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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

REVISED NOTICE—NOVEMBER 17, 1999

If the 106th Congress, 1st Session, adjourns sine die on or before November 18, 1999, a final issue of the Congressional Record for the 106th Congress, 1st Session, will be published on December 3, 1999, in order to permit Members to revise and extend their remarks.

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If the 106th Congress does not adjourn until a later date in 1999, the final issue will be printed at a date to be announced.

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By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

WILLIAM M. THOMAS, *Chairman.*

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MICHAEL F. DiMARIO, *Public Printer.*

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

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PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Dear God, it is with reverence and commitment that we address You as Sovereign of our lives and of our Nation. You are absolute Lord of all, the one to whom we are accountable and the only one we must please. Our forefathers and foremothers called You Sovereign, with awe and wonder as they established this land and trusted You for guidance and courage. Our founders really believed that they derived their power through You and governed with divinely delegated authority.

In our secularized society, Lord, recall the Senators to their commitment to Your sovereignty over all that is said and done. May this day be a reaffirmation that You are in control and that their central task is to seek and to do Your will. Thank You that this is the desire of the Senators. So speak, Lord; they are listening. Guide, strengthen, and encourage faithfulness to You. In Your holy, all-powerful name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHUCK HAGEL, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

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

Mr. HAGEL. I thank the Chair.

SCHEDULE

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, this morning the Senate will consider numerous legislative items that have been cleared for action. Following consideration of those bills, the Senate will resume debate on the final appropriations conference report. Cloture was filed on the conference report yesterday, and it is still hoped that those Senators objecting to an agreement to change the time of the cloture vote to occur at a reasonable hour during today's session will reconsider. However, if no agreement is made, the cloture vote will occur at 1:01 a.m., Saturday morning. Senators may also expect a vote on final passage to occur a few hours after the cloture vote. In addition, the Senate could consider the work incentives conference report prior to adjournment.

Mr. President, I thank you.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I would ask the acting minority leader be recognized.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

BANKRUPTCY REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I hope in the final hours of the session in the final day we will not forget the progress that has been made on the bankruptcy bill. I spoke to the manager of the bill, the subcommittee chair, late yesterday evening, and he indicated that there was some thought by the Republican majority leadership they would accept the unanimous-consent agreement that I suggested yesterday morning. As I indicated at that time, we have gone from some 320 amendments down to 14, 7 of which have either been accepted or they will be resolved in some manner. We only have seven contested amendments.

I hope we do not lose the initiative that has taken place to this point in the next few hours, or the next few minutes, really, that we could enter into that unanimous-consent agreement so that at such time as we return to the bankruptcy bill, we have a finite number of amendments and can proceed to wrapping that up. I repeat that it is not the minority but, rather, the majority that is holding up this most important bill.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

(Mr. HAGEL assumed the chair.)

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business.

The Senator from Illinois.

A CHALLENGING SESSION OF THE SENATE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Senate, we hope today or perhaps tomorrow, will be bringing this session to a close. It has been a session which has involved some historic decisions by the Senate. Of course, it began with an impeachment trial of the President of the United States, which ended in a bipartisan decision of the Senate not to convict the President. Then, shortly thereafter, we faced a rather historic challenge in terms of our role in Kosovo. So we went from one extreme in the Constitution, involving an impeachment against the President, to the other extreme, where this Senate had to contemplate the possibility, the very real possibility, of war. That is how our session began, at such a high level with such great challenges.

There were so many other challenges that were presented to the Senate during the course of the year. I am sad to report that we addressed very few of them. Things that American families really care about we did not spend enough time on, we did not bring to a conclusion. So, as we return to our homes, States, and communities after this session is completed and we are confronted by those who are concerned about their daily lives and they ask us, What did you achieve during the course of this session? I am afraid there is very little to which to point.

This morning, I received some letters from my home State of Illinois from senior citizens concerned about the cost of prescription drugs, as well they should be, because not only are these costs skyrocketing, but we find gross disparities between the charges for prescription drugs in the United States and the cost of the very same drugs made by the same companies if they are sold in Canada or in Europe.

In fact, in the northern part of the United States, it is not uncommon for many senior citizens to get on a bus and go over the border to Canada to buy their prescription drugs at a deep discount from what they would pay in the United States. That is difficult for seniors to understand; it is difficult for Senators to understand as to why that same prescription drug should be so cheap if purchased overseas and so expensive for American citizens in a country where those pharmaceutical companies reside and do business.

The senior citizens have asked us, as well as their families who are concerned about the costs they bear, to do something. Yet this session comes to an end and nothing has been done—nothing has been done—either to address the spiraling cost of prescription drugs or to amend the Medicare program and to make prescription drugs part of the benefits.

Think about it: In the 1960s, under President Lyndon Johnson when Medicare was created, we did not include any provision for paying for prescription drugs. We considered it from a Federal point of view as if prescription drugs were something similar to cosmetic surgery, just an option that one might need or might not need, but certainly something that was not life-threatening.

Today, we know we were wrong. In many instances, because of the wide array of prescription drugs and the valuable things they can do for seniors, we find a lot of our senior citizens dependent on them to avoid hospitalizations and surgeries and to keep their lives at the highest possible quality level.