



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 106th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 146

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2000

No. 31

Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

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

Almighty God, Sovereign of history and personal Lord of our lives, this week we join with Jews throughout the world in the joyous celebration of Purim. We thank You for the inspiring memory of Queen Esther who, in the fifth century B.C., threw caution to the wind and interceded with her husband, the King of Persia, to save the exiled Jewish people from persecution. The words of her uncle Mordecai sound in our souls: "You have come to the kingdom for such a time as this."—Esther 4:14.

Lord of circumstances, we are moved profoundly by the way You use individuals to accomplish Your plans and arrange what seem to be coincidences to bring about Your will for Your people. You have brought each of us to Your kingdom for such a time as this. You whisper in our souls, "I have plans for you, plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."—Jeremiah 29:11.

Grant the Senators a heightened sense of the special role You have given them to play in the unfolding drama of American history. Give them a sense of destiny and a deep dependence on Your guidance and grace.

On Purim, we renew our commitment to fight against sectarian intolerance in our own hearts and religious persecution in so many places in our world. This is Your world; let us not forget that "though the wrong seems oft so strong, You are the Ruler yet." Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHUCK HAGEL, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Repub-

lic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Chair.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Today the Senate will be in a period of morning business throughout the day, and tomorrow the Senate will begin consideration of H.R. 5, the Social Security earnings test legislation. Under a previous agreement, there will be approximately 4 hours of debate with three amendments in order to the bill. I expect votes will occur during Tuesday's session of the Senate on one or two of the amendments to the bill. However, I expect final passage will not occur until Wednesday morning at approximately 10 o'clock. I will need to consult further with the Democratic leadership as to the exact time for that vote.

During the remainder of the week, the Senate will also consider any of the following items: Crop insurance legislation that was reported out of the Agriculture Committee a couple of weeks ago, plus any nominations from the Executive Calendar that might be cleared. Therefore, votes should be expected throughout the remainder of the week, certainly Wednesday and Thursday. Also, Senators should be on notice that we expect to begin the budget resolution next week, the week of March 27, and Senators may expect votes likely will occur on Friday, March 31.

We had indicated earlier in the year that if we saw a Friday where there would very likely be some votes, we would let Senators know as soon as we could, in order to comply with the budget resolution rules, which is up to 50 hours of debate and amendments in

order. Senators will recall that sometimes we have a number of amendments at the end of the process, so it could take us into Thursday night or over into that Friday, March 31. Of course, if there is a change in that, we will let Senators know, but we need to conclude that budget resolution as soon as possible so the Appropriations Committee can go forward with its bills.

SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I will take just a few minutes of my leader's time to talk about the Social Security earnings limitation.

I am very proud that the Senate is going to be taking up that issue this week and that we have a unanimous consent agreement which will limit us to only two or three amendments. One of those amendments is a technical correction, and then we have one by Senator KERREY of Nebraska and one by Senator GREGG of New Hampshire.

We have talked for years about the unfairness of Social Security recipients losing Social Security money if they need to continue working or want to continue working. At a time when we have a need for seniors who are 65, 66, 67 years old to meet the demands of our increased job availability market in America, it is the logical thing to do. Unfortunately, for many years we talked about it and did not do anything.

The House of Representatives deserves credit for taking the lead on this issue, and now we find it is developing bipartisan support of Republicans and Democrats in the Senate and an indication that the President will sign it. It is long overdue, and I think it is an important issue. I hope a number of Senators will comment on it today and that we will have debate on the two amendments tomorrow and conclude this no later than Wednesday morning.

So I am pleased we are able to proceed in this way, and I look forward to

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S1441

completing action on this important legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

SOCIAL SECURITY, THE BUDGET RESOLUTION, AND THE FEDERAL RESERVE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we on this side of the aisle look forward to working on eliminating the Social Security earnings limitation. I just returned from Nevada. It was amazing the number of people who came up to me and said, Are you going to do finally something about eliminating the earnings test on Social Security? As the leader has said, we have talked about this a long time but done nothing. It is time now that we join together, as we are going to do Wednesday, to pass this important bill.

This legislation will pass overwhelmingly with both Democrats and Republicans voting for it. Why? Because the America of today is much different from the America of 1935 when Social Security came into being. People are living much longer lives, healthier lives, more productive lives, and there is no reason in the world why we do not have people working as long as they want and as hard as they want. We need to remove this limitation. We have a problem in America today in its lack of productivity. This legislation will help a great deal because some of the most productive people in the world are people who are over age 65. So I look forward to joining Senators on both sides of the aisle to make sure we pass this bill as quickly as possible. As the leader said, we should do it Wednesday afternoon.

