



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 108th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 150

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2004

No. 14

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LINCOLN CHAFEE, a Senator from the State of Rhode Island.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Merciful God, You have been good to us beyond our deserving, surrounding us with light and music, beauty and friendships. Thank You for Your eternal love and for the little miracles You give us each day. Lord, You give us sunrises and sunsets. You provide us with air to breathe and heartbeats. We hear Your love in the roar of the oceans. We see Your sovereignty in the flight of the eagle.

You protect us from dangers, seen and unseen. You cause the weapons of our enemies to fail. Help us to show our gratitude by moving beyond rhetoric to deeds.

Empower our Senators to trust You to guide their steps. Bless them as they seek to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Give them peace for turbulent moments and anchors for life's storms. We pray this in Your serene Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable LINCOLN CHAFEE 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. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 6, 2004.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable LINCOLN CHAFEE, a Senator from the State of Rhode Island, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CHAFEE thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning the Senate resumes consideration of S. 1072, the highway bill. As we announced last night, there will be no rollcall votes today. Chairman INHOFE will be on the floor this morning, and Senators are encouraged to come to the floor to speak on the bill. When we complete our business today, we will reconvene on Monday for more work on the highway bill. As I previously announced, we expect to complete this bill next week. I will be consulting with the chairman and the Democratic leader as to the specific schedule and will announce that later today.

NEWS UPDATES

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I want to make a few comments on the news, and give a quick update on the events that have happened in my own mailroom earlier in the week.

First of all, just a few minutes ago, this morning, with regard to the employment situation, we have been given very good news. The unemployment rate is at 5.6 percent, which was little changed, but the nonfarm payroll em-

ployment increased by 112,000, with job gains in construction and several service-providing industries. Indeed, that is very good news. That is 112,000 new jobs in January.

If we look back to last August, we have seen a creation of 366,000 payroll jobs. These numbers are very good news. It demonstrates we have turned the corner. But, clearly, we have a lot more work to do as we go forward. So there is very good news today on the job front; the trends are in the positive, right direction. But, again, we have a lot more work to do.

The economy is doing well. I say that very quickly, and say we have a lot more work to do in job creation. But, again, that figure of 112,000 is very good news.

Mr. President, on another front but timely in terms of the news itself, I am delighted to report we are ahead of schedule in getting Senators back into their offices here on the Capitol grounds. As everyone knows, in response to the attack on my office with what is a deadly poison by the name of ricin, we immediately focused on the safety and welfare of the staff throughout the Capitol complex. Through a very comprehensive plan, a comprehensive response, even though I know it has not been handled just perfectly, and there are a lot of frustrations, I am delighted to report nobody has been hurt, everybody is safe, and that includes people here in my office, in the Dirksen building, the Senate office buildings, the Capitol complex, and, indeed, the postal system in this country.

All testing has been negative, with the exception of the testing right around where the discovery was made. The Russell Senate office building has been opened now for 2 days. The Hart Senate office building opened yesterday. The Dirksen office building we will be making announcements about over the course of the day.

On a third issue, Mr. President, I am delighted to see the response to the

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



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