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Senate

The Senate met at 9:20 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

God of hope, You have shown us that authentic hope always is rooted in Your faithfulness in keeping Your promises. We hear Your assurance, "Be not afraid, I am with you." We place our hope in Your problem-solving power, Your conflict-resolving presence, and Your anxiety-dissolving peace.

Lord, You have helped us discover the liberating power of an unreserved commitment to You. When we commit to You our lives and each of the challenges we face, we are not only released from the tension of living on our own limited resources, but a mysterious movement of Your providence begins. The company of heaven, plus people and circumstances begin to rally to our aid. Unexpected resources are released; unexplainable good things start happening. We claim the promise of Psalm 37:5,7 "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass." In the name of our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader, Senator STEVENS of Alaska, is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. STEVENS. Thank you, Mr. President pro tempore. I have a message here from the majority leader.

For the information of all Senators, this morning, following remarks that I will make, the Senate will resume consideration of the reconciliation bill. At approximately 9:30 a.m. this morning the Senate will proceed to a series of

back-to-back rollcall votes on or in relation to a number of amendments which were offered last evening, alternating between each side of the aisle and ending with the final passage of the Balanced Budget Act. Also, by consent, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided on each amendment prior to each vote. Therefore, Senators can expect a lengthy series of back-to-back rollcall votes as the Senate disposes of all amendments in order to the budget reconciliation bill.

Following final passage, the Senate is expected to proceed to consideration of S. 949, the Tax Fairness Act. As previously announced, all Members may expect busy sessions of the Senate the next couple of days as the Senate works to complete action on the budget reconciliation process prior to the Fourth of July recess.

THE RETIREMENT OF ROBERT J. OPINSKY

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, after a distinguished 40-year career with the U.S. Postal Service and its predecessor the Post Office Department, my good friend Robert J. Opinsky is retiring.

Bob traveled to Alaska in 1956 for a summer vacation. By the time the vacation was over, Bob was ready to become a full-time Alaskan.

He began working with the Post Office Department in Anchorage that year in 1956. By 1970, having served in almost every capacity at the Post Office, he was named Anchorage Postmaster.

When the Anchorage Division was created in 1986, Bob became Division Manager. He was the top Postal Service official in our state, responsible for the delivery and retail operations of all 209 post offices in Alaska.

There have been tremendous challenges during Bob's career, and he's met them with his characteristic quiet efficiency.

One example is how he managed to keep the mail flowing after Alaska's

1964 earthquake, which I remind the Senate measured 9.2 on the Richter scale.

Bob was foreman of delivery and collection at that time.

He worked around the clock and kept the mail moving, even though much of what we call southcentral Alaska was brought to its knees by the disaster.

As our population increased after North Slope oil was discovered and production began, Bob led a team which built and updated more than 50 post offices in a hurry to keep up with the growing number of Alaskans.

In his quiet manner, Bob made sure the task was accomplished quickly and efficiently.

Bob has also ensured that distinguished postal officials learn about Alaska.

Hosting several Postmasters General, the entire Postal Service Board of Governors and members of the Postal Rate Commission on their visits to Alaska, Bob has given them a firsthand view of the beauty of our State, and also an awareness of our unique problems.

I have traveled with Bob to postal functions all over our State: post office dedications, stamp ceremonies, or town meetings to discuss new facilities.

Everywhere we have gone together, it has been obvious how well-liked and respected Bob Opinsky is. He is an Alaskan's Alaskan, with a real can-do spirit.

While working his way up the ladder at the Post Office, Bob put himself through college. He worked hard to become the best manager in the Postal Service, and he has succeeded.

Many awards have come his way over four decades, but perhaps the recognition he most treasures is the Postmaster General Award for Executive Achievement, presented to him in 1991 by Postmaster General Tony Frank.

Bob is married to a lifelong Alaskan, the former Edith Jordet—Edie to many of our friends. They have raised three great children, William, John, and Celine.

