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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of mercies, whose unfailing love and faithfulness cover our sins, make us today instruments of Your grace. Give us the wisdom to think before speaking and to say the right thing at the right time. May our actions so please You that even our enemies will live at peace with us.

Guide our lawmakers in their challenging work. Remind them that many counselors bring success. Help them also to remember that they can make plans but You determine their steps. Teach us all that it is better to be patient than powerful, and it is better to have self-control than to conquer a city. Guide us by Your light that we may reach the light that never fades.

We pray in Your holy 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 PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today we will have a 1-hour period for morning business, which will follow the remarks of the two leaders. After morning business, the Senate will begin consideration of the pension security bill under the time agreement which was reached last night. Under that order, there will be 2 hours of general debate on the bill and substitute, with two additional amendments in order limited to 30 minutes each. We will finish that bill today with probably three rollcall votes. We will also vote on the adoption of the conference report to accompany the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill that was debated yesterday. The vote on final passage will be stacked with the pension votes that we will have a little bit later this morning.

In addition, yesterday the Finance Committee reported the tax increase prevention bill. That is the tax reconciliation bill, and we will begin that measure today as well. Hopefully, we will be able to get to that bill as soon as possible in order to begin the clock running on the 20-hour statutory time agreement and, hopefully, we will be able to facilitate a very busy schedule this week by beginning that tax measure early this afternoon and using some of that time to get the clock started.

In addition, we have conference reports that will be coming over from the other side. We will continue to consider any of those available conference reports as they arrive from the House. I will be back to the floor to update Members on the schedule for the remainder of the week as these conference reports become available.

As I have mentioned, we have a lot of business to do today. Although we have made huge progress over the course of yesterday, much of which is seen on the floor, and we had a very successful day, there is much of which people do not see that is occurring in these conferences that are ongoing. We do have a lot to do. I know there are a lot of Members who are asking about their schedules, whether we will be out Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, or Tuesday. Again, things are coming along nicely to be out at a reasonable time, but a lot depends on how efficiently we can work together. I am pleased with the progress that has been made over the last 48 hours.

ASBESTOS LITIGATION REFORM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I have been working with my colleagues for 3 years to reform our asbestos litigation system. It is a system that today is unfair and unjust. Because of that, people suffer, jobs are lost, and bankruptcies occur. The day has come for us to fix it.

I am pleased to inform my colleagues that asbestos reform will be the first major legislation that we consider in late January when we return. In January, asbestos reform will be the first major legislation that we consider.

I commend my friend, Senator SPECTER, chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Rarely a day goes by that we

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

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