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Senate

(Legislative day of Thursday, April 17, 2008)

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Great is Your faithfulness, O God, our Father. We rejoice today because we know You are in control. We do not understand all of Your ways, but we know and trust You. Let that faith pervade all that we say and do today.

Guide and bless our Senators. Strengthen their courage and lead them to the right road. May they enact such laws as shall please You. Give them the courage to admit mistakes and the wisdom to trust Your mercy. May they faithfully serve You and promote the well-being of this great Nation.

Lord, we pray also today for all the men and women of our Armed Forces. Defend them day by day with Your Heavenly grace. We pray in your powerful 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 18, 2008.

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. Mr. President, after I speak, and if the Republican leader chooses to speak, we will be in a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. No votes will occur today or on Monday. There will be no votes on Monday because of the Passover holiday. The next vote will occur at 12 noon on Tuesday on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 1315, the disabled veterans' benefits bill.

VETERANS BENEFITS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is hard to comprehend why we have to file cloture on a motion to proceed to a bill dealing with veterans, but that is what is happening. It has been heard on this floor on many occasions in recent weeks, but it is hard to comprehend what the Republicans are trying to do with the country, other than maintain the status quo.

We invoked cloture twice on a technical corrections bill, and now, on a

veterans' benefits act, we have to invoke cloture on even being able to debate it. That is really too bad. There have been 4,039 Americans killed in Iraq; I read that in the newspaper this morning. The occupant of the chair indicated to me that he presented a flag to some Ohio people who lost a loved one. Tens of thousands of troops have been wounded. The morning papers report that 20 percent—one out of every five—of the Iraq veterans, our soldiers, coming home from Iraq have traumatic stress disorder.

Mr. President, we have talked about those who have been killed in Iraq, those who have been wounded, but there are also, as a result of this huge military presence there—earlier this year, about 175,000—people who are in the military who get hurt when trucks back over them by mistake or they may have falls—a lot of things happen to disable these veterans. We have been trying to bring this legislation to the floor since last August. In the height of the war, with soldiers being killed every day, being wounded every day, coming home from Iraq every day, we cannot even get to a bill to deal with their health. The Republicans are holding that up. We have been trying since August to bring it up.

This comprehensive, budget-neutral legislation will provide much needed benefits for veterans young and old. The legislation, among other things, would expand the number of individuals qualifying for traumatic injury insurance.

In the morning papers all over the country, there are headlines such as "VA Suicide Hotline Set Up Last Year Credited With Saving 726 Lives So Far." As I said, we have these stories appearing all over the country.

Twenty-two-year-old Joshua Omvig shot himself in his truck outside his parents' home in Grundy Center, Iowa, on December 22, 2005. A local newspaper reported that he

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



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