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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the State of Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray. O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, on the eve of the sixth anniversary of the 11 September attacks, when many are not strangers to anxiety and fear, draw near to us. Speak to those who recall the uncertainty of life and their hearts fail them.

Lord, some look at an empty chair or a desk and remember that all flesh is as temporary as the grass of the fields and withers like the flowers. Others find themselves thinking about brave Americans in harm's way. Today, remind us of Your sovereignty. Teach us that You are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, and we need not fear. Infuse us with a faith that will not shrink, though the Earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters roar and be troubled. Bless our Senators today as they labor for freedom. Use them to hasten the day when justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM WEBB 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, September 10, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the State of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WEBB 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. Mr. President, this morning the Senate will immediately proceed to executive session for an hour's debate regarding three noncontroversial—we hope, at least—District Court nominations. The time is equally divided and controlled between Senators LEAHY and SPECTER or their designees, and Members can expect votes on these nominations to occur at approximately 11 a.m. this morning.

Once the nominations have been confirmed, Senator BARRASSO will be recognized to give his maiden speech, and he will be recognized for up to 30 minutes.

I say to Senator BARRASSO and others, sometimes these maiden speeches bear fruit. I remember my first speech. I was speaking on the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights, and presiding, as is the Senator from Virginia today, was Senator David Pryor from Arkansas, who was chairman of the IRS Subcommittee of the Finance Committee. Also listening to this speech, fortuitously, was Senator GRASSLEY, who was a member of the Finance Committee—not a senior

member but someone who was active. When I finished my speech, talking about the Taxpayers' Bill of Rights making it a more level playing field between the taxpayer and the tax collector, Senator Pryor had written a note, given it to a page, and he said to me he liked what I was trying to do and would help me. I also got a communication from Senator GRASSLEY that he wanted to work on this.

Well, to make a long story short, Mr. President, because of their involvement, I had to do very little. That legislation passed, and it was landmark legislation. It was not because of my ability to communicate as much as who was listening. So I say to Senator BARRASSO: You never know what is going to happen with your maiden speech.

Once he has completed his speech, the Senate will proceed to the Transportation Appropriations bill. Senators MURRAY and BOND are managers, and they are prepared to finish that legislation this week. There should be votes prior to 5:30 or 6 o'clock tonight. After that, we will have no votes.

Tomorrow should be a very long, productive day because at 1 o'clock on Wednesday we can have no more votes. We can do more Senate business, but because of the Jewish holiday there will be no more votes after that time.

Mr. President, on September 17, which is a week from today, there will be no votes but there will be work. I indicated to the distinguished Republican leader and others that we are going to do what we can to see if we can get the DC-Utah congressional thing worked out, the Voter Rights Bill. What we are working on now is to get some type of consent to have a cloture vote on that sometime next week. That hasn't been resolved yet but we are working on it. I have kept Senator LIEBERMAN involved.

Next week, also, we are going to move to the authorization bill for Defense, which has to be completed. 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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need to complete this appropriations bill this week, because as soon as we complete the Defense authorization bill, we need to move to Defense Appropriations. That is what we have to complete before the end of the work period.

There are other things we have to do. We have to have some extension or some agreement on what we are going to do with the farm bill. We have SCHIP that we need to work on prior to the end of this month. So we have a tremendous amount of work to do. Last week was a very productive week. We had to work a couple of late nights, but it was worth it. So that should set us up for this week and give us an idea of what we are going to do next week.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would ask one question of my good friend, the majority leader. I didn't hear him indicate whether—and maybe he doesn't know yet—the Iraq debate will occur in the context of the DOD authorization bill or separate from that.

Mr. REID. I am going to try to work with the minority leader to see what we can work out as to whether we want to have the Iraq votes intertwined with Defense authorization or whether we do not. I have Members telling me on the Defense authorization bill that they are going to offer an amendment to close Guantanamo and offer habeas corpus, so it is going to be a contested piece of legislation. We have to complete that.

There are some who believe we would be better off having the Iraq matters separate and apart from Defense authorization. I have to work that out first with Senators LEVIN and MCCAIN. My initial report from them is that they would rather have them separate, but I will work with the minority leader and we will try to finish deciding what we are going to do by Wednesday or Thursday of this week.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I am going to make some remarks in my leader time. I would ask the Chair if this is the appropriate time to do that.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

The Republican leader.

