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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by the Chief of Staff to the Senate Chaplain, Alan N. Keiran.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Spirit of the living God, discover us today. Remove the obstacles that keep us from You and reach into the barren places of our hearts. Permit us to hear Your whisper as we are guided by our conscience. Chasten us as You guide our feet to the right path.

Today, O Lord, speak to our Senators. Let some ennobling word of justice and beauty inspire them in this challenging hour. Strengthen them to mend broken relationships, to maintain their integrity, and to strive always to please You. Protect them with Your power. We pray this in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SHERROD BROWN 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. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 30, 2007.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWN 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. REID. This morning, the Senate will be in a period for the transaction of morning business for 60 minutes, the first half controlled by the majority and the remaining half controlled by the Republicans. Following morning business, we will resume H.R. 2, the minimum wage bill, and debate on the motion to invoke cloture on the substitute amendment to H.R. 2 will extend until 12:15 p.m. today, and that time is equally divided. However, at 11:55 a.m., the Republican leader will be recognized for 10 minutes for whatever time he or his designee wishes to speak, and then the final 10 minutes prior to 12:15 p.m. will be controlled by the majority. The first 5 minutes of that time will be for Senator KENNEDY and the second 5 minutes will be for me.

Regardless of the outcome of the cloture vote, the Senate will recess for the party conferences and then reconvene at 2:15 p.m. For the information of the Senate, each Senator will have until 11 a.m. to file any additional second-degree amendments.

I will have more to say later today regarding the schedule, according to how the votes turn out.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with each Senator permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the first half of the time under the control of the majority and the second half of the time under the control of the minority.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, at long last, I believe we are on the verge of passing legislation that is long overdue. Soon we are going to vote on a procedural motion, known as a cloture motion, for the Fair Minimum Wage Act, which takes us one step closer to raising the minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour over the next 2 years.

It has been 10 years since Congress has raised the minimum wage for the lowest paid workers in America. Since we last raised the minimum wage, its value has eroded because of inflation, the rising cost of living. Unlike our congressional pay raises, it has not kept pace with the actual cost of living in America.

The Democrats have been trying for almost 10 years to convince the majority party, then Republicans, that there

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



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are millions of Americans who go to work every single day and still can't make enough money to provide decent daycare for their kids, pay their medical and utility bills, and provide food and other essentials that are part of every family's life.

Many of those people working for a minimum wage in Illinois make about \$6.50 an hour because we raised it on a State basis in my home State. Yet they understand the need to raise the minimum wage. One woman wrote to me and said:

I can't support my daughter on the wages I have, and I have to rely on my family. I won't get a significant increase in my wages until you bump up the wages. I make about \$14,000 a year. I'm sure that's nothing to you but I have to live off that.

This woman, by the way, is a college graduate trying to raise her child, trying to do the right thing.

What help has she received from this Congress over the last 10 years? Almost none. Keep in mind, she lives in a State where our minimum wage is higher than \$5.15. I can't imagine, in the 21 States that are stuck at \$5.15 an hour, how these folks get along.

I heard a lot of my colleagues stand up on the floor and make good speeches about family values. Let's all agree on one thing: The most important family value is helping a parent raise a child and provide the necessities of life, and \$5.15 an hour will not do that.

So 6 million Americans are watching this debate. Those are the people living on the minimum wage. I urge my colleagues to keep them in mind when we get a chance to vote this afternoon.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. President, I am honored that the President of the United States is in my home State of Illinois today. He is visiting Peoria, a great city. It has a great major company, Caterpillar, which has had terrific success. Caterpillar has shown increases in revenues and profits. It is a great corporate citizen and neighbor in the Peoria area. We are proud it is doing well.

But I would like to talk for a minute about areas in Illinois that the President will not be visiting. He will not be visiting Herod, IL, which lost 1,000 jobs recently when its Maytag manufacturing plant closed; or DuQuoin, IL, where 356 manufacturing jobs were lost at Archway; and then Mount Vernon, where Joy Manufacturing lost 175 manufacturing jobs; and Pinckneyville, where Technicolor Media Services will be closing its plant on March 31, causing 444 people to lose their jobs. I could go on.

Today President Bush comes to Peoria to talk about the state of the America's economy. The reality of America's economy is that on his watch, we have lost 3 million manufacturing jobs. Some have been replaced with jobs in convenience stores, but we all know the harsh reality. A person working for a minimum wage in a convenience store is not going to be able to take care of their family similar to someone working in a manufacturing job.

We have to understand that America can do better. How can we do better? First, acknowledge that trade is part of our future; globalization is as real as gravity. But make sure the trade agreements we enter into are trade agreements that are sensible—sensible in terms of labor standards, environmental standards, and enforceable.

