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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, January 31, 2025, at 10 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2025

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Immortal God, Your Name is great throughout the Earth. We thank You for the undeserved blessings You give us each day. Lord, You bless us with life, health, faith, hope, and love. You give us Your peace. Great and marvelous are Your works.

Today, guide the Members of this body with Your wisdom. Help them to resolve to become part of the solutions to our Nation's problems. Make clear to them the path of duty, and lead them in the doing of Your will. Lord, provide them with counsel to deal with complex challenges and infuse them with divine discernment to accomplish Your purposes.

We pray in Your strong 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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. RICKETTS). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 Lee Zeldin, of New York, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday afternoon, my Democratic colleagues—and when I say “my Democratic colleagues,” I mean all of my Democratic colleagues, with one exception—chose to block legislation to sanction individuals at the International Criminal Court who participated in investigations or prosecutions of American or Israeli citizens.

In the wake of the vote, a number of my Democratic colleagues put out a statement expressing their concern at the ICC's decision to issue arrest warrants for Israeli leaders. I suppose it is nice that they are concerned. They should be concerned. But it would be even nicer if they had done something about it.

It is hard for me to fathom how Democrats could vote against this commonsense measure. In fact, they wouldn't even vote to have a debate. I am not sure if they are afraid of antagonizing the anti-Israel wing of their party or if they are simply too beholden to Big Tech, which lodged some tenuous concerns about this legislation.

But whatever their reason, Democrats chose to vote no—no to standing up for our ally Israel and, even worse, no to standing up for our own citizens. Apparently the “America last” playbook is alive and well in the Democratic Party.

Mr. President, Republicans tried to the very end to accommodate Democrats in hopes of finally getting this legislation over the finish line, nearly 8 months after the Republican-controlled House first passed the bill. But Democrats kept moving the goalpost, and Republicans were not going to just gut the legislation to get Democrat votes.

If Democrats decide that they want to take real action to address the targeting of our allies and prevent future targeting of American citizens, Republicans are here. Until then, we will continue to do what we can without Democrats to defend our allies and our Nation.

NOMINATION OF LEE ZELDIN

Mr. President, over the last 4 years, the Biden administration set our energy security on a dangerous path. Administration policies created serious uncertainty for energy producers. The administration sharply restricted oil and gas development. New government

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



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regulations threatened to close existing powerplants, even as our electric grid struggled to keep up with demand. The President attempted to force the widespread adoption of electric cars—again, despite the incredible strain that would place on our already shaky power grid. And the list goes on.

Mr. President, a recent report from the North American Electric Reliability Corporation warns of “mounting resource adequacy challenges” in the next decade. One reason is the retirement of conventional energy generators—in some cases, because of regulation. Another is increased demand—like increasing demand for electricity being driven by artificial intelligence data centers.

It takes roughly 10 times as much electricity to run a ChatGPT query as it takes to run a Google search. Think about that. Imagine the energy demands of AI at scale. Anyone who thinks we can be on the leading edge of new technology with less—or less reliable—energy should think again.

We need more energy, and the good news is: We have it. In fact, we have the resources to be energy dominant. But we need to start saying yes to American energy.

On his first day in office, President Trump took the first steps toward restoring American energy dominance. He declared a national energy emergency, which will allow him to cut through some of the redtape that stifles energy production, as we continue to work toward broader regulatory relief.

He also reversed the Biden administration’s pause on new exports of liquefied natural gas, a decision that threatened American jobs and left our allies looking elsewhere for their energy. President Trump also reopened parts of Alaska to energy development that the Biden administration had previously closed off. He spared the American people from the Biden electric vehicle mandate. And he put the brakes on spending from the Democrats’ so-called Inflation Reduction Act—in reality, a climate bill whose actual cost has skyrocketed since it passed.

Mr. President, energy is an asset, and producing our own energy means we don’t have to rely on other nations for a critical resource, including countries that don’t share our values. Energy dominance is a deterrent to our adversaries, and it is literally the engine of our economy. But if we want to restore our energy dominance, we have to start saying yes to American energy—yes to an “all of the above” energy strategy that includes everything from oil and gas to hydropower and biofuels—everything. We need all of it.

I have come to the floor many times to discuss the negative effects of burdensome regulations, and for the last 4 years the EPA has put forward some of the Biden administration’s most harmful regulations. There was the WOTUS rule that would have been a disaster for farmers and ranchers; the Good

Neighbor rule that would have shuttered powerplants in several of our States; the Clean Power Plan 2.0, which would have jeopardized our future energy security; overly strict emissions rules for vehicles that would have forced Americans into electric vehicles that they don’t want and, in most cases, can’t afford; costly standards for medium- and heavy-duty trucks that would have harmed small trucking operations. The list goes on.

Regulations like these, drawn up in Washington, DC, have real-world impacts, and I am pleased that President Trump has committed to giving Americans relief from excessive regulations and that his EPA nominee will help him implement that vision.

