



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 104th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 142

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, JANUARY 5, 1996

No. 3

Senate

(Legislative day of Wednesday, January 3, 1996)

The Senate met at 11 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer: Gracious Father, in the welter of human words, our souls cry out, "Is there any word from the Lord?"

We wonder what You have to say about our present crisis. In our deepest hearts we know all too well. You call all of us to absolute honesty with You and with each other, and to mean what we say and to do what we promise. So often we speak across the cavern of contentious conflict, but do not listen to each other. You command all of us to humble ourselves and repent of the use of coercion because we have failed effectively to communicate our perception of truth or convince each other of the theories and programs we hold so dear. We meet, but sometimes there is not a meeting of minds because often our desire is to defeat those we consider to be the opposition and to rally the approval of our constituencies. Our attention to the polls keeps us poles apart. Pious attitudes mask petulant agendas.

O God, we all are accountable to You. We give up the human power struggle so that we may receive Your power to humbly move forward toward workable solutions. In the name of our Lord. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able majority leader, Senator DOLE, is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, leaders' time has been reserved.

Mr. President, today we will be awaiting a possible House action on maybe one or two measures on returning Federal workers and also paying Federal workers who have not been paid.

We do not expect rollcall votes to occur during today's session. We do not know precisely what the form of the legislation will be when it comes from the House. We hope to be able to pass it by unanimous consent. So if anybody wants to object, they ought to be letting us know early because we will have to give 24-hour notice to get our colleagues back here sometime tomorrow for that vote.

I know that some indicated that they would have objected to the last UC while they were hundreds of miles away. So I want to be sure those people who may be out and around the country today understand that there may be another request for a unanimous consent, and if they wish to object, they had better hustle back here and do so.

I hope, with the House apparently trying to come together on a couple of proposals that would enable Federal workers to return to work with pay, that we would not engage in rhetoric here today that might discourage positive action by the House.

So it would be my hope that we would dwell on other matters, if necessary, and let the Senate then stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair awaiting House action. I do not think it is going to help anything if some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle find it necessary to beat up House Republicans. It will only make it more difficult, and it should make it more difficult, frankly. So I hope we can avoid that rhetoric today.

ORDER FOR RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following statements by the Senator from New Mexico, who is here, and the Senator from Virginia, that the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WARNER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished Senator from Virginia is recognized.

SENATOR DOLE'S LEADERSHIP

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I again wish to thank the distinguished majority leader for his leadership throughout this situation. I find a ray of encouragement here that Federal workers can return to work with pay.

I want to state for the record that the majority leader has stood steadfast on seeing that Federal workers who have been furloughed, and otherwise their pay stopped, will receive this pay.

It is an obligation of the United States of America and all citizens to see that those who have contracted with our Federal Government to be gainfully employed be compensated because they are in no way—absolutely no way—at fault on this situation.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

Mr. WARNER. Also, Mr. President, I wish to inform my colleagues that throughout my State, and in many other parts of the United States, this problem is now working its way by ripple effect into the private sector such that many, many gainfully employed persons in an infrastructure supporting not only the Government but other private sector support are beginning to feel most severely this situation.

This morning on television here in the Nation's Capital was a picture of

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



Printed on recycled paper containing 100% post consumer waste

an entrepreneur who runs a small business—simply a bakery—which provides food for individuals, and they had to furlough three-quarters of their work force today. But that is by the tens of thousands throughout Virginia in the private sector.

The tragedy, Mr. President, is that there is no back pay coming to those private sector employees who are being laid off as a consequence of this partial shutdown of the U.S. Government.

So I extend to my colleagues here in the U.S. Senate a most fervent plea that they allow the Senate leadership, most particularly the majority leader, to pass today those matters that will be coming from the House by a voice vote such that they can become law after the President's signature.

It is my fervent hope that the President will recognize the problems throughout this Nation today and that he will come forward with a balanced budget, as is his obligation, so that we can quickly come to closure on this matter.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BINGAMAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, before the Senator from Virginia leaves the floor, I wanted to just ask in a very straightforward way if he had any more information than I have been able to get about what might be in the bill which would be coming to the Senate from the House of Representatives on several different issues. And I would ask the President pro tempore at this time if the Senator from Virginia would be able to respond to my question on this issue.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, the answer to that rests in a meeting that is now taking place by the Speaker of the House together with the Republican colleagues. I would not want to venture any speculation as to what might emerge. I think the reports today in the press are reasonably accurate as to the framework of what would come about by this.

