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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Holy God, sustainer of humanity, if it were not for Your love, our burdens would be too heavy and the journey would seem too difficult. But because of Your mercies, we can mount up on wings like eagles.

Draw near to our Senators today. Breathe upon their thinking with Your truth and illuminate their understanding with Your light. May the pressures of the world not intimidate them, but may they receive Your strength so that they can shape our Nation and world according to Your purposes.

Lord, maintain in them the fidelity of those to whom much has been given. May this be for them a productive day because they have placed their trust in Your strong and guiding hands.

We pray in your Sacred 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 16, 2024.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. DUCKWORTH 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 820

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

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

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 820) to direct the Federal Communications Commission to publish a list of entities that hold authorizations, licenses, or other grants of authority issued by the Commission and that have certain foreign ownership, and for other purposes.

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

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

U.S. SECRET SERVICE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, yesterday afternoon, I spoke with Secret Service Acting Director Rowe after an armed suspect was arrested after fleeing from former President Trump's golf course in West Palm Beach, FL.

I will say what I have said many times before: There is no place in America for political violence of any kind.

I am glad the former President is safe, and I applaud the Secret Service and all first responders for acting quickly before anyone got hurt.

As for the perpetrator, he should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

We all must do our part to ensure an incident like this does not happen again. This means that Congress has a responsibility to ensure the Secret Service and all law enforcement have the resources they need to do their jobs. So as we continue the appropriations process, if the Secret Service is in need of more resources, we are prepared to provide it for them, possibly in the upcoming funding agreement.

RIGHT TO IVF ACT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on IVF, 2 years ago, Donald Trump and the MAGA Supreme Court succeeded in overturning Roe and ripping away the right to choose from millions of Americans. This year, as we have seen in States like Alabama, the hard right has its sights on a new target, IVF.

So, tomorrow, the Senate will take up Senator DUCKWORTH's—your bill, Madam President—Senator DUCKWORTH's bill, the Right to IVF Act, to establish a nationwide right to IVF and make it easier for people to access this vital treatment.

This is the very same legislation that almost every single Senate Republican voted against earlier this summer. This

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



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past weekend, in New York, I stood with some amazing families—some amazing parents and their beautiful baby, a miracle of IVF—to say that we Democrats will do everything we can to protect access to IVF, and I hope that in this Chamber we will be joined by our Republican colleagues when we vote tomorrow, because tomorrow we will take up Senator DUCKWORTH's Right to IVF Act.

The vast majority of Americans support requiring insurance plans to cover IVF treatments, and I bet every one of us knows someone who has struggled with infertility at one point or another. In my own family, IVF was the answer to our prayers. I have a beautiful grandchild thanks to the miracle of IVF, and I could not bear to imagine the pain we would feel if we were told: Sorry, you are out of luck.

If Republicans truly stand on the side of families, as they regularly claim, then they should leap at the opportunity to protect people's right to access IVF. They should stand ready to pass a bill that makes this treatment available on insurance plans. They should vote yes tomorrow. Of course, we are already beginning to hear the same tired, predictable, and unconvincing excuses from our Republican colleagues looking for a way to vote against IVF protections.

To my Republican colleagues: If you truly support IVF, then vote for a bill that actually protects IVF through the letter of the law.

Republicans cannot claim to be pro-family on the one hand, while then voting against IVF protection bills on the other. Americans are much smarter than that.

Republicans had a chance to back up their rhetoric with action when we voted earlier this year, and nearly all of them failed. I hope tomorrow will bring a different result. The American people will be watching.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on the CR, legislators now have roughly 2 weeks to reach an agreement to keep the government open beyond the September 30 deadline. It is not really much time at all. In order to avoid a shutdown, the worst thing our colleagues in the House can do right now is waste time on proposals that don't have broad, bipartisan support. But that is what the Speaker and his Republican colleagues have been doing all month long, and it is already September 16.

