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Senate

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Mighty God, have mercy upon us because of Your unfailing love. Because of Your great compassion let us feel Your presence today on Capitol Hill. As we gather with so much work left undone, guide our lawmakers with Your wisdom. Lord, show them the right thing to do and give them the courage to do it. Be their shelter in the midst of the storm, regardless of how high the waters rise. When they feel exhausted, remind them of the great sufficiency of Your grace. Look with favor on our Nation and save us from self-inflicted wounds.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET 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. LEAHY).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 30, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET, a

Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BENNET 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, there will be an hour of debate on the Galante nomination. At 2 p.m. there will be two rollcall votes on confirmation of the nominations of William Baer to be an Assistant Attorney General and Carol Galante to be an Assistant Secretary for HUD.

Following those votes, there will be a recess allowing for caucus meetings. The majority's meeting will begin at 3 o'clock today.

Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CAROL J. GALANTE TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

NOMINATION OF WILLIAM JOSEPH BAER TO BE AN ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the

Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Carol J. Galante, of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and William Joseph Baer, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be 60 minutes of debate equally divided in the usual form on the Galante nomination.

The Senator from California.

THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, as we stand here—or sit here—and watch what is happening, we know there are negotiations going on to avert at least part of the fiscal cliff. I want to say—I have said this privately, but I want to do it publicly—I hope our leaders can find a way out of this.

I watched the President speak today and I thought, as usual, he was very fair in what he said. What he basically said is it is the middle class that grows this economy. It is the middle class that needs to be lifted up. It is the middle class that cannot afford tax hikes. Those at the very top can do just a little bit more.

It is a very simple point. I hope, given that everyone says they are for the middle class—I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle say that every day, that they agree with that—that finding this compromise will not be elusive but will come to pass.

I have been here for a while. My understanding is we have not met between Christmas and New Year's Day since 1962. So it does take a crisis of major proportions to make that happen. I think we are in a crisis right now, but it is a self-made one. It is a self-imposed one. It is similar to the crisis we had on the debt ceiling—self-imposed. It is not some, God forbid, exterior attack on our country which 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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