So I have been in consultation with the Republican Members of the greater metropolitan area of Washington, primarily Congressmen DAVIS and WOLF and Congresswoman MORELLA, this morning. As yet, I would not want to try to speculate as to the final action.

I know essentially it is in two parts. One is to try to restore the Government across the board in terms of people returning to their work with pay for the future and backpay, and then the possibility of coupling another provision which would be contingent on the President of the United States being forthcoming with a balanced budget, which has always been the bottom line. It seems to me that it is a very reasonable request by the Republican leadership of the House and the Senate.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I appreciate that response.

I guess what caused me to come to the floor today was an article which came out in our paper in New Mexico today saying that "The Federal budget deadlock has caused depleted drug cupboards at the Veterans Administration hospital in Albuquerque. The hospital's procurement division has warned pharmacists that drug stocks soon will be exhausted."

Then they go on to say, "What is the Government thinking about these people who fought for their country?"

I was wondering if the funding in the bill that would come from the House would provide money to the Veterans' Administration to buy drugs for the VA hospital in our State. I have a one-page summary of what might be passed by the House. It says here veterans' compensation, pensions, and education programs would be covered. But it does not say anything about the VA hospital functions and the expenses for drugs for veterans. I do not know if the Senator from Virginia has any information on that.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, at this time I do not have the specific answer to my distinguished colleague, who, by the way, serves with me on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and I, like the Senator from New Mexico and, indeed, the Presiding Officer, feel very strongly about this Nation's obligation to its veterans. I will try to get a very prompt answer.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, if the Senator would be able to get answers to two other questions, I will just pose those and then yield the floor.

One pertains to our Department of Labor in New Mexico. This is another article that was in our papers there. It says that the Department of Labor employs State workers but they use Federal funds to pay their salaries. I gather that is a normal practice all around the country in the Department of Labor. They operate the unemployment compensation program and a variety of programs there, and the State workers are paid with Federal funds.

Does the bill which is being considered in the House contemplate that there would be funds to pay the State workers who are paid with Federal funds as well as the Federal workers, or does the Senator from Virginia know?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I do not have the specific answer. I will get it and provide it to the Senator. But I hope that this measure would cure that situation because a great many State workers are dependent on some Federal source as a means of being able to continue with the performance of their duties.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I thank the Senator very much.

There is a similar article about the Bureau of Indian Affairs activities in our State and how that agency has had trouble buying food, heating oil, trucks, and other equipment in order to perform their responsibilities on the reservations.

I hope we can get information as to whether or not those items would be covered by this kind of a bill which is coming to us.

I say to my colleagues, the information that I have been given is that there would not be funds made available for anything other than the salaries of the Federal workers. Obviously, that becomes a problem if your job as a Federal worker requires you to drive a vehicle and you have to have funds to buy gasoline for that vehicle.

The other issue on which I hope we can get an answer relates to an article I saw that the Government shutdown has delayed the construction of a fence at the United States-Mexican border. I had the occasion a few weeks ago when I was in Dona Ana County in my State near El Paso to get a tour of the area for the planned construction of a fence that would go along the southern part of the Anapra area between the United States and Mexico. This is a priority for the law enforcement officers of that region. It is a law enforcement issue. They feel the incidence of crime across the border has increased very dramatically and they need to get this fence up. The article I saw indicated that because contract officers responsible for obtaining building materials have been furloughed, work on that project has had to stop.

I hope very much that when we get the bill from the House of Representatives it will contain funds, authorization and appropriation of funds, for those items as well. So I will not delay the Senate further at this point, Mr. President. I do think that there are a great many activities going unattended, a great many needs going unaddressed which I hope this House action today will correct.

Again, I have spoken several times on the Senate floor this week commending the majority leader and other Senators, all Senators, Republican and Democratic Senators, for the continuing resolution that was passed earlier this week and sent to the House. In my opinion, that was the correct and responsible way for us to proceed. It demonstrated and reflected the recognition that the Congress as well as the President have a shared responsibility to maintain a functioning Government. I think that is the essential issue: Do we agree that we in Congress share in that responsibility to maintain a functioning Government? I feel very strongly that we do. I think all Senators indicated their belief that we do by agreeing to that continuing resolution. I hope the action by the House reflects the same recognition of that responsibility.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WARNER). Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess subject to the call of the Chair.