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



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Bob's Opinsky's kindness is legendary. His knowledge of the Postal Service is absolutely incredible. His gentleness has earned him the special respect of coworkers, neighbors, and friends. His unassuming demeanor masks a true competitor—a man who works to make sure that he and his people are at the top.

Retirement may mean that Bob's golf game may get a little better, and that he and Edie may have a chance to seek some sunshine during the winter months.

Best of all for me, Mr. President, Bob is my friend. Retirement won't change that.

On behalf of all Alaskans, whose lives have been enriched through the great postal services Bob has ensured for them through the years, I commend Bob Opinsky for a job well done, and wish him well as he explores new horizons.

I thank the Chair and yield back any time I might have.

BALANCED BUDGET ACT OF 1997

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). The Senate will now resume consideration of S. 947, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 947) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 104(a) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for the fiscal year 1998.

The Senate resumed the consideration of the bill.

Pending:

Harkin amendment No. 428, to reduce health care fraud, waste, and abuse

Gramm amendment No. 444, to provide waiver authority for penalties relating to failure to satisfy minimum participation rate.

Reed amendment No. 445, in the nature of a substitute.

Hutchison amendment No. 447, to modify the reductions for disproportionate share hospital payments.

Chafee/Rockefeller/Jeffords amendment No. 448, to clarify the standard benefits package and the cost-sharing requirements for the children's health initiative.

Durbin/Wellstone amendment No. 450, to provide food stamp benefits to child immigrants.

D'Amato/Harkin amendment No. 451, to improve health care quality and reduce health care costs by establishing a National Fund for Health Research.

Domenici (for Murkowski) amendment No. 455, to confirm Title IV, Energy Title, to the provisions of the bill, with respect to the use of underutilized Strategic Petroleum Reserve facilities.

Domenici (for Abraham/Levin) amendment No. 456, to extend the moratorium regarding HealthSource Saginaw until December 31, 2002.

Domenici (for Helms) amendment No. 458, to provide for inclusion of Stanly County, North Carolina in a large urban area under the Medicare program.

Domenici (for Helms) amendment No. 459, to provide for inclusion of Stanly County, North Carolina in a large urban area under the Medicare program.

Domenici (for McCain/Wyden) amendment No. 460, to provide for the continuation of certain State-wide medicaid waivers.

Domenici (for McCain) amendment No. 461, to provide for the treatment of certain Amerasian immigrants as refugees.

Domenici (for Jeffords) amendment No. 462, to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to provide medicare beneficiaries with notice of the medicare cost-sharing assistance available under the medicaid program for specified low-income medicare beneficiaries.

Domenici (for Jeffords) amendment No. 463, to provide for the evaluation and quality assurance of the children's health insurance initiative.

Domenici (for Brownback) amendment No. 464, to establish procedures to ensure a balanced Federal budget by fiscal year 2002.

Domenici (for Allard) amendment No. 465, to expand medical savings accounts to families with uninsured children.

Domenici (for Chafee) amendment No. 466, to extend the authority of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to collect fees through September 30, 2002.

Domenici (for Grassley) amendment No. 467, to preserve religious choice in long-term care.

Domenici (for Kyl) amendment No. 468, to allow medicare beneficiaries to enter into private contracts for services.

Domenici (for Specter) amendment No. 469, to extend premium protection for low-income medicare beneficiaries under the medicaid program.

Domenici (for Specter) amendment No. 470, to strike the limitations on DSH payments to institutions for mental diseases under the medicaid program.

Domenici (for Specter) amendment No. 471, to strike the limitations on Indirect Graduate Medical Education payments to teaching hospitals.

Domenici (for Burns) amendment No. 472, to provide that information contained in the National Directory of New Hires be deleted after 6 months.

Domenici (for Hutchinson) amendment No. 473, to clarify the number of individuals that may be treated as engaged in work for purposes of the mandatory work requirement for TANF block grants.

Domenici (for McCain) amendment No. 474, to provide for the extension and expansion of spectrum auction authority and to provide for the flexible use of electromagnetic spectrum.

