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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.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.

Almighty God, our rock and fortress, You put the mountains in place and bring silence to roaring waves. We celebrate and sing because You are always with us. You are a strong tower where we find safety. Strengthen our faith and forgive us when we doubt Your power and providence. Thank You for this great land and for the many freedoms we sometimes take for granted.

Lord, we appreciate Your faithfulness and Your mercies that are new each day. Today, lead our lawmakers so that Your Name will be honored.

And, Lord, bless Senator MCCONNELL with a speedy recovery.

We pray in Your marvelous 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 701

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

I understand that there is a bill at the desk that is due for a second reading.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 701) to protect a person's ability to determine whether to continue or end a pregnancy, and to protect a health care provider's ability to provide abortion services.

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

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

MITCH MCCONNELL

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, my thoughts this morning are with my good friend Leader MITCH MCCONNELL, who is recovering in the hospital after an accident last night.

This morning, I offer a prayer of strength and healing for the leader and his family. I called the leader this morning and spoke briefly with his staff to extend my prayers and well wishes. My thoughts are also with Leader MCCONNELL's family and his team.

I join every single one of my colleagues in wishing Leader MCCONNELL a speedy and full recovery.

BUDGET

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on the President's budget, today, as we all know, President Biden will release his budget for fiscal year 2024.

As promised, the President's budget is set to be a bold, optimistic, and seri-

ous proposal for strengthening our economy and creating opportunities to climb into the middle class as well as helping people stay there once they get in the middle class.

The President's budget succeeds where Republicans have failed by presenting a realistic blueprint for lowering the deficit without cutting benefits tens of millions of Americans rely upon. Unlike the Republicans, the President's plan actually protects Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid while building on Democrats' work to lower prescription drug costs and save taxpayer dollars.

Again, Republicans love to talk about deficit cuts and saving tax dollars, but Democrats are the ones actually getting it done.

The President's budget prioritizes a strong defense. It offers robust support for Ukraine, which, after last night's brutal missile barrage, remains as urgent as ever.

Unlike Republicans, the President's plan invests in America instead of starving it. The President's budget invests in advanced manufacturing and high-tech jobs and scientific research, job training, education, and apprenticeships.

The President's budget asks the wealthiest Americans to pay just a little more of their fair share in taxes so that programs like Medicare remain solvent for decades. Just about all Americans think this is just plain fair because there is no justification for the ultrawealthy to have a lower tax burden on a percentage basis than teachers and nurses and cabdrivers and firefighters.

I want to thank President Biden for laying down an optimistic, forward-thinking vision for our country. This is what Americans want. They want real stuff. They want positive thinking about the future, help for those in the middle class to stay there, and for those struggling to get to the middle class, to make it a little easier to get there.

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



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But I really want to thank my Republican colleagues who have done a great job in highlighting all of the ways they want to cut health programs and give the ultrarich yet another pay-day. I am impressed at how effectively Republicans are making the argument on Democrats' behalf because, while Democrats want to help average Americans, a group of House Republicans is working right now with former Trump Budget Director Russell Vought to carry out a budget outline with drastic cuts that would harm tens of millions of people. Vought is a hard-right guy. He hates government even when it helps people.

According to the New York Times, Republicans in the House are considering proposals that would cut hundreds of billions from everything from the FBI to things like Pell grant eligibility and even Medicaid.

I recently saw—catch this, Madam President. I recently saw one House Republican frame spending cuts as a matter of courage. That is what one House Republican said. Well, there is nothing courageous about taking SNAP benefits away from hungry kids. There is nothing courageous about cutting national security or constricting Pell grant eligibility. There is nothing courageous about cutting housing and funding for police and firefighters while doing nothing—nothing—to get wealthy Americans to pay their fair share. How dare Republicans say it is courageous to make those cuts.

Finally, the ball is now in Speaker MCCARTHY's court. Today is March 9, and there is still one big question all of us are asking: Speaker MCCARTHY, where is your plan?

The debt ceiling must be raised soon. House Republicans say they won't do it without painful cuts to our country, which Democrats fiercely reject, but to this day, Americans have no idea where Republicans truly stand on Federal spending cuts, whether it is dealing with the debt ceiling or proposing a budget itself. All we have are various proposals like Mr. Vought's, which, if passed, would wreck our country and do huge damage to working families.

