

Finally, there was a consensus that we need to find balance between innovation and guardrails. This won't be easy, but it is essential. You can't go too far in either direction. We want to both maximize the benefits and minimize the risks, and if you go too far on one side, you may hurt the other. So Congress must pay attention to both. That ain't easy. This is going to be one of the toughest jobs the Congress has ever undertaken but one of the most important and one of the most necessary.

To be sure, we didn't cover everything in today's forum. We are just at the beginning. The conversation that began yesterday will continue into the fall and beyond when we host even more AI Insight Forums. Our committees, which will have to do the work—the real work—of crafting legislation, have already held a dozen hearings and are going to hold a lot more, using what we learn at the forums to help craft legislation.

Well, we have a lot of work in front of us, but yesterday's conversation gave the Senate a strong sense of where to begin, and it was a decided blow to the ostriches around here who might put their heads in the sand and say: It is too complicated. It is too difficult. Let's do nothing.

Thanks to all of our participants who came to yesterday's AI forum. Thanks to Senators ROUNDS and YOUNG and HEINRICH for hosting with me, and thanks to all of my colleagues who joined. Let's now look ahead to our second day AI Insight Forum, which will happen very soon.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Now, Mr. President, on Senate business, today, the Senate will take the next step in our bipartisan appropriations process. Later this morning, we will hold a vote on the motion to proceed to the minibus, which contains three spending bills: MILCON-VA, Agriculture, and Transportation-Housing, affectionately known around here as T-HUD.

Earlier this week, the first vote on this bill got an overwhelming 85-to-12

vote. That is yet another example of the bipartisan nature of our work here in the Senate to date, and I hope both sides come out in strong support of the vote in a few minutes. We should not slow this process down because once we are on the bill, I look forward to a constructive debate where both sides can secure votes on amendments.

Off the floor, the work of advancing the President's highly qualified nominees also continues. Today, the Judiciary Committee will hold a markup on another seven district judges, two U.S. attorneys, and other nominees.

I thank Chairman DURBIN and my colleagues on the Judiciary for their work. They have helped the U.S. Senate confirm over 140 judges, including 36 circuit judges, 104 district court judges, and, of course, Ketanji Brown Jackson, the historic nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court.

REPUBLICAN AGENDA

Mr. President, on Republican extremism, a lot has changed since I first arrived in Congress but nothing more so than the seismic shift in the Republican Party's support for the members of our great Armed Forces.

When I arrived in the House, Republican Representatives used to fall over each other to give speeches expressing support for those in uniform—the same when I arrived in the Senate. Their policies didn't always match the rhetoric, but the support truly seemed real and genuine. It no longer does. Oh, some of them may still use the rhetoric, but these days, the actions we see on the other side say more than all of the patriotic rhetoric on Earth.

Look at where we are. In the House, the Republicans can't even agree to debate a bill to fund the Defense Department and the intelligence community, and they balk at providing emergency aid to a democratic partner fighting off a Russian invasion. In the Senate, our Republican colleagues are more supportive of our Ukrainian friends, to their credit, but extremists in their ranks are blocking the promotion of hundreds of military leaders. And what does the Republican leadership do? Nothing—tacit approval of this nakedly cynical tactic. They are shrugging their shoulders and letting it go forward. The result? Real lives—real lives, families—trapped in limbo because a select few want to push the MAGA hard line on women's choice.

To my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, these servicemembers—the finest our military has to offer—are seemingly just numbers on the Senate calendar. The Senator from Alabama claims that no one is being harmed by his obstruction and that the leadership of his conference supports him.

Well, I say to my friends: These are not just numbers. Our armed services members are real people who have dedicated their lives to serving and defending our great country. They are real families, spouses, children whose lives have been put in limbo by the callous calculation of the Senator from

Alabama; officers who cannot assume their new assignments, spouses who cannot find jobs in new locations, families who cannot get settled in their new homes; kids who have to go to a new school can't start.

The bottom line is this: This is a Republican problem. It was created by the Senator from Alabama—no one else—and it is up to Republicans to put pressure on him to back off, plain and simple.

We already see that pressure mount. Last week, one of the major Republican Presidential candidates said that the Senator from Alabama ought to back off. Just a few days ago, the House chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee—one of the most respected, conservative Members of the House—said the same thing. But Senate Republican leaders need to step up. Yet here we are with extremists—extremists—of one party choosing to upend the lives of hundreds of dedicated and honorable military families.

I will continue to find a way to break this logjam and get these lives back on track.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 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 Republican leader is recognized.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, America's example and the threats posed by Russia and China are leading major allies and partners in Europe and Asia to step up their commitments to collective security and dramatically increase investments in their own defense.

It is worth pointing out once again that the United States is not—I repeat “not”—shouldering the burden for European free riders. In fact, when it comes to security assistance to Ukraine as a share of GDP, 14 of our European allies are actually giving more.

Lithuania—a small nation by any measure—has sent tens of thousands of rifles, handguns, and grenade launchers and millions of rounds of ammunition. Denmark and Estonia have sent their entire inventory of certain critical artillery. Larger allies, like the United Kingdom and France, are making remarkable contributions themselves, including longer range systems than the United States has provided. Even Germany, despite slow and sometimes agonizing decision making, has provided historic support to Ukraine and is the continent's largest provider of security assistance to Ukraine. Europe has more than doubled American economic and humanitarian assistance, not to

mention the massive cost of hosting millions of Ukrainian refugees.