In looking forward to next week, to the budget resolution, this is a time where we have an opportunity to look at what the Nation is going to do financially for the coming year. I think it is important we all prepare for this debate. There is a limited amount of time we can debate this issue. There is no limitation on the number of amendments that can be offered. We certainly hope there is not an unlimited number of amendments, but that people will give thought and consideration to the ones that are most important.

The Democrats today are going to take some time to talk about a number of issues, and leading the debate will be the chairman of the Democratic Policy Committee, Senator BYRON DORGAN. When he is called upon, he is going to talk about a number of issues.

The Senator from North Dakota has certainly been a leader on the issue of the Federal Reserve System, and there is no one who has been more articulate when talking about the need to do something about the Federal Reserve System and its secretive nature, and the fact that, as an example, they have a \$3.5 billion slush fund that is there to be used for many other programs in the Federal Government.

There is no need to have the Federal Reserve with this amount of money, this pot of money, this \$3.5 billion that they simply have never used since its inception. This money can be used for education. It can be used for many of the other programs for which we are searching for money. I hope during today we will have a good discussion on issues that are affecting this country and that tomorrow we move forward on the social security earnings legislation.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, or his designee.

The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, it is my intention to seek recognition for the purpose of making a presentation. My understanding is Senator BYRD has a presentation. I will defer my presentation so that the distinguished Senator from West Virginia can proceed. I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized following the presentation of the Senator from West Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank my friend, the very distinguished junior Senator from North Dakota, but he is the dean of the delegation. He served in the House several years.

DREAM OF SPRING

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, today, as we observe the arrival of the vernal equinox and, with it, the official arrival of spring, the words of the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge come easily to mind:

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—

The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—

And Winter slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!

Washington has turned her smiling face towards spring as well. The roadsides, so recently painted gray-brown with grit and dirt in the wake of receding glaciers of snow mounded up by mastodon plow trucks, have greened again. The brave crocuses have forced their way through the still-cold Earth to offer their first bright promise of warmer weather, the merry forsythia mirrors the Sun's golden light, and the pear and magnolia trees are softening the gray weave of bare branches with

their pink and white petals. Washington's famous cherry blossoms will soon be adding their dainty petals to the spring breezes.

It is time for the soft whisper of falling snow to be replaced by the conversational patter of spring rains. It is time for the volume to be turned up from the quiet solos of solitary winter birds to the rousing, full-throated chorus of springtime birdsongs.

I asked the robin, as he sprang
From branch to branch and sweetly sang,
What made his breast so round and red;
Twas "looking at the sun," he said;

I asked the violets, sweet and blue,
Sparkling in the morning dew,
Whence came their colors, then so shy;
They answered, "looking to the sky";

I saw the roses, one by one,
Unfold their petals to the sun,
I asked them what made their tints so bright,

And they answered, "looking to the light";

I asked the thrush, whose silvery note
Came like a song from angel's throat,
Why he sang in the twilight dim;
He answered, "looking up at Him."

We have this full-throated chorus of springtime voices—the violets, the roses, the robin, the thrush, the other bird songs—and it is time to spade up the garden, releasing the intoxicating perfume of rich, moist earth. How my little dog, Billy, loves that scent. He stands watch over the spade as I prepare the ground for my tomatoes, and his ears are pricked up, his tail is wagging, his eyes are shining with anticipation, waiting to chip in with paws flying, heedless of the dirt he will track into the house on his white coat. You see, he is a Maltese. This is Billy Byrd—Billy Byrd II. I used to have another dog. It was a cocker spaniel, but it was Billy Byrd I.

It is also time to marvel at the mysteries of God's designs as we watch daffodils burn their way through dense layers of last year's leathery leaves in order to put on their bright show. It is time to wonder how a tiny crocus bulb, no larger than a thumbnail and no heavier than a dust-dry clod of earth, can push aside frozen Earth, melt its way through snow or ice, just to put out four colorful petals. I sometimes wonder for whom the crocuses' show is, for surely crocuses bloom too early for even the hardiest bee.

William Shakespeare observed that, "There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners . . . They hold up Adam's profession." There is indeed a kinship among gardeners, whether serious gardeners whose gardens are their lifelong avocation, or the duffer with a few beds who buys plants at the local hardware store each spring. All gardeners are, at heart, optimists. They have to be. This season allows the gardener each year to fall in love all over again, and to wear on his smiling face a dream of spring and of greatness in the garden. He stands outside, shovel in not-yet-blistered hand, and has visions. He sees, not the patchy lawn and unkempt flowerbeds worn by winter, but some grand turf flowing like a green sea between islands of color, Sun, and shade.