Speaker MCCARTHY, again, where is your plan? Where is your plan in regard to the debt ceiling? Where is your plan in regard to the budget?

The President has done his job by showing where Democrats stand. Speaker MCCARTHY needs to come clean with the American people and spell out precisely what cuts he plans and explain how these cuts will put the pain on average families.

FOX NEWS

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Madam President, in terms of FOX News, most Members of this Chamber were present the day the insurrectionists attacked the Capitol on January 6. We saw it with our own eyes. I was within 20, 30 feet of these hooligans. One of them allegedly screamed out "Let's get him,"

pointing at me. Thousands of Trump supporters broke through police barricades, assaulted officers, and smashed through windows to enter the building. Our offices were ransacked. Staffers hid behind closed doors and beneath conference tables, trembling in fear for their safety.

My point is this: Those of us who were here on January 6 know the attack was a violent insurrection, including Speaker MCCARTHY. The Speaker has now had multiple chances to denounce FOX News for lying to the American people about January 6, but instead of speaking out against FOX's lies, the Speaker is sticking his head in the sand, saying he hasn't watched Tucker Carlson's broadcast.

MCCARTHY gives Carlson the tapes. He knows how inflammatory and dishonest Tucker Carlson is. He knows how dangerous this is. And he doesn't even take the time to watch the segment? That is unacceptable. It is outrageous. For Speaker MCCARTHY not even to watch the spoiled fruits of his labor shows a callousness and unconcern far beneath the dignity of the Speaker's office.

Senators, thankfully, from both sides of the aisle have called out FOX News for lying. Leader MCCONNELL has acknowledged FOX News's lying. The Capitol Police chief, in sticking up for his own officers, has called out FOX News for lying. Every leader on Capitol Hill has done the right thing by calling out FOX News's lies except for Speaker MCCARTHY.

By remaining silent, Speaker MCCARTHY is empowering Tucker Carlson's lies. The Speaker is outing himself as a January 6 denier, in complete accord and in line with Tucker Carlson. It is a shame.

RAIL SAFETY

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on the railroads, this morning, Norfolk Southern's CEO, Alan Shaw, will testify before the Environment and Public Works Committee, where he will be held to account for his company's pattern of negligence when it comes to safety regulations.

My questions to Mr. Shaw remain the same: Why did Norfolk Southern spend years lobbying for looser regulations to prevent accidents like this, particularly when Donald Trump was President? Despite seeing a record \$3.3 billion in profits last year, why did Norfolk Southern prioritize billions in stock buybacks instead of investing in safety equipment or in their workers? What is Norfolk Southern doing to prevent future accidents like the one in East Palestine? And God forbid another one happens, how will Norfolk Southern ensure communities get the resources they need to respond to them?

I expect Mr. Shaw to answer these questions. The American people expect Mr. Shaw to answer these questions. And we expect a candid, frank, and honest discussion about the dangers of

rail companies like Norfolk Southern maximizing profits at the expense of everything else, even people's safety.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, finally, on the nominations front, today will be a busy day on the Senate floor.

Later this morning, we will confirm Daniel Werfel to serve as Commissioner for the IRS. Mr. Werfel's confirmation will bring important benefits to the American people because when the IRS is better staffed, more Americans can benefit from the tax credits—significant tax credits—we approved last year through legislation like CHIPS and Science and the IRA and other legislation as well.

First, Republicans wanted to cut IRS agents, which hurts the American people because they have to wait longer in line to get help with filing their taxes, and it lets the rich get away without paying their fair share of taxes.

No ultrawealthy American should ever pay less on a percentage basis than a nurse or a cabdriver. This nomination, plus the addition of IRS agents in the bill, will make it far more likely the wealthy will pay their fair share. As we know, under Donald Trump, auditing the ultrawealthy went way down, while people on the EITC, the earned income tax credit, who were making about \$40,000 a year, were being audited over and over again.

It also makes it more likely that when Americans need help, they won't have to wait hours or days or weeks to get in touch with an IRS agent.

We will also confirm today two more exceptional judges: James Edward Simmons, Jr., to serve as district judge for the Southern District of California, and Maria Kahn to serve on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. Both Mr. Simmons and Ms. Kahn are remarkable legal minds, with impressive résumés. Their confirmations will strengthen our Federal courts and help restore Americans' trust in an independent and impartial judiciary.

I look forward to getting these three nominees confirmed, and I thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle for their bipartisan support.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Daniel I.