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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal spirit, who has made and preserved us as a Nation, You are the same yesterday, today, and forever. In these changing times, help us to fix our gaze on You, the changeless one. Remind us that You are the one who places leaders in positions of power and responsibility, and that to whom much is given, much is required.

As this Nation gathers itself for the challenging work ahead, give us Your wisdom. Let that wisdom guide the Members of the U.S. Senate to accomplish the most good for the most people. Remove from the lives of our lawmakers obstructions that prevent them from doing Your will. We pray in Your sovereign name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, November 13, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I have a few announcements and then the Democratic leader may want to respond to those and then I will have a brief statement. I know he has a statement following that.

Today we return to begin the process of finishing our work for the 109th Congress. This afternoon we will begin consideration of the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill. Senator HUTCHISON will be here around 3 o'clock today to begin consideration of that bill with opening statements. Although we do not have any rollcall votes today, I hope the chairman and ranking member will work together to reach an agreement for com-

pletion of that bill during tomorrow's session.

Over the course of the next several days, we have orientation events for Senators-elect for the 110th Congress. We will be welcoming them a little bit later tonight at a dinner that formally kicks off that orientation meeting. We will also have our leadership elections this week and policy luncheons as well. Those will be on Tuesday and Wednesday. The Democratic elections will occur Tuesday morning, followed by their Democratic policy luncheon, and on this side of the aisle we will proceed with our elections on Wednesday morning, with our policy luncheon to follow that afternoon. Given this schedule, our first vote will likely occur sometime Tuesday—late Tuesday afternoon. We do hope to finish the military construction bill on Tuesday afternoon.

This week we will also consider a short-term continuing resolution. The current CR expires on Friday, and we need to pass a further resolution as soon as we possibly can. I have talked to the Democratic leader about this and we hope we will act on this quickly.

This week we will also work toward agreements and passage of the Vietnam normal trade relations legislation and the U.S.-India nuclear agreement, as well as other appropriations measures that can be considered. We will keep Members apprised as we schedule these and other matters as we move through the week.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the majority leader and I have had a number of conversations and we think this should be a productive week. There will naturally be a number of interruptions, but we have our minds on completing the appropriations bill and finishing the very important nuclear agreement with the largest democracy in the world: India. We want to do it now for

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



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a number of reasons, not the least of which is the President is leaving in the next few days for Vietnam and we want to see if that can be completed with a minimum amount of debate and amendments. We are confident and hopeful that can be done.

RECENT ELECTIONS AND LOOKING AHEAD

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to comment on the recent elections and then a very brief look ahead. First, let me remind my colleagues in every year that we have waged war, our troops have fought to uphold certain ideals: the ideals of democracy, of liberty, and of freedom. They are those very same principles upon which this Nation was founded in 1776 and they are the principles we strive to live by today in 2006. We saw that play out in last week's election, a natural manifestation of those ideals. We saw democracy at work, an opportunity for the American people to speak, to influence Government. So while I, of course, was disappointed in the outcome, we are not discouraged, and people come back today not discouraged because, as I have said, this election was democracy at work.

Change can be tough. Change opens the door, however, to new opportunity, and with that new opportunity comes new hopes. The American people have spoken and now is the time for us to move forward together. That is a very powerful message from the American people: Move forward and move forward together.

For a number of my colleagues—and I think of this as I mention the orientation program that begins for our new colleagues for the next Congress—moving forward means concentrating in part on paving the way for their successors. For them, it is a time of transition. The next few weeks, the last of the 109th Congress, will be my final weeks serving as a Senator, but as most everyone knows, I self-limited my time as a Senator 12 years ago, so I have known every day—every day for the last 12 years—that I would be departing this body next month, and it did help me to keep focused. It kept me grounded in the fact that those of us serving here only occupy our positions of service and that we don't own those positions. As Senate majority leader, my job is to focus on finishing the business of the 109th Congress, and that is where I will be concentrating my efforts.

