

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for over 2 years, the Biden administration has failed to attend to some of the most basic governing duties. Stable prices, secure borders, and safe streets are three of the most fundamental responsibilities that any government owes its people.

But Washington Democrats neglected the basics for their pet priorities. They spent trillions of dollars on government goodies that nobody asked for, triggered the worst inflation in 40 years, and turned a blind eye to the border crisis and a crime wave, all occurring on their watch.

They caused the damage on party-line votes, without any input from the Republican side. In response, the American people flipped the House and chose a closely divided Senate. The voters dialed up the checks and the balances. The people went to the ballot box and demanded the Democrats start negotiating and compromising.

But the President is refusing to engage. Even as his own advisers say the debt ceiling is approaching fast, the White House is totally MIA. His position has been no negotiation, no reforms.

It is such an absurd position that even fellow Democrats are not buying it. The senior Senator from West Virginia, a Democrat, has publicly called on the President to sit down with Speaker MCCARTHY and negotiate.

Listen to the House Democrats: "Get to work and get it done for the sake of the country," says one. "They've got to do it soon," says another.

Just a few years ago, the Democratic leader said debt limit talks were an "opportunity for bipartisanship."

And what about President Biden himself? Here is what then-Vice President Biden said about the debt ceiling back in 2011. "Some of them are still unwilling to budge . . . taking an absolute position: my way or no way. . . . That's not governing," said the Vice President in 2011.

My goodness, that is harsh criticism for the 2023 version of President Biden from the 2011 version of Vice President Biden.

The Democrats' reckless policies have already dealt far too much damage to our country. This administration's inflation has hammered working families' budgets. Their anti-energy policies have raised gas prices and utility bills. Their attempt to reinvent cash welfare without work requirements hurt small businesses by worsening labor shortages and hurt families by promoting dependence.

So the working people of this country have already paid a heavy enough price for Democrats' failures. We should not even come within a mile of flirting with a Democratic debt default on top of all the rest.

It is time for President Biden to stop the partisan stubbornness, join Speak-

er MCCARTHY at the grownups' table, and get talking.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion. The motion was agreed to.

REMOVING THE DEADLINE FOR THE RATIFICATION OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT—Motion to Proceed

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 3, S.J. Res. 4.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 3, S.J. Res. 4, a joint resolution removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 3, S.J. Res. 4, a joint resolution removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Charles E. Schumer, Benjamin L. Cardin, Margaret Wood Hassan, Richard Blumenthal, Sherrod Brown, Tim Kaine, Christopher A. Coons, Alex Padilla, Tina Smith, Elizabeth Warren, Cory A. Booker, Gary C. Peters, Jack Reed, Angus S. King, Jr., Brian Schatz, Mazie Hirono, Amy Klobuchar.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 22.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Anthony Devos Johnstone, of Montana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 22, Anthony Devos Johnstone, of Montana, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Alex Padilla, Tim Kaine, Margaret Wood Hassan, Ben Ray Lujan, Raphael G. Warnock, Tammy Duckworth, Jack Reed, Sheldon Whitehouse, John W. Hickenlooper, Catherine Cortez Masto, Tammy Baldwin, Brian Schatz, Christopher Murphy, Tina Smith, Debbie Stabenow.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions filed today, April 25, be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DEBT CEILING

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, Mr. President, for months, the American people have demanded House Republicans stop their hostage-taking and show us a plan to avoid default.

Last week, House Republicans failed in their assignment yet again. Speaker MCCARTHY rolled out a wish list straight out of the Freedom Caucus playbook. It might as well be called the "Default on America Act" because that is exactly what it is: DOA.

Instead of doing what both sides have done many times before—avoiding default without preconditions—Speaker MCCARTHY and House Republicans want to force working Americans to accept either a punch to the gut or a blow to the head. Either the United States defaults on national debt for the first time in American history or MAGA Republicans get their way and America defaults on everything else—on our future and our security, on our promise to care for veterans and law enforcement and the American middle class. Either way, Republicans are promising real pain for American families when they bring their Default on America Act to the House floor this week. According to one study by Moody's Analytics, the DOA could send us into a damaging recession.

So let me say it one more time. What Republicans released last week was not so much a plan as it was a threat to default on America. Either we default on the national debt or we default on everything else through extreme cuts that will harm millions of people. That is so unpopular with the American people that the Republican House has had to hide it.

For all of the GOP's lipservice about public safety, the House DOA Act defaults on America's law enforcement and first responders. Nearly 30,000 law enforcement jobs across the country would be cut under the Republicans' DOA Act. Over \$8 billion in funding for the DOJ would be eliminated. Donald Trump called for Republicans to defund law enforcement, and now it looks like House Republicans are following through.

But that is just the start. The House Default on America Act would also spell disaster for American families and American healthcare. Parents who struggle affording childcare would see over 100,000 childcare slots eliminated under the GOP proposal, preventing moms and dads from getting a job or finishing their education since they can't afford to pick up their kids in daycare. Over 21 million Americans would be at risk of losing their health coverage—21 million Americans losing health coverage—while hospitals would see billions in funding disappear. Hospitals, patient groups, doctors—you name it, they are all coming out in droves to oppose this measure.

We just endured a global pandemic that claimed the lives of over 1 million Americans, and House Republicans want to cut funding for healthcare and hospitals? Utterly revolting.