Lee Zeldin, whose nomination we will vote on later today, is a former four-term Congressman representing a district almost completely surrounded by water.

He understands the stakes of environmental protection. His record in Congress speaks to this. But Mr. Zeldin also recognizes that the EPA can’t be a hammer in search of nails and that EPA rules have to be balanced with the needs of our economy, our national security, and the American people.

He also understands the importance of collaboration with stakeholders—something that was too often lacking in the Biden administration. I know farmers and ranchers in my State would have appreciated a seat at the table before the Biden administration resurrected the harmful WOTUS rule, and I am pleased that Mr. Zeldin is focused on bringing that collaborative approach to the EPA.

I am also grateful that Mr. Zeldin committed to timely release of the renewable volume obligations, as is required by the renewable fuel standard. In years past, the Biden EPA has been late in releasing its renewable volume obligations, which were often below industry production levels, creating instability for producers.

Biofuels are an important asset in America’s energy portfolio, so I am pleased that Mr. Zeldin will ensure that biofuel producers have the certainty that has been lacking in recent years, and I am encouraged that Mr. Zeldin is willing to work with Congress on President Trump’s promise of year-round E15 sales.

Restoring energy dominance will require an “all of the above” approach. It will require a smarter approach from regulators, and I look forward to working with Mr. Zeldin in carrying out this important work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am here to back the nomination of Lee Zeldin of New York to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, so my vote will be yes in a few hours from now when we vote on that nomination.

The EPA plays a very important regulatory role in the United States. Not

only does it regulate pollution, like many Americans already know, but it also regulates many areas that impact Americans every day.

As many farmers in Iowa know, the previous administration’s EPA put out a regulation that would overregulate what we know in this town as waters of the United States or, as the leader just put it, WOTUS. This would have regulated 96 percent of the land in the State of Iowa, and that would subject that land to Federal water regulations. It would almost be impossible to do regular farming operations without wondering whether you were violating some regulation. That is what the leader just said. This regulation is not common sense.

The EPA also oversees issues critical to agriculture, such as the approval and labeling of pesticides and other important tools for farmers.

The EPA also oversees the renewable fuel standard and protects its integrity. The renewable fuel standard provides an important framework for biofuels, which benefits farmers by sustaining an additional market for their commodities.

Besides, biofuels, or in Iowa because we are No. 1 in the production of ethanol, we like to say it is good for agriculture; it is good for good-paying jobs in rural America that we would never have without the ethanol industry; it is good for the environment because it is clean-burning; it is good for our national security—less reliance upon foreign sources of energy. There is everything about biofuels that is good, good, good. There is not a negative that you can come up with about them.

In our meeting earlier this month in my office—Mr. Zeldin came there—I impressed upon him the far-reaching impact that his Agency has over the lives of farmers and all Americans.

Mr. Zeldin assured me that he would be responsive to Congress and that he would provide ample time to provide transparency and market stability before regulations from his Agency are promulgated. Mr. Zeldin’s assurance about making decisions on time is important because previously the required volume obligations dealing with biofuels and the small refinery exemptions have not been finalized in time to make the RVOs whole. This leads to less ethanol blending, which goes against President Trump’s commitment to farmers and the ethanol industry, which Mr. Zeldin assured me that he supports. For the sake of Iowa farmers, I am hopeful that Mr. Zeldin stays true to his word.

Just in case you wonder whether or not we have anything to fear from EPA in agriculture, I want to give you a little history that is now history, but it just shows you how, in this town, which I call an island surrounded by reality—the real America is outside of this island here—a few years ago, they were going to promote a rule that you would say is just unbelievable. You have to be telling us a story. They wouldn’t be proposing this rule.

It was called the fugitive dust rule. OK. The theory of the fugitive dust rule from EPA is that if you are farming and you create dust in the normal operations that go into a farming operation—plowing, disking, planting, spraying, whatever it might be, combining the harvest—that you are supposed to keep that dust within your property lines.

Now, that is what EPA tried to promulgate. In fact, I think one time we thought we had it killed, and a couple of years later, it came up again. Now I think it is dead forever because it doesn't meet the commonsense test that a farmer working his fields can keep the dust within his property lines.

So I tried to explain it to EPA Administrators this way in regard to the harvesting of soybeans, which leaves a lot of dust. I said that when soybeans are 13 percent moisture, it is very necessary that you very quickly harvest them because 13 percent is the most ideal time with that amount of moisture in soybeans.

Do you know, to these Administrators, only God determines when the wind blows, and whether the wind is blowing or not, your soybeans are 13 percent, you have to get in there and combine them and not worry about where the dust goes, and you have about 2 weeks during the harvest season to accomplish the same goal.

But, no kidding, that is what EPA was trying to do to agriculture a few years ago.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

JANUARY 6 PARDONS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, all of us can remember that when the Biden administration took office, one of the first issues facing them was the evacuation of American forces from Afghanistan. That effort had started under President Trump in the previous administration, but it was up to Joe Biden to execute the plan for that to happen.

