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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK BEGICH, a Senator from the State of Alaska.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the source of our strength, and the King above all gods, thank You for Your presence that sustains us throughout our days. Lord, let that presence guide our Senators in every situation and place. Make them instruments of Your peace and love, as they serve You by serving our Nation. Look with favor upon their efforts to meet the daunting needs of our times and to leave a legacy of excellence and integrity. Bless also the members of their staffs. Lord, each one has distinctive needs that only You can meet. In those matters that unsettle them, give them wisdom, grace, and power. We pray in Your loving name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK BEGICH 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, March 24, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, section 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK BEGICH, a Sen-

ator from the State of Alaska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BEGICH 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, following leader remarks, we will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour. The Republicans will control the first half; the majority will control the second. Senators will be permitted during that time to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume the postcloture debate on the motion to proceed to H.R. 1388, the national service reform legislation.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 for the weekly caucus luncheons.

As I announced yesterday, we have to finish the national service legislation this week, because we have to be on the budget next week. For those of us who have been in the Senate for a while, frankly, the budget is kind of an ugly thing. We have no rules, other than that the time for debate is limited. But at the end, it is a free-for-all where we can offer amendments, and there is no limitation to them. We have to finish that legislation before we take the Easter recess.

As I told everyone yesterday, we have to finish this bill today. I hope we can start legislating early today. I spoke to the managers of the bill yesterday, Senator MIKULSKI and Senator ENZI, who was held up in a snowstorm. I talked to Senator MIKULSKI and she thought the bill could be finished in 1 day. I hope those who are wanting to

use this time would allow us to start this legislation so that we can offer some amendments today and finish it in a reasonable time. I hope we don't have to work into the weekend. There are important things people have scheduled.

This is our last weekend prior to the Easter recess. I hope we can have thoughtful cooperation. If there are amendments, offer them, but let's complete this as quickly as possible.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, a lot of people are still justifiably upset that executives at bailed-out businesses received multimillion-dollar bonuses compliments of the American taxpayer. The Senate will continue to press the question of how to make sure this doesn't ever happen again. But already there are some clear lessons we can draw from this experience. Perhaps the most important one is this: If we can't keep track of \$165 million, then it is going to be even harder to keep track of a trillion dollar stimulus bill, and it is going to be even harder still to keep track of the \$3.6 trillion that the administration is proposing in this budget we will be voting on next week.

Americans have already heard enough about this budget to know that it taxes too much. That verdict was validated by an unexpected source last week, when the President's own Transportation Secretary, Secretary LaHood, said he doesn't think it is a good idea to raise taxes in a recession.

Americans know this budget spends too much, that the spending figures are simply staggering, and that much of the spending is borrowed money. They

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



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