But the damage isn't just limited to American families. The Republican DOA Act would cripple America's ability to stay ahead of the Chinese Communist Party.

After all the work we did last year on CHIPS and Science, the Republican bill would slash billions—billions—from cutting-edge research and prevent us from fully implementing CHIPS and Science. The damage would be measured in countless jobs lost and billions in squandered private investment. That is the last thing we can afford as President Xi and the CCP work to outcompete America on the world stage—squandering all that great private investment that is now coming to America.

Let's not forget, should this Republican DOA bill go into effect, taxes will go up for small businesses that no longer benefit from the green energy tax credits Democrats passed last year. Many of these green tax credits support job creation in Republican districts—jobs that Republicans are happy to take credit for while working behind the scenes to destroy them. It is the dictionary definition of "hypocrisy."

Finally, the House Default on America Act would break America's promise to our veterans, gutting funding for new VA facilities, funding for housing and food security and addiction treatment, and even endangering 81,000 jobs across the Veterans' Administration. How could House Republicans possibly think it is OK to cut funding for our veterans in exchange for lifting the debt ceiling? What kind of message does that send to our military families, our servicemembers?

If MAGA Republicans want to sell their cuts to the American people, they should not do so in the middle of discussions to avoid default. That discussion properly belongs in conversations about the budget, not here. And we will be happy to discuss those cuts with them, oppose them, as we might, in the budget—not as a prelude to default.

In the meantime, I urge Speaker MCCARTHY to stop wasting any more time on this DOA—dead on arrival—bill. Time is running out for Congress to work together to avoid catastrophe.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. President, now Senate business and the ERA. The Senate is set to have a very busy week on the floor.

Later this afternoon, we will begin with a cloture vote on the nomination of Joshua Jacobs to serve as VA Under Secretary for Benefits. Mr. Jacobs comes before the Senate at a critical moment for the VA, as he will be the one responsible for overseeing the implementation of PACT Act benefits. To date, the VA has already completed 191,000 PACT claims, 80 percent of which have been granted, I am proud to say. As senior adviser, Mr. Jacobs has already done great work at the VA pushing these benefits out the door, and he is clearly the right man for the position.

Later today, I will also file cloture on Anthony Johnstone, an outstanding nominee to serve a lifetime appointment as circuit court judge for the Ninth Circuit. I want to thank Senator TESTER for championing this strong nominee. The Senate will take it up later this week.

Finally and importantly, a few moments ago, I took the first procedural step for the Senate to take up a monumental resolution regarding the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. The Senate will vote to take up this historic ER measure on Thursday.

It has been exactly 100 years since the first Equal Rights Amendment was proposed here in Congress. Despite the progress America has made in the advancement of women's rights, we have yet to take one fundamental step: ratification of the ERA to guarantee gender equality under the Constitution. The Senate has a chance this week to bring our country one step closer to equal justice under the law by passing this bipartisan ERA resolution.

Three-quarters of the States have already ratified the ERA, just not in the requisite time set decades ago. The resolution would remove the arbitrary deadline and formally recognize that 38 States—the number required under the Constitution—have ratified the ERA.

Anyone who thinks the ERA isn't necessary at a time like this is not paying attention to the terrible things happening in this country. In the past year alone, the Supreme Court has eliminated the protections of *Roe v. Wade*, our courts have targeted drugs like mifepristone, and we have seen over a dozen hard-right States enact near-total bans on abortions. We need the ERA more than ever, ever before.

I want my daughters and grand-daughter to live in a country where they never have to worry about being discriminated against simply because of their gender. While, sadly, that is not the case today, we have a great opportunity to make significant progress on ERA ratification this week so we can enshrine the rights of generations of women to come.

I want to thank Senator CARDIN, who has spearheaded this, along with Senator MURKOWSKI—it is bipartisan—and thank them for championing this ERA resolution, and I look forward to advance its voting this Thursday.

Finally, in a few minutes, my colleague from Massachusetts will take the floor to ask unanimous consent that some of our brave military leaders get the promotions they deserve. It is absolutely outrageous that the Senator from Alabama is playing with the security of America—playing with the lives of these military leaders, whose lives are being disrupted by his harsh action.

He believes strongly that women in the military shouldn't have the right to abortion. Almost all Americans disagree with him. But no matter how strongly he feels, to hold up the promotion of military leaders, many of whom—most of whom have dedicated decades of their lives to protecting our country, and now leaving those positions vacant, risking our security, is one of the most abominable and outrageous things I have seen ever done in this Chamber, witnessed by the fact that no one has ever had the temerity, the gall to do this before.

So I salute the Senator from Massachusetts for bringing these names up. Everyone in this Chamber should exalt them. Members of this Chamber from the other side should go plead with the Senator from Alabama to stop this headstrong, nasty, and unneeded action.

I again thank our Senator from Massachusetts, who is chair of the subcommittee that is relevant, for bringing this issue to floor and showing America what the Senator from Alabama is exactly doing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I want to thank the leader for his strong words about the importance of making sure we advance our military leaders when they have been approved for promotion and pay increases.

You know, most people are aware that the Senate votes on nominees who have been appointed by the President to occupy top roles in almost all parts of the Federal Government—Cabinet Secretaries, judges, Ambassadors. Less well known is the fact that the Senate must also vote to approve thousands of military promotions every year. So if a colonel has done well on the job and their service's promotion board decides they are ready to be a brigadier general, the Senate must vote to approve