THE PETRAEUS PLAN

Mr. McCONNELL. When we opened this session in January, the situation in Iraq appeared to be unraveling. Sectarian violence had sharply increased, particularly in Baghdad, since the bombing of the Golden Mosque. Foreign fighters were taking advantage of this fighting to inflame it even more. And two options emerged: withdraw our forces and abandon this fledgling democracy to al-Qaida and the other terrorists, or confront them directly, in the streets and neighborhoods where they lived.

We needed a new and realistic strategy to succeed, and we got one. The President proposed, and a Democratic-led Senate unanimously confirmed, Gen David Petraeus on January 26 to carry out a new plan aimed at protecting the population in and around Baghdad, beating back al-Qaida, and training Iraqi forces to defend Iraq on their own. The new plan would take time and patience. We had no guarantees it would work. But General Petraeus assured us of one thing. In testimony delivered just before his Senate confirmation, he said this:

I will provide Multinational Force Iraq the best leadership and direction I can muster; I will work to ensure unity of effort with the ambassador and our Iraqi and coalition partners; and I will provide my bosses and you with forthright, professional military advice with respect to the missions given to Multinational Force Iraq and the situation on the ground.

That was General Petraeus.

And if he should determine that this new strategy cannot succeed, the general said he would provide such an assessment.—a promise of candor.

Tomorrow, General Petraeus will give the Senate the forthright advice he promised, a first-hand account by the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq on the progress of their mission. And then we, the men and women who unanimously confirmed him for that mission, will respond accordingly. This briefing will take place 6 years to the day after the attacks of 9/11—when nearly 3,000 innocent people were killed in unprovoked attacks; more than in another sneak attack some 60 years earlier at Pearl Harbor.

Over those 6 years, General Petraeus has compiled an astounding record of service. He has spent 4 of them deployed away from home and away from his family, with nearly 3 years service in Iraq. Let me say that again: 3 years of service in Iraq.

He led the 101st Airborne with distinction in northern Iraq early in the fight. Later he improved the way we trained Iraqi security forces after early mistakes by the Coalition Provisional Authority. And he served as commander of the U.S. Army's Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, where he developed the Army's doctrine on counterinsurgency—he literally wrote the book.

He has proven his devotion to this country. His integrity is above reproach. And any suggestion to the contrary is totally absurd and demonstrably untrue.

And so I resent the comments of those who have sat comfortably in their air-conditioned offices, thousands of miles away from the firefights and the roadside bombs, and tried their Washington best in recent days to impugn the general's good name.

The Democratic majority sent him into battle by a unanimous vote, funded his mission, and asked him to report back on progress. And when he returns, is he greeted with the respect and appreciation his service deserves? No. He

is attacked again, at home, by some of the very Democratic Senators who confirmed him.

They are following the lead of the left-wing groups that placed a full-page ad in today's New York Times, questioning the character—questioning the character—of a four-star general who has the respect and admiration of the more than 150,000 brave men and women serving under his command. These childish tactics are an insult to everyone fighting for our freedom in Iraq, and they should be condemned. I am waiting for someone on the other side to condemn this ad in the New York Times today—the condemnation it richly deserves.

Republicans have tried to maintain a level of civility in this debate. We have let most of the rhetorical excesses of the other side slide, knowing that tempers are bound to flare in this charged environment. But the effort to discredit General Petraeus personally over the past few days is completely and totally out of bounds. It needs to be recognized as such, and it needs to end—right now.

The early effort to undermine his mission was troubling enough. Scarcely had a fraction of the additional soldiers or marines landed in Iraq before we started hearing the voices of defeat. Amazingly, some Democrats who had called for a surge before January, would then label the policy a failure 2 full months before it fully began. Others said the war was lost even as these soldiers and marines were being sent into battle.

General Petraeus was asked to carry out a new plan, and it would be a challenge. But it was guaranteed to fail too if armchair generals in Washington were allowed to dictate the battle plan from here. And with the help of a single courageous Independent, Republicans circled around a simple principle: tactics would be dictated by conditions on the ground, not the political thermometer. Before rushing to legislative judgment, we would listen closely to our commanders.

We held our ground. Despite the best efforts of some of our colleagues on the other side, we gave our commanders what they needed to carry out their plan. Not least of all we gave them hope that they'd have the time and the funding to do their work.

As the summer dragged on here in Washington, leftist groups continued to insist on an arbitrary withdrawal date. And when they failed to get their wish in Congress, they followed Republicans home over the August recess, pouring money into misleading political ads and busing in protesters. This was the other surge, a surge aimed at intimidating Republicans who supported the Petraeus Plan.

These efforts were misguided—and of course they failed.

They failed because Americans will always choose the hopeful path, when they see one in view. And while the defeatists were pouring out of their buses