Mr. Speaker JOHNSON, you know as well as everyone else that your plan is a no-go as currently written. A 6-month CR with poison pills is not going to fly in a narrowly divided government.

CRs are always meant to be a short-term extension funding to give appropriators more time to do their work. They are not meant to be a substitute for Congress doing its job.

And if the hard right thinks that we will willingly give them leverage to ram Project 2025 down the American people's throats early next year by agreeing to a 6-month CR, they are dreaming. MAGA radicals are hoping they can use the threat of a shutdown next spring to pass the very worst of Project 2025. They want to cut the Department of Education. They want to eliminate Head Start. They want to privatize Fannie and Freddie, raising mortgage rates, making it harder to buy a home. They want to monitor women's pregnancies—monitor them—and potentially cut VA funding and more. We cannot—we will not—let that happen.

But even before we get to all of that, pushing for a CR that lasts 6 months, as the Speaker wants, would also mean that a slew of critical programs would still be shortchanged. It would be awful for our military. You simply cannot run the military with a 6-month stopgap—little surprise that even many House Republicans recognize the Speaker's current approach is the wrong one.

The answer to the Speaker's problem is not very complicated. The Speaker should drop his current proposal and work with both parties on an extension that prioritizes keeping the government open—open without pushing poison pills. We are happy to work with him.

Now, despite all its flaws, there are some bits of good news in the Speaker's proposal that I hope we can build on. I am very heartened that the Speaker's current proposal preserves the essence of the Schumer-Johnson agreement from early this year, the one that set top-line funding levels for fiscal year 2024.

This is a good sign because, last September, Speaker McCarthy wasted precious time trying to pass a CR that curried favor with the hard right through very deep, brutal funding cuts. In the end, that approach didn't work, and Speaker McCarthy was removed from the speakership anyway because of the radicals on his right flank.

For now, Speaker JOHNSON seems to be taking a different approach, and it is not pushing for across-the-board cuts as part of his CR. That is good news. It is a sign Speaker JOHNSON may be accepting the reality that any deal we reach will have to include the spending levels we agreed to earlier this year.

To be clear, there are still far too many omissions in his current proposal, and a 6-month timeline is not acceptable, but I hope we have a foundation on which to build upon. Make no mistake about it—the clock is ticking. We have until September 30 before the government shuts down.

If the government shuts down, it will be average Americans who suffer most. A government shutdown means seniors who rely on Social Security could be thrown into chaos as the Social Security Administration limits certain services, like benefit verifications or

fixing errors in payments. Our veterans could see regional VA offices shut down and support services put on halt. Some of our military servicemembers could be forced to work without pay. Families who benefit from WIC and other nutrition programs could see benefits halted. And a shutdown would shake the confidence of our economic recovery—something we can't possibly afford at a time like this.

If a shutdown happens because of Republican poison pills, the American people are going to hold them responsible.

We don't need to go down this road. We still have a little time to reach a bipartisan agreement. So I hope the Speaker drops his current plan.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, now on judges, finally, after today, the Senate will reach another great milestone in our effort to confirm more strong judges. With today's vote on Kevin Ritz to serve as a circuit court judge for the Sixth Circuit, the Senate will reach 210 judges confirmed under President Biden.

Mr. Ritz would be an excellent addition to the Federal bench. He is rated "well qualified" by the ABA and has spent his entire career with the U.S. Attorney's Office. Seventy-five percent of all the cases he has worked on have been criminal proceedings. In trial, he has won convictions on everything from carjackings, to firearm offenses, to robbery. On the merits, he deserves confirmation.

I thank Chairman DURBIN, members of the Judiciary Committee, and all my colleagues who have helped us reach 210 judges. Many have been bipartisan. I am glad to say. And once we finish with Mr. Ritz, we will keep going.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam 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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRUMP ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I am dismayed to begin another week with news of an assassination attempt against a former President. We are certainly all grateful once again that the worst outcome was avoided.

This ought to be a moment of soul-searching for all Americans. It is a