The sad reality is that during the course of that evacuation, American troops lost their lives. I am sure that haunted President Biden every day he served as President, that the moment when he was being tested, he did not come through for those men in uniform who risked their lives and gave their lives in that effort. Those deaths haunted him, I am sure, during the 4 years of his Presidency.

I would say to the new President, Donald Trump, serving his second term, he has an issue that is going to haunt him. I can't tell you for how long, and I don't know exactly how it will affect our country, but it has already started. It started when he decided about 10 days ago to grant clemency to the January 6 offenders, those men who were engaged in an insurrectionist mob activity that overran the U.S. Capitol on January 6.

I know something about this because I was here. I was in this chair when the

mob that you have seen on television and in videos over and over again were taking control of this Capitol.

Presiding over the U.S. Senate—we were all in our seats—was the Vice President of the United States, Vice President Pence. We were counting the electoral votes in each State to decide who was the official winner of the Presidential election. It was happening right after President Trump had his rally not far from here and told his supporters and demonstrators to come up to the Capitol Building, which they did in vast numbers. And they didn't just come here for a casual visit; they came to break down the doors and break down the windows and to invade this building.

I am not exaggerating. You have seen it on the videos; you know what happened.

The net result of it is a lot of brave men and women who were part of the Capitol Hill Police force and the DC Police force stood in their way and tried to stop them and were beaten back. Over 140 of these officers were seriously injured by the demonstrators and the insurrectionists who were coming into this building. Several lost their lives. That was the reality of what happened.

The net result of it was one of the largest prosecutions in the history of the United States. Ultimately, hundreds of them paid a price for that violent activity on January 6 and what they did to our policemen.

The same policemen who are standing in the hallway now and protecting you—they are the people who were assaulted on that day. In fact, on the floor at this moment, I notice across the way one of the officers who stood before us that day and gave us instructions as to what to do. After Vice President Pence was removed, this officer of the Capitol Police told us: Stay in this Chamber. Stay in your seats. This is going to be a safe room.

That lasted about 10 minutes, and he came back in and said: We have changed the plan. Evacuate this room as fast as possible.

We all went outside the door.

It was a dangerous moment. It took hours before we could take the Capitol back from these demonstrators and marauders.

The men and women who were dedicated to their cause did things that were outrageous in terms of desecrating this building, the U.S. Capitol Building, this symbol of America. They desecrated it, and they had to be stopped. A lot of brave men and women in uniform risked their lives and some gave their lives as a consequence of it.

Many of them went to jail after they had been charged with crimes on that day of January 6, and it wasn't until the first day of the Trump Presidency that they finally had a chance for a pardon, and President Trump gave them that opportunity by releasing them from jail.

It is important to know what happened afterwards. You would think

these men—largely men—who had served time in jail, some of them for lengthy sentences—up to 20 years—when they were released with this pardon by President Trump, would go about their business and resume a normal, law-abiding life. That is not the fact.

Let me tell you what happened in the 10 days since President Trump granted these pardons, just so far as we know of those who were released from jail for their violence on the U.S. Capitol of January 6. I am going to do it by name.

Matthew Huttie, released by President Trump by pardon, was shot and killed by the Indiana State Police earlier this week after a traffic stop, when he resisted arrest while in possession of a firearm.

Daniel Ball has already been re-arrested, since he was released with the Trump pardon, on gun charges related to past convictions for domestic violence by strangulation and battery against a law enforcement officer.

These two individuals not only assaulted the law enforcement officers protecting us in the Capitol, when they were released by pardon from President Trump, they did it again in the week that has transpired since that happened.

Andrew Taake assaulted police at the Capitol with bear spray and a metal weapon. He is now wanted in the State of Texas for soliciting a minor for sex and a felony carrying a charge of up to 10 years in prison.

Enrique Tarrio, the head of the Proud Boys organization, a domestic terrorist group which has been identified for many years—he was convicted of seditious conspiracy on January 6 for his role in planning that riot. Here is what he said after his release:

Success is going to be retribution. Now it's our turn.

Stewart Rhodes, head of the Oath Keepers, another domestic terrorist group, convicted of seditious conspiracy for his role in planning the riot, said after his pardon by Trump and release:

The people who did this, they need to feel the heat. They need to be put behind bars and they need to be prosecuted.

He said January 6 should be remembered as "Patriot's Day." He said he had no regrets "because we did the right thing."

Jacob Chansley, the so-called QAnon Shaman, posted on X after his pardon—and I have to leave some of the words out now:

I AM GONNA BUY SOME [MF] GUNS . . . and EVERYTHING done in the dark WILL come to light.

Let's be clear. President Biden's acts of clemency are far more defensible than President Trump's pardons on January 6. Sadly—sadly—for law enforcement officers across the country, they are going to face many of these people again.