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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of our eternal hope, those who serve You live in Your presence. Give our lawmakers the wisdom to follow Your teachings. Let Your precepts lead them to make laws that will help the marginalized and strengthen our Nation's moral foundation. May Your wisdom provide them with strategies to defeat the enemies of liberty. Remind them that You have a plan which enables Your will to be done on Earth even as it is done in Heaven. Lord, instill in our Senators the courage to obey Your commands, the grace to pray for their enemies, and the power to persevere in doing what is right.

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 executive clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 21, 2023.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable BEN RAY LUJÁN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. LUJÁN 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.

The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant executive clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

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

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 3935

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant executive clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3935) to amend title 49, United States Code, to reauthorize and improve the Federal Aviation Administration and other civil aviation programs, and for other purposes.

Mr. SCHUMER. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provi-

sions of rule XIV, I would object to further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

UKRAINE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, earlier this morning, it was my distinct honor, along with Leader MCCONNELL, to welcome Ukrainian President Zelenskyy to the United States. It is always a privilege to welcome a foreign head of state to the Capitol, but rarely in history have we heard directly from a leader who is fighting for his country's survival and fighting to preserve the idea of democracy.

I told the Members that, right now, this courageous man is at the fulcrum of democracy and freedom. And my message to President Zelenskyy and to my colleagues was simple: America must always stand with our friends around the world, and that includes the people of Ukraine.

President Zelenskyy could not have arrived at a more crucial moment for his country and for Congress. Right now, Ukraine is engaged in a major counteroffensive against Putin's forces to reclaim their own territory and turn the tide of their bloody and brutal conflict. But it is also a moment for Congress too. It is very clear that if we were to have a government shutdown or pass a CR without Ukrainian aid, the damage to Ukraine's campaign would be devastating.

In fact, to quote President Zelenskyy, in the room—and this is a quote—he said: If we don't get the aid, we will lose the war.

That is a quote from President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. That is how stark the issue is. Nothing would make Putin happier right now than to see the United States waver in our support for the Ukrainian people.

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



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This is not just about Ukrainian security, but as President Zelenskyy reminded us, it is about American security, as well, because a victorious Putin would be an emboldened Putin.

What is the point of cutting off support now, when we are at a turning point in the war, when we have invested a large amount of resources to get to this turning point? To be sure, there are some on the hard right who say we should abandon Ukraine and negotiate with Putin. It is ironic that the hard right, which historically opposed communism, now openly flirts with autocrats like Putin.

Giving Putin what he wants, for America to abandon Ukraine—that is what Putin wants—would be a terrible, terrible mistake and one I think that would come back to haunt us more rapidly and quickly than people believe.

Now is not the time to take our foot off the gas when it comes to helping Ukraine. Turning our backs would make the world less safe for American democracy.

I commend President Zelenskyy for his leadership during this unprecedented moment in his country's history. I thank him for his visit. I thank him for his courage. I thank him for his steadfastness. And I will keep working to ensure we continue supporting the Ukrainian people.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the CR, an ominous case of déjà vu is playing out this week in the House of Representatives. A national crisis is around the corner. The solution demands bipartisanship, but Speaker MCCARTHY is wasting precious time catering to the hard, hard MAGA right. Catering to the hard right didn't work during the default crisis, and it will not work here in the shutdown crisis.

It has been a troublesome, vexing week for the House of Representatives. A few days ago, House Republicans released what they called the deal on a CR but which, in reality, read like a House Freedom Caucus screed. It called for a devastating 8-percent cut on virtually all nondefense spending. It would have gutted law enforcement funding, border protection, nutrition benefits, and so much more. But that still wasn't extreme enough for MAGA Republicans.

The House GOP's latest proposals are even more extreme, call for even greater cuts, and stand even less of a chance of passing the U.S. Senate. House Republicans are still trying to appease the most hard-right elements of their conference. It is almost as if a small handful are deciding what the whole body of 435 Members should do. It makes no sense. And the hard right, many of them, publicly say they want the government to shut down, despite the fact that it would hurt so many.

So that is what seems the Republican leadership is doing, instead of pursuing the one path we all know will work: bi-

partisanship. Instead of decreasing the chances of a shutdown, Speaker MCCARTHY is actually increasing it by wasting time on extremist proposals that everyone knows—he knows—cannot become law.

Let me say that again. Instead of decreasing the chance of a shutdown, Speaker MCCARTHY is actually increasing it by wasting time on extremist proposals that cannot become law.

In the Senate, many of us are united in the need for more Ukraine aid, but the hard-right proposals in the House fail to provide any. In the Senate, only an agreement that can get votes from both parties will be able to pass, but the hard-right proposals have all been drafted with zero Democratic input and zero effort to even appear bipartisan.

So for all the efforts Speaker MCCARTHY has spent on trying to find something that makes MAGA Republicans happy, there is no scenario where we avoid a shutdown without a bipartisan agreement. If the Speaker continues down on the path he is on, the odds of a shutdown, sadly, go up, and Americans will know that the responsibility of a shutdown will be on the Republicans' hands.

TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on TPS, yesterday, the Biden administration announced they will designate temporary protection status for Venezuela, giving migrants from that country relief from removal and the ability to get work authorization. This decision will affect more than half of the newly arrived asylum seekers in New York.

The administration's announcement is welcome news and one many of us in the New York congressional delegation have been calling on for months. I wrote to Secretaries Blinken and Mayorkas, in July, that country conditions in Venezuela clearly met the criteria for TPS. So this is a good step forward.

TPS will give much needed relief for New York systems currently straining to support newly arrived immigrants. It is going to save New York taxpayer dollars, and it will allow migrants from Venezuela who are seeking asylum to find temporary employment, support themselves and their families, contribute to our economy, and reduce the shelter burden that New York is now undergoing.

So this is very, very welcome news. Many of these migrants can now, hopefully, get closer to finding work and finding shelter, which they need, and I thank the Biden administration for taking this step.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant executive 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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks, followed by Senator ERNST for 3 minutes, prior to the scheduled rollcall votes.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

CHINA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning, I was proud to welcome President Zelenskyy to the Capitol. I was glad our colleagues had an opportunity to hear from him firsthand and ask questions about the state of Ukraine's counteroffensive.

At the risk of repeating myself, American support for Ukraine is not charity. It is an investment in our own direct interests, not least because degrading Russia's military power helps to deter our primary strategic adversary, China.

As I have discussed this week, competition with China is a global proposition. But increasingly, the Biden administration's approach to the PRC reflects a faulty assessment of the challenge this competition presents.

A few weeks ago, the Secretary of Commerce visited Beijing to tend the soft power of American businesses in China. Unfortunately, the PRC had already targeted Secretary Raimondo with hard power, successfully stealing her official email in a cyber attack just weeks earlier.

To the extent that economic relations with China are deteriorating, it is because on President Xi's watch, Americans and other foreign businesses are facing a state that increasingly expropriates companies, steals intellectual property, welds workers inside of apartment buildings, and forces business leaders to attend communist indoctrination sessions.

So the Biden administration is uninterested in negotiating trade deals with our allies and partners. But it seems desperate to double down on trade with Communist China.

PRC officials publicly mocked Secretary Raimondo's efforts as "doomed to fail" and vowed that "China will never let down individual vigilance because of a few 'beautiful words' from the U.S."

This is hardly the only time the Biden administration has tilted at windmills, literally and figuratively. Remember special climate envoy John Kerry's own recent trip to Beijing. He sought common ground on green energy goals with a nation that publicly pledged not to stop increasing carbon