The one thing that troubles me the most is this Bush administration has refused to enforce the trade agreements on the books. We all know what is going on in China—currency manipulation, dumping, unfair subsidies. Under the Bush administration, in 6 years, they have only filed two complaints against China for unfair trade practices.

As we lose good-paying jobs in America to China and other countries, we need to stand up and enforce the trade agreements that this administration and others have entered. The Bush administration needs to stand up for working families and fight off unfair trade practices that steal good jobs from America.

We also have to understand another harsh reality. Most Americans today, when asked, don't believe their children will have as good a life as they have had. That is such a sad commentary in America. It reflects the fact that 47 million Americans have no health insurance. It reflects the fact that fewer and fewer Americans have a retirement plan on which they can count, and it shows us that the wages that are being paid to working families, middle-income families in America, are not keeping up with the cost of housing, the cost of utility bills, the cost of gasoline for their cars, and the cost of putting their children through college.

If you want to know the real state of the economy, don't sit down and talk to the economists. Talk to the real working families in Illinois and across America who are struggling each day to make ends meet, going deeper in debt on their credit card bills and wondering if their kids will have as good a chance in the America to come.

That is the reality of our economy. Oh, the stock market may be strong. The heads of major corporations may be making tens of millions, hundreds of millions of dollars. The Tax Code may be crafted by this administration to favor those who are doing so well. But the reality on Main Street in America is that people are struggling. We are losing manufacturing jobs. We are not enforcing our trade agreements, and we are not giving the kind of hope which they need to working families across America.

This Congress is going to start to turn that around. It will take some time. First, we are going to raise the Federal minimum wage. Then we are going to address the needs of the families who have kids in college, reduce the cost of those college student loans so kids don't end up with a mountain of debt when they finally graduate;

find a way to make health care more affordable and bring down the cost of the prescription part of Medicare, Part D, so the seniors are not stuck with the highest drug bills in America.

That I hope is the real state of the economy. I hope the President will today acknowledge that reality.

IRAQ

One last point I would like to make—the major issue on the minds of most Americans is the situation in Iraq. The President now wants to send 21,000 more troops to Iraq. Many of us feel this is a serious mistake; this is a strategy which has not been thought out.

This morning's Washington Post tells a story which is ominous. It is entitled "Equipment for Added Troops is Lacking." It goes on to say:

New Iraq forces must make do, officials say.

And here is the grim reality. The 21,000 soldiers this President wants to send into Iraq to join the 144,000 there will go without the equipment and protection they need and deserve. This report, which comes from the Pentagon, tells us that whether we are talking about vehicles, armor kits or basic equipment, our troops will not have what they need. In fact, the statement in here is from LTG Stephen Speakes and suggests:

We don't have the [armor] kits, and we don't have the trucks. . . . He said it will take the Army months, probably until summer, to supply and outfit the additional trucks. As a result, he said, combat units flowing into Iraq would have to share the trucks assigned to units now there, leading to increased use and maintenance.

I have to ask, before we put any more soldiers in harm's way, don't we owe them the very best equipment they need so they can fight and come home safely? Don't we owe that to them and their families?

Some argue that when we come to the floor and take exception to the policies of this administration, it undermines the morale of the troops. I couldn't disagree more. What undermines the morale of the Nation's soldiers is the notion that they have to go into combat with less than the best equipment, that they have to go into combat without the armor plate they need to come home safe and sound. That undermines morale a lot more than any debate on the floor of the Senate, and it is time for the White House and the Bush administration to answer honestly how can we escalate this war in Iraq if we don't at least improve the equipment for the troops who are going into battle? That is the reality of what our soldiers face today and have faced throughout this war in Iraq, and that is why we definitely need a new direction.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, we are in morning business at this time?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct. We are in morning business.

INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I wish to, again, thank my friend from Illinois and also our leader for their strong support on the increase in the minimum wage. We will have more as we go on through the morning. We expect to vote at noontime today on the increase on the minimum wage. This is day seven. We had five courageous Republicans who voted with us to pass what we call a clean minimum wage law that would increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 without additional kinds of tax provisions in there. The nine times we have increased the minimum wage we have only added tax provisions on one time. It is not necessary to add additional tax provisions, since we are restoring the purchasing power of the minimum wage to what it was some 10 years ago.

But I raise another broader issue for a few moments and that is, What is it about these working families that so outrages our Republican friends? What is it about providing a decent wage—some would say it is not decent because it is still so low at \$7.25 an hour—but what is it about our Republican friends that they refuse to give us a vote in the Senate? It is true that 80 Republicans voted for an increase over in the House of Representatives. But Republican leadership has been strongly opposed to this over the last 10 years that I tried to bring up an increase in the minimum wage. It goes back a long period of time. We are seeing it once again, here, as the President is against an increase in the minimum wage.

