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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God, You have truly been good to us. Even when we stumble and fall, Your mercy continues to sustain us. Lead our lawmakers to realize that the abilities You have given them are only maximized when they are used for Your purposes. Show them the best way to use their talents and opportunities to honor and serve You. Lord, keep them from being so mired in political gridlock that they fail to do what is best for this land we love. May they speak today words that are constructive and helpful, bringing encouragement, as well as vision, to their work. Let Your glory be seen in this place.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND 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. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 5, 2012.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND 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. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for up to 4 hours. The reason for that is we have been on a Defense bill for a considerable number of days, and people haven't had the opportunity to come to express their views on a number of different issues, so we are going to extend that morning business for a longer time than normal.

Following morning business, about 2 o'clock, we will begin consideration of H.R. 6156, the Russia trade bill. We hope we are able to complete action on that matter today.

DISABILITIES TREATY

Mr. REID. Madam President, across the country Americans are lamenting the lack of progress in negotiations to avoid a massive tax increase on middle-class families, and I share that frustration. But for insight into why negotiations have been difficult, consider yesterday's failure of the disabilities convention at the hands of the tea party. This shouldn't have been a battle, but extreme elements of the Republican Party picked a fight when there was nothing to fight about. Thirty-eight Republicans voted against the convention, including several who were

on record supporting it, even cosponsored it. This treaty, already ratified by 125 countries, would hold foreign nations to the same high standard and treatment the United States already maintains for people with disabilities.

It would safeguard American citizens traveling, working, and serving abroad, and that is hundreds of thousands of people right now. The treaty has the support of veterans groups, disability groups from around the country, virtually all of them. It wouldn't cost the taxpayers a single penny. It wouldn't require any changes to existing United States law, and the issue is as bipartisan as they come.

Here is what one Senator said about the treaty:

Protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, any person's, is not a political issue. It is a human issue, regardless of where in the world a disabled person strives to live a normal, independent life where basic rights and accessibilities are available. Disability rights and protections have always been a bipartisan issue and ratifying this treaty should be no different.

This wasn't some ultraliberal speaking, it was Senator JOHN MCCAIN, a disabled veteran, a hero from the Vietnam conflict, who broke with extremists and tea partiers and voted to ratify the treaty.

The convention also has the strong support from a number of other leading Republicans, including George H.W. Bush, the first President Bush. He, by the way, of course, was a World War II veteran and did heroic things during that war.

It also has the support of former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, certainly a patriot. Senator Dole, a disabled veteran from World War II, who led the fight to pass the treaty, was here yesterday urging Republican support.

Think about that. Robert Dole, who was grievously injured in World War II, spent more than 2 years in a hospital, came to this Senate floor, and the first speech he gave was on disabilities. 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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