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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, thank You for Your promise to meet all our needs. Plant Your peace in the garden of the hearts of our Senators, enabling them to feel the power of Your presence when they need it most. May they find opportunities to trust You, even in the midst of trouble. Lord, bring them through the difficulties of our times, as gold tried in the fire. Help them to be healing agents as they exemplify for the American people civility, graciousness, and oneness. Let Your spirit guide them moment by moment, keeping them close to You.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN 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 as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable WILLIAM M. COWAN, a

Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COWAN 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. Following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 933, the continuing resolution legislation. Last night I filed cloture on a motion to proceed to this most important legislation. We are now in the midst of another filibuster. If no agreement is reached, the cloture vote will be tomorrow morning.

THE RYAN BUDGET

Mr. President, yesterday Americans got their first look at this year's Ryan Republican budget. It turns out it looks like last year's Ryan Republican budget. I wasn't the only one who said: Gee whiz, not again.

Here is the headline from Bloomberg News:

Ryan Budget Replays Republican Hits.

One Washington Post reporter compared the release of the not-so-new and certainly not improved Ryan Republican budget to the movie "Groundhog Day," where Bill Murray relives his least favorite holiday over and over and over. Remember, this is the third Ryan Republican budget.

This is what the Washington Post also wrote:

The unrepentant reprisal of the same fiscal vision that was decisively repudiated last fall is bound to attract notice.

Indeed, this is the same budget plan we saw from Congressman RYAN last

year and the year before that. Even the name is the same. If anything, this new version is even more extreme than the last two Ryan Republican budget proposals—proposals that sought to end the Medicare guarantee and raise taxes on middle-class families, all the while handing out more tax breaks to the wealthy.

The Ryan Republican budget is anything but balanced, and it reflects the same backward values Americans rejected in November. Instead of asking the wealthiest to contribute their fair share, the Ryan Republican budget demands that middle-class families pay more in taxes. Instead of ending wasteful corporate tax loopholes, it basically ends Medicare. In fact, the Ryan Republican budget takes special aim at health care. It would eliminate free preventive health services for 34 million Americans. The Ryan Republican budget would increase prescription drug prices for seniors by \$2.5 billion in 1 year. It would end the coverage guarantees for 3.1 million young men and women who are on their parents' health plans. The budget would end coverage for mammograms, cervical cancer screenings, and contraception for more than 47 million women and allow insurance companies to deny care for 17 million children simply because they were born with a heart defect or some other illness. These drastic cuts will literally cost lives and also jobs.

Instead of a balanced approach that protects the American economy, the Ryan Republican budget guts education, medical research, infrastructure, and even public safety. The Ryan Republican budget would actually jeopardize the economic recovery; it wouldn't help it. And in case you are thinking such huge and painful cuts can buy an awful lot of deficit reduction, think again. Instead, Congressman RYAN's cuts will buy more tax breaks for the wealthiest among us. This budget isn't a serious attempt to

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



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reduce the deficit. Meaningful deficit reduction will require shared sacrifice, including contributions from those who can best afford to contribute to it.

Today, Budget Committee chairman PATTY MURRAY will introduce a budget that reflects the principle of balance. Senator MURRAY's plan, the Democratic plan, will cut wasteful spending, reduce the deficit, and close tax loopholes that benefit the rich, and it will invest in the things that help our economy grow: education, preventive health care, worker training, and roads and bridges. It will invest in a strong middle class. And unlike the Ryan Republican plan, it won't leave you wondering if it is Groundhog Day all over again.

As things now stand, we are in the midst, as I indicated, of a filibuster to even try to get on the bill. If we get on the bill tomorrow morning, then there will be 30 hours of waiting around, staring at each other. I just alert everyone that we have an Easter recess coming a week from Friday, and we are not going to be able to do that. The budget has a locked-in amount of time, 50 hours, plus the vote-athon. So everyone should be prepared to change their plans for the first few days—we hope it is the first few days—of the Easter recess.

