United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 167 WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021 *No. 80*

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 11, 2021, at 2 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MAY 10, 2021

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MAZIE K. HIRONO, a Senator from the State of Hawaii.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, vindicate those who cling to the truth. They seek to walk on Your path, to honor You with their work, and to glorify You with their lives. May these lawmakers remember that You are their light and salvation, bestowing mercy and honor on them.

Lord, You refuse to withhold any good thing from those who walk blameless before You. Continue to strengthen our Senators, who strive to please You with their thoughts, words, and actions. Empower them as they seek and pursue peace for our Nation and world.

We pray in Your great 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 (Mr. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 10, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MAZIE K. HIRONO, a Senator from the State of Hawaii, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. HIRONO thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, like all of my colleagues, I spent last week traveling my home State. I spoke with Kentuckians about where we have come over the past 15 months, where we are today, and the bright future we should have ahead.

More than 1.8 million Kentuckians have received COVID vaccines. These medical miracles were created in record time by genius scientists plus Operation Warp Speed. And they are proving the pathway back to normalcy that we had hoped for.

I was happy to get to visit the Baptist Health Hardin Memorial Hospital in Elizabethtown to hear about their vaccination program and to thank the staff for all of their work.

We should be on track for a fantastic American comeback summer, full steam ahead. From vaccinations to job growth, the new Biden administration inherited favorable trends in every direction, thanks to the five bipartisan rescue packages that Congress passed just last year.

But in several important ways, the decisions of elected Democrats have contributed to slowing the return to normalcy. We have seen some State and local officials bow to Big Labor and soft-pedal the clear science on school reopenings. And the big bill that Washington Democrats pushed through a couple of months ago did not require schools to reopen in order to receive even more extra funding.

The President and his team keep sending mixed messages about gatherings and wearing masks that sometimes break from their own CDC's guidance for vaccinated Americans. Again, there almost seems to be some reluctance to let go of emergency measures, even to the point of clashing with science.

And what about our economic recovery? Back in March, Democrats rammed through their so-called American Rescue Plan with a $2 trillion partisan spending spree. It is packed with policies that seem designed for March 2020, not March 2021; for example: continuing to use taxpayer dollars to pay a special bonus for unemployed people to stay home rather than filling one of the growing number of job openings around the country.

Republicans had this crazy idea that with vaccines flooding the country, with COVID–19 in retreat, it was time

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

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to actually reopen our country instead of spending even more of working families' tax dollars to keep things shut down.

Well, a few days ago, experts were stunned by a monthly jobs report for April that came in way below expectations. It was the first full month of data collected after the Democrats passed their so-called rescue plan. This bill they sold as a fast-acting, urgent, emergency measure that was going to bolster our economy right away. This report was expected to show that more than a million American workers had gotten jobs back in the month of April. Instead, we added about one-fourth that many jobs.

Now, I had just spent the prior week talking with Kentuckians. I spoke with workers and employers at nearly every size of business from just about every kind of industry, all across the spectrum. And from big national companies to local chambers of commerce, to businesses like Manchester Tank in Campbellsville, we heard optimism but also real concerns—concerns about inflation and runaway costs, concerns about backed-up supply chains.

And as Washington pays workers a bonus to stay unemployed, virtually everyone discussed very real concerns about their difficulties in finding workers who are willing to come back and fill these open positions. Almost every employer I spoke with specifically mentioned the extra generous jobless benefits as a key force holding back our recovery.

Now, I have heard some Democrats say that whatever incentives Washington creates, the responsibility really falls on workers. But my friends on the other side can't use the American people to shield their own bad ideas from scrutiny. Policy matters. Incentives matter.

It is May of 2021. Vaccines are available nationwide. There are millions of jobs open, ''Help Wanted'' signs from coast to coast. We should not still be taxing the Americans who are working to fund continued extra benefits for those staying home.

It is not March of 2020 anymore. It is May of 2021. Kentuckians and all Americans need our Democratic friends to govern accordingly.

NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on another matter, yesterday marked the beginning of National Police Week. Under normal circumstance, we would be welcoming police officers across the country here to Washington to share experiences and commemorate brothers and sisters who have fallen in the line of duty.

This year, I understand many of the in-person gatherings have been postponed until this autumn. But we are still remembering our law enforcement officers as we prepare for Police Officers Memorial Day on May 15.

The past year has seen the difficult job of law enforcement become even harder. They have battled the challenges of the historic pandemic. In many places, they have grappled with increased violent crime rates and unrest. And following terrible incidents this past year, the majority of brave and honorable law enforcement officers have too often found themselves painted unfairly with a broad brush, as though their entire profession should be defined by the worst examples.

This year's remembrances will be especially somber here at the Capitol, where we are still mourning Officers Billy Evans, Howie Liebengood, and Brian Sicknick, whom we have lost in a matter of months.

I hope police officers throughout our country, from the Capitol to Kentucky and all 50 States, know how very grateful we are for their courage and for their service.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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 MAJORITY LEADER

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

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the last time we observed Mother's Day, most of the country could not spend time with their parents or have their kids spend time with them. Standing outside of a window and waving to mom was the closest you could get. I remember that. So this year, I was beyond grateful to celebrate with my mother and my daughters in person. I know the same was true for Americans across the country. As COVID–19 continues to recede—and more than half of eligible adults have received at least one shot of the vaccine after a very painful and difficult year—it was another sign that our country is turning the corner. Praise God.

Now, as we begin this work period, the Senate will continue working to help the country recover and build back stronger than ever. That includes filling vacancies in the executive branch with highly qualified public servants.

This week, the Senate will consider the nomination of Andrea Palm for Deputy HHS Secretary and Cynthia Marten, a teacher of 17 years, to serve as the next Deputy Education Secretary. There will be additional nominations on the floor as the week goes on. At the committee level, at least half a dozen other nominees will have their markups.

There will be plenty of legislative action off the floor as well. Discussions continue on a potential, bipartisan infrastructure bill, gun safety legislation, and policing reform.

On Wednesday, the Senate Commerce Committee will begin to mark up the Endless Frontier Act, bipartisan legislation that would invest in our scientific and technologic capabilities and help the United States outcompete China and other nations in a number of emerging industries. There have been extremely constructive bipartisan talks over the last week, and I am fully supportive of the product that will be considered in Wednesday's committee meeting.

In addition, a number of other Senate committees are working on bipartisan legislation to improve our competitiveness and make the United States a world leader in advanced manufacturing, innovation, and supply chains.

It is my intention to have the full Senate consider comprehensive competitive legislation during this work period.

This week, the Senate Rules Committee will also mark up S. 1, a bill to strengthen our democracy, increase transparency in our campaign finance system, and make it easier for all Americans to vote. The Senate Democratic majority named this bill ''S. 1'' because it is a very top priority. The majority gets to name the first five bills of any new Congress. We picked the For the People Act to be S. 1 for a reason. Make no mistake, we are moving forward with S. 1 in the Rules Committee this week. I will attend the markup tomorrow.

As a reminder to my colleagues, I have committed to bring S. 1 to the floor of the Senate. As the Rules Committee prepares to amend and advance S. 1, our Republican colleagues face a critical choice between working with Democrats in good faith to pass law to protect our democracy or siding with Republican State legislatures that are orchestrating the largest contraction of voting rights in decades. There is no reason our two parties can't work together on S. 1. In fact, the legislation has already been updated and improved. It now includes input from election officials across the country, including Republican election officials.

I am sure we will see additional amendments to mark up tomorrow. For example, I understand my colleague from Georgia, Senator OSSOFF, will offer an amendment to ban States from restricting volunteers from giving food and water to Americans waiting in line to vote. You would think such a provision would be unnecessary, but, sadly, giving voters food or water while they are waiting in long lines has just been criminalized by the State of Georgia.

Look, we know our Republican colleagues don't like every aspect of S. 1, but will they work in good faith to improve it? Will they offer revisions or new ideas to protect voting rights, or,