But, like America, our allies are not in the business of philanthropy. As far away as Tokyo and Seoul, leaders are making a sober calculation about their interests. Our friends are making historic new investments in growing their arsenals and modernizing their militaries.

More than half of our NATO allies are now on track to hit the alliance's 2 percent spending target by the end of next year. Sweden, not yet a full-fledged NATO member, is increasing its defense spending next year by nearly 30 percent to invest in modern capabilities and meet its 2 percent of the GDP target. Lithuania, which spent less than 1 percent of its GDP on defense back in 2014, is set to spend over 2.5 percent next year.

To bolster their security, many of our allies are buying American. Since Russia's escalation began last February, our allies and partners across the globe have purchased over \$120 billion in advanced, American-made weapons systems.

Germany, Switzerland, Finland, and the Czech Republic have all moved quickly to sign contracts to purchase F-35s. Indonesia has signed up for nearly \$14 billion in F-15 fighter aircraft made in St. Louis, MO. Bulgaria—an economy roughly the size of the State of Maine—has spent \$1.5 billion on Stryker combat vehicles that are produced in Lima, OH, and Anniston, AL. Poland has ordered \$12 billion worth of Apache helicopters produced in Mesa, AZ, and is planning to buy 486 HIMARS launchers. They will have the biggest HIMARS inventory in the world.

Here is the most important part: When our friends and allies "Buy American," they are buying into a closer security relationship with the United States. They are building more interoperable militaries to strengthen deterrence. They are also lowering costs for the American taxpayer as we rebuild our own capabilities. They are sharing the burden of collective defense.

These investments are not a coincidence; they are a demonstration of the confidence our allies have in American leadership. But make no mistake, that confidence is perishable. As we saw with the disastrous retreat from Afghanistan, America can lose trust far more quickly than we can earn it.

If we pull the plug on our commitment to stand with Europe, our largest trading partner, I can guarantee it will shred our credibility as a security partner worldwide. It will make it harder to convince our allies to stand together against Chinese aggression—the single biggest threat to our own security and prosperity.

TRIBUTE TO MIKE DUNCAN

Mr. President, today, I join folks in my home State in thanking Mike Duncan for his decades-long service to the Kentucky Republican Party as he steps down as our national committeeman.

In Washington, it is rare to find an individual equally skilled at navigating the worlds of business and politics, but my good friend Mike is just that rare hybrid. Despite his success in standing up a chain of community banks, Mike chose to commit his considerable talents to public service. He would serve terms as Governor of the U.S. Postal Service, chairman of the Republican National Committee, and chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority, on top of a number of impressive positions under five Republican Presidents. In my home State, Mike has served as a national committeeman for the Kentucky GOP since 1992, advising the Republican leaders at the local, State, and national levels his entire career.

Early on, Mike had a gift for giving that he shared generously with the people of my home State. When Mike and his wife Joanne first moved to East Kentucky, they committed to spending at least 1 day a week doing something to benefit their community.

Since then, Mike has devoted decades to student mentorship, training young people in Appalachia, and sponsoring their continued education. His lifetime of civic service has been recognized by a number of prestigious organizations.

Somehow, between raising a family and serving his country, Mike found time to develop a close circle of friends, which I am grateful to be a part of. Mike has been a trusted source of counsel, and I am thankful to always have him in my corner.

So as Mike steps away from his national role, I am grateful he will continue to be a leader in our State party and in his own community.

Thank you, Mike. Thank you for your decades of friendship and your service to our country. Elaine and I wish you and Joanne all the best.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Washington.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I urge all of our colleagues who have come to me and to the Senator from Maine to talk about the need for regular order to vote yes now on this motion to proceed. I will have more to say about what we all need to do to keep this process moving, but this vote is important if we want to make sure that Senators will have the opportunity to speak out for their values and their constituents.

So I urge a yes vote on the motion to proceed, and let's get going on an agreement, as soon as possible, so Sen-

ators can vote and debate and act on amendments. That is what regular order is, and that is what everyone has told me is exactly what they want and what I have been hearing all year from Senators on both sides of the aisle.

Let's keep up the bipartisanship. Let's get to work.

VOTE ON MOTION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, all postcloture time is expired.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 91, nays 7, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 228 Leg.]

YEAS—91

Baldwin	Grassley	Reed
Barrasso	Hagerty	Risch
Bennet	Hassan	Romney
Blackburn	Heinrich	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Booker	Hirono	Rubio
Boozman	Hoeven	Sanders
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Schatz
Brown	Johnson	Schumer
Budd	Kaine	Scott (SC)
Cantwell	Kelly	Shaheen
Capito	Kennedy	Sinema
Cardin	King	Smith
Carper	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Casey	Lankford	Sullivan
Cassidy	Lee	Tester
Collins	Manchin	Thune
Coons	Markey	Tillis
Cornyn	Marshall	Tuberville
Cortez Masto	McConnell	Van Hollen
Cotton	Menendez	Vance
Cramer	Merkley	Warner
Crapo	Moran	Warnock
Daines	Mullin	Warren
Durbin	Murkowski	Welch
Ernst	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wicker
Fetterman	Ossoff	Wyden
Fischer	Padilla	Young
Gillibrand	Paul	
Graham	Peters	

NAYS—7

Braun	Lummis	Scott (FL)
Cruz	Ricketts	
Hawley	Schmitt	

NOT VOTING—2

Duckworth	Luján
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The motion was agreed to.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2024

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4366) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024, and for other purposes.