We are not even on this bill, and that is such a sad thing. I thought it was such a good atmosphere here. We had a bill at a decent time from the House. As I indicated yesterday, I didn't like everything in that bill, but we had Senator MIKULSKI and Senator SHELBY working together. They checked in with me and Senator MCCONNELL to let us know how they were doing, and they did well on their own. They didn't need our help. They came up with a plan that was fair and as balanced as could be under the sequester situation, and it was bipartisan. The amendment that is being filibustered is sponsored by MIKULSKI and SHELBY. So this is a real shame.

I said last week when we were going on this bill that we would have opportunities for amendments. I hope we can get on the bill and have some amendments offered, but each day that goes by—and we have wasted 2 so far—we are unable to have the amendment process. We had yesterday waiting all day for Harkin and Cruz because that is the first Democratic amendment and the first Republican amendment. They are still on deck, waiting to come whenever the umpire says we can go forward—the umpire being one Senator.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, four years, four long years, that is how

long Kentuckians and Americans from coast to coast have had to wait for Senate Democrats to perform their most basic of legislative responsibilities.

Later today, we hope, that long wait will come to an end when they finally release a budget plan.

Given what we have heard about that budget so far, it is obvious why they refused to release one for so many years.

We hear it won't prevent programs such as Medicare from going bankrupt.

We hear it contains yet more wasteful "stimulus" spending, spending that turns out to be a lot more effective at generating jokes for late-night comedians than jobs.

And in order to finance more spending, we hear it relies on more than \$1 trillion—that is trillion with a T—in new taxes, including on the middle class. Remember, Washington Democrats already got more than \$600 billion in taxes this year. So where is this new revenue going to come from, charities, the home mortgage interest deduction? Will they go after families and small businesses yet again?

At least there is one thing we almost certainly know: their budget will never balance—not today, not tomorrow, not ever.

If that was my vision for the country, frankly I would want to hide it from the American people too.

Look, a budget like that would be a disaster for our country. It would betray those who are going to need Medicare when they retire.

It would betray the younger Americans who would be forced to grapple with the consequences of Democrats' failure to get serious about the debt.

It would betray the hard-working middle-class families that simply can't afford higher taxes, especially in the Obama economy.

And if that is really the kind of budget Senate Democrats plan to offer, it would sacrifice Americans' hopes for sustained economic recovery at the altar of higher taxes and bloated, unaccountable government.

It would also draw an important contrast with the budget Republicans put forward yesterday.

Because here is the thing: Republicans believe we should be growing the economy, not the government—and the House Republican budget reflects just those priorities.

It is a budget that does something else too; it actually balances.

That is important for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it would help unleash economic growth and bring down our country's massive debt load. Interest payments on the national debt alone are set to exceed everything we spend on defense in just a few years' time, so the path we are on clearly is not a sustainable one.

With that in mind, I hope Democrats offer something serious today. I hope they face up to the fact that they already got the revenue they are going to

get. So that they can start dealing with the real issues that are leading us to fiscal ruin.

And I hope they will finally stop trying to shield the Washington establishment from every single attempt to inject a little accountability and reform, because if the reports I have seen are correct, the budget they plan to offer would do none of these things. It would only speed up the dangerous trajectory we are on rather than change it; entrench government waste and cronyism rather than root it out; and make things worse for the families we represent rather than give them hope. Hope is something the American people really need right now. They have been battered by the President's economy. They are tired of seeing their money wasted on an endless labyrinth of self-perpetuating bureaucracy.

So I am calling on my Democratic friends to shelve the extremist liberal budget we have been hearing so much about. Let's get serious here and start doing the things necessary to make government more efficient, more pro-growth, more responsive, and more compassionate—in other words, enact the same priorities Republicans have and, frankly, the priorities many of our constituents have too.

After 4 long years, Senate Democrats should be willing to do more than just protect their buddies in government at all costs—to offer Americans something better than a budget that would expand the IRS and crush the middle class.

The American people deserve better than that. Haven't they waited long enough already for true growth-oriented reform?

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND FULL-YEAR CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 21, H.R. 933.

The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 21, H.R. 933, a bill making appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other departments and agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I wanted to make a few comments. We have finished our analysis of this bill. The bill has 587 pages and spends well over \$1 trillion. We finished at 9 p.m. last