As I look back on this Congress, the Republican majority has accomplished many things of which I am very proud. We submitted the tax cuts for every American which have helped to create 6 million jobs in the last 3 years. We have waged a bold war on terror, which has prevented every potential terror attack on our soil right here in this country over the past 5 years. We have given seniors prescription drug coverage through Medicare for the first

time, affordable prescription drug coverage. We confirmed outstanding judicial nominees, including two Supreme Court justices. We passed a forward-looking energy bill. We strengthened our commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS here at home and around the world. We have eliminated frivolous class action lawsuits. And we did all of this in one of the most challenging partisan political environments ever.

But as we move forward—and that really does officially begin today—we begin with finishing the business of the 109th Congress, and we must work together to overcome that partisanship we have seen in the past, that crippling partisanship that has plagued us in the recent past. America wants results and America wants solutions, and it is with that focus we enter the waning days of the 109th Congress. We must return to an era of working together in a civil, bipartisan fashion. It is my hope both parties, Republicans and Democrats, will work toward governing together to produce those tangible results for the American people. That begins here, and it begins now.

This week the Senate agenda will focus, as we mentioned earlier, on completing the remaining appropriations bills, and in the days and in the weeks ahead, we will consider the nomination of Bob Gates as Secretary of Defense and, as we just stated, the Vietnam trade legislation and the U.S.-India civilian nuclear technology bill. Each of us has many ideas to contribute to the discourse and I know we will continue to do that. We must build on our successes, the successes that make America the best place—the best place—to raise a family, the best place to start a business, and the best place to get and keep a job. Now is the time for us to get back to work.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

MOVING FORWARD

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the elections are over. It is time for us to move forward. It is time to move forward and, in working together, begin the process of moving our great country forward.

Last week the American people spoke for change. In the months ahead, Senate Democrats will fight for change. We are going to focus on three priorities, including bipartisanship. We have to work together. We can't accomplish anything as Democrats standing alone. As has been shown, the Republicans couldn't accomplish anything standing alone. We need to work together to pass legislation on a bipartisan basis and send it to the White House. We must have open government—a new word: “transparency”—and we have to

have results. Bipartisanship is great. But if people don't see what we are doing and there are no results, it is not as it should be.

We have a lot of challenges: health care, energy, the economy, including these deficits we have; Iraq. We need to restore checks and balances. Last Wednesday or Thursday I met a lot of press people in the audience and I said to each of them: I will bet most of you here have never watched a congressional conference in session, a conference committee meeting. It is true. We haven't had one. That is what we used to do here. We used to have them for a couple of hundred years, and for a couple of decades I was involved in them. But during the last at least 6 years, we haven't had any—a conference where we have a House bill and a Senate bill and we have an open meeting, and Republicans make suggestions on how the bill could be made better, and Democrats make suggestions, and there is a vote taken publicly. We haven't done that, and that is not good. We need to do that. That is what I am talking about, open government, these checks and balances our Founding Fathers set forth in that document we call the Constitution, three separate, equal branches of government.

I commend the distinguished majority leader. We worked together here in the Senate to come up with the most significant lobbying and ethics reform in a quarter of a century—since Watergate, actually. We passed that. We passed it on a bipartisan basis. We included not only lobby and ethics reform; we had, as a result of a number of Senators led by DIANNE FEINSTEIN, a provision in there dealing with earmarks, to make earmarks more transparent. The bill we passed out of here slowed the revolving door between government employees and lobbyists and eliminated gifts paid for by lobbyists and substantially expanded disclosure by lobbyists. It limited privately funded travel in many instances, and required more disclosure. It stopped dead-of-the-night legislating regarding open meetings. We did this. We should all feel good about what we accomplished in this regard. But, sadly, it went to the House and that was the end of it. So I would hope before the distinguished majority leader ends his career as a Senator, which has been a markedly significant career, that we can do that. It should be the law of the land, and hopefully it will be in the next couple months.

Finally, this Senate and we Democrats will do our very best to focus our energies on the challenges facing our country and take concrete steps to protect our country and help working families get ahead. For too long families have struggled with high health care costs while the big drug companies haven't struggled. I am glad they have not had to struggle, but I think we need to have a more even playing field—especially with insurance companies. For too long, ranchers in Nevada