Lautenberg amendment No. 475, to ensure that certain legal immigrants who become disabled are eligible for disability benefits.

Lautenberg (for Kerrey) amendment No. 476, to enhance taxpayer value in auctions conducted by the Federal Communications Commission.

Lautenberg (for Durbin) amendment No. 477, to provide food stamp benefits to child immigrants.

Lautenberg (for Rockefeller) amendment No. 478, to require balance billing protections for individuals enrolled in fee-for-service plans under the Medicare Choice program under part C of title XVIII of the Social Security Act.

Lautenberg (for Dodd) amendment No. 479, to provide for medicaid eligibility of disabled children who lose SSI benefits.

Lautenberg (for Murray) amendment No. 480, to clarify the family violence option under the temporary assistance to needy families program.

Lautenberg (for Dodd) amendment No. 481, to amend the provision with regard to transfer cases.

Lautenberg (for Levin) amendment No. 482, to allow vocational educational training to be counted as a work activity under the temporary assistance for needy families program for 24 months.

Lautenberg (for Wyden) amendment No. 483, to provide for the continuation of certain State-wide medicaid waivers.

Lautenberg (for Harkin) amendment No. 484, to make community action agencies, community development corporations and other non-profit organization eligible for welfare-to-work grants.

Lautenberg (for Feinstein) amendment No. 485, to provide that the hospital length of stay with respect to an individual shall be determined by the attending physician.

Lautenberg (for Feinstein) amendment No. 486, to provide additional funding for State emergency health services furnished to undocumented aliens.

Lautenberg (for Feinstein) amendment No. 487, to provide for the application of disproportionate share hospital-specific payment adjustments with respect to California.

Lautenberg (for Wellstone) amendment No. 488, to provide for actuarially sufficient reimbursement rates for providers.

Lautenberg (for Mikulski) amendment No. 489, to reinstate the requirements for provider payment rates.

Lautenberg (for Kennedy) amendment No. 490, to improve the provisions relating to the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Lautenberg (for Baucus) amendment No. 491, to prohibit cost-sharing for children in families with incomes that are less than 150 percent of the poverty line.

Lautenberg (for Kennedy) amendment No. 492, to ensure the provision of appropriate benefits for uninsured children with special needs.

Lautenberg (for Kennedy) amendment No. 493, to exempt severely disabled aliens from the ban on receipt of supplemental security income.

Lautenberg (for Conrad) amendment No. 494, to provide for medicaid eligibility of disabled children who lose SSI benefits.

Lautenberg (for Conrad) amendment No. 495, to establish a process to permit a nurse aide petition to have his or her name removed from the nurse aide registry under certain circumstances.

Lautenberg (for Kerrey) amendment No. 496, to strike the limitation on the coverage of abortions.

Lautenberg (for Kohl) amendment No. 497, to clarify that risk solvency standards established for managed care entities under the medicaid program shall not preempt any State standards that are more stringent.

Lautenberg (for Harkin) amendment No. 498, to allow funds provided under the welfare-to-work grant program to be used for the microloan demonstration program under the Small Business Act.

Domenici amendment No. 499, to provide SSI eligibility for disabled legal aliens.

Domenici (for Chafee/Rockefeller) amendment No. 500, to require that any benefits package offered under the block grant option for the children's health initiative includes hearing and vision services.

Domenici (for Chafee/Rockefeller) amendment No. 501, to require that any benefits package offered under the block grant option for the children's health initiative includes hearing and vision services.

Roth (for D'Amato) amendment No. 502, to establish a Medicare anti-duplication provision.

Lautenberg (for Rockefeller) modified amendment No. 503, to extend premium protection for low-income medicare beneficiaries under the medicaid program.

Lautenberg (for Kennedy) amendment No. 504, to immediately transfer to part B certain home health benefits.

Roth (for Lott) amendment No. 505 (to amendment No. 448), to improve the children's health initiative.

Roth amendment No. 506, to make technical corrections and revisions.

Roth (for Lott) amendment No. 507 (to amendment No. 501), in the nature of a substitute.