I remind those who are watching the Senate deliberations this morning that we do not have any amendments over here on our side. The Democrats do not have any. They have more than 90 amendments over on the other side. I reminded the Senate, they have had amendments for over \$200 billion. Some are dealing with Social Security. There are \$35 billion in tax cuts on education, but they didn't include any help or assistance for children on the IDEA, those with disabilities or, for the neediest children, the Pell grants. We haven't had any consideration on that. They dropped that amendment in on the minimum wage program, completely unrelated to the minimum wage program. They had health savings accounts to benefit people with incomes of \$133,000. We have had all those kinds of amendments, and they continue, if you read through that list. I have gone through those amendments and they continue.

My question comes back to this. What is it that the Republican leadership has against working families? I have raised that over the period of the last few days and I raise it today. I was looking back at the record of our Republican friends over the last year or

so. They eliminated 6 million workers from overtime. Do we understand that? In the last 2 years, 6 million workers have had their overtime effectively canceled.

Since the 1930s, under President Roosevelt, there was a recognition that if people work more than 40 hours a week, they were going to be able to get overtime. The number of those individuals who work more than 40 hours a week is significant. It is over 28 percent in our country today. But this administration eliminated that extra time and a half for 6 million workers.

We say: What is it about those 6 million workers? Then we think about the opposition to the increase in the minimum wage. We take away their overtime when we are seeing this extraordinary increase in executive salaries, salaries which are exploding through the ceiling. Take away that overtime for 6 million workers. All right.

Then we see the great tragedy we had with Katrina, and we saw the attempts to rebuild after Katrina. What was the first thing the administration said? Eliminate any coverage or protection for workers in terms of their wages down there, what they call the Davis-Bacon program. It means they are not going to get paid what they get paid in the various regions, eliminate that so you can drive wages down even further in New Orleans. What is the reason for that? It is a good way to drive wages down for workers.

What is it about people in the construction industry? They average, I think it is \$29,000 a year. That is too much for our Republican friends? Or \$10,712 for a working American, a man or woman at the minimum wage, and they refuse to give some increase in that to \$7.25 an hour? Here you have the average construction worker at \$29,000 a year, and you are saying that is too high. What is it about this Republican Party, against the working families?

What was in their minds when they eliminated safety positions and reduced the budget for mine safety, prior to the Sago and Alma mine disasters? What was in their minds at that time, to reduce the kind of safety provisions? Is the power of the mine companies so great they can increase the risks for workers? Oh, yes, there are workers down there. They are the ones we want to cut back on, in terms of their overtime. They are the ones we are going to cut back on, in terms of safety.

I remember when this President Bush—after the first hearings we had, I think, in our committee—acted to eliminate the protections that had been recommended by President Clinton in the area of ergonomics, particularly affecting women who spend a great deal of time on computers. It affects others—those in the meat-packing industry and poultry industry, workers who perform repetitive kinds of procedures. We had extensive hearings. The Clinton recommendations were very modest. He encouraged com-

panies to get into this and work with industry. Some people thought they were too weak, but they were protecting workers, hard-working people doing some of the most difficult work in America, protecting them so they are not going to get the kinds of complicated health challenges that will disable so many of those.

We know what the science is. We have had study after study by the National Academy of Sciences that said do something in Congress. We did something. But oh, no, the Republican leadership said: No, we are not going to do that. We are not going to provide protection for those workers. We are going to cut back on safety for those who work in the mines. We are going to cut back on overtime for 6 million. We are going to refuse to cover the workers down there in New Orleans who are working, trying to rebuild, when this administration basically ignored the problems there. Workers who were out there working, we are going to cut back and skimp on their salaries on this.

What is it about working people that this administration—the list goes on. Look at the amendments that are lined up to weaken OSHA. We see the number of lives that have been saved—tens of thousands of lives were saved. We have cut the death rate by more than 77 percent since OSHA has been in effect. There are new problems, new challenges, in terms of toxic substances, we have to look at. What is the voice over there? We hear great speeches about what is happening to the middle class. Let's take a step that can make some difference—certainly to 6 million children who will benefit if we increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25—6 million children's parents will benefit. We will have that opportunity.

I don't know what has changed in productivity. We worked closely together, for years and years, for a decent wage. It shows back in the 1960s, 1965 into the 1970s, we saw where our great American economy was moving along, increasing productivity. That increase in productivity was shared between the corporate world, the business world, and the workers. That is what was happening. We will get the charts later on.

Evidently our friends on the other side want to prolong this debate. We will get the charts to show that all America moved along in the 1940s and the 1950s, all the way through the 1960s—each quintile moved along virtually together. If you saw growth in the economy, it benefited all the groups together.

What has come over this country, and particularly the Republican Party, to say that no longer works in the United States? We don't want an economy that is going to work for everyone. We want an economy that is going to work for some—a few. What is it about it? I termed it "greed." It is greed.