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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 24, 2001, at 2 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, APRIL 6, 2001

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SAM BROWNBACK, a Senator from the State of Kansas.

PRAYER

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

Dear God, our Creator, Sustainer, loving heavenly Father, it is awesome to us that You have chosen, called, and commissioned us to be Your blessed people. We thank You for the times we trusted You and received Your blessings of wisdom, strength, and determination. Now hear our longing to know and do Your will in the final negotiations on the budget. There is so much on which we do agree; show us how to come to creative compromise in the issues on which we do not agree.

Give us clear heads and trusting hearts. May we earn a new confidence from the American people by the way we press on expeditiously and with excellence. Now we commit ourselves anew to You. With confidence we thank You in advance for a successful day of debate on the issues before us. When votes are counted may we neither be grim over defeat nor gloat over victory but pull together as Americans who put You and our Nation's good above all else. In Your all-powerful name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SAM BROWNBACK 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.

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. THURMOND).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 6, 2001.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SAM BROWNBACK, a Senator from the State of Kansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

STROM THURMOND,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWNBACK thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, today the Senate will immediately resume

consideration of the final amendments to the budget resolution. There will be 2 minutes of debate prior to a vote on any of the amendments proposed.

There are, for the information of Senators, between 30 and 40 amendments to be considered during today's session. We are working with Senators on both sides to see which amendments can be accepted, which will require rollcall votes, and perhaps which we will not be required to take action on at all.

Senators should be aware that all votes after the first vote will be limited to 10 minutes. Therefore, Members should stay in the Chamber if possible between votes. We are working to vote on final passage by 2:30 or 3 p.m.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we have looked at the amendments overnight. We still have 42 amendments pending. Between the two sides we have 42 amendments pending. That does not count the leadership wrap-up amendments or the debate on those amendments. So realistically we would be talking about 16 hours of straight voting unless we are able to find some give in the good hearts of our colleagues. I am going to turn to my side of the aisle and urge colleagues on my side to please relent in the interest of getting the business of the Senate done on this budget resolution.

Senator REID and I have gone to our colleagues and asked them to please refrain from pushing their amendment 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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a vote. We understand every Senator has a right to take his or her amendment to a vote, but if everyone insists on their absolute right, we are going to be here 16 hours. Truthfully, it would probably be more than that because we have not been able to do three votes an hour.

That is the reality of the situation we confront. We urge our colleagues to try to work with us as the morning proceeds and to reduce amendments.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. CONRAD. I am happy to yield.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Just for the record, would the Senator do me the favor of emphasizing this amendment dealing with veterans' health care benefits is an amendment from yesterday? I have, indeed, withdrawn my other two amendments, just so colleagues will know that. Will the Senator amplify that?

Mr. CONRAD. I am pleased to say the amendment of the Senator from Minnesota was actually scheduled for last night for a vote and it was held over because of a parliamentary situation that developed last evening. So I am not making this request of the Senator from Minnesota. He has been patient. He has been one who has cooperated and dropped amendments, which we appreciate very much.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

Does the chairman wish we go to a quorum call or go to the vote?

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, let me suggest we have three or four Senators we want to talk with on the phone. We may significantly change our numbers. We do not have anything like those—we are one-third of your number or one-fourth.

I believe we ought to proceed. I believe Senator BOND is ready on our side with a second-degree.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, what is the parliamentary situation? I understood we were going to have votes at 9:30?

Mr. DOMENICI. We are ready to go. We will get an amendment up and be ready to go.

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR THE FISCAL YEARS 2001—2011

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of H. Con. Res. 83, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 83) establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2002, revising the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2001, and setting forth appropriate budgetary levels for each of fiscal years 2003 through 2011.)

Pending:

Domenici amendment No. 170, in the nature of a substitute.

Motion to reconsider the vote by which Harkin amendment No. 185 (to amendment No. 170) was agreed to.

Wellstone amendment No. 269 (to amendment No. 170) to increase discretionary funding for veterans' medical care by \$1.718 billion in 2002 and each year thereafter to ensure that veterans have access to quality medical care.

AMENDMENT NO. 269

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes for debate on the Wellstone amendment No. 269.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the Chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Colleagues, this amendment adds \$1.7 billion to the veterans' health care budget over the next 10 years. The President's budget proposal is a terrible proposal; it leaves so many gaps, there is no question about it. This amendment has the support of AMVETS, VFW, Paralyzed Veterans, Disabled American Veterans, and many colleagues have signed on to it. I especially thank Senator JOHNSON and Senator ROCKEFELLER.

The problem is between \$900 million of medical inflation and then the commitment we made to elderly veterans with the Millennium Program and the commitment for mental health services, hepatitis C, and the commitment to treat veterans who have no health care coverage, this is totally inadequate.

This is not a game. If we are committed to veterans, you are going to vote for this amendment. This really does deal with some of the unmet needs. There are amendments that can come in with less funding, but this is the only way we say thank you to veterans. It is extremely important. I can't think of any more important vote from the point of view of working with a very, very important group of people.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who seeks time?

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I yield myself 1 minute on this side to respond to the comments of the proponent of the underlying amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 351

Mr. President, I send a second-degree amendment to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND] proposes an amendment numbered 351.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: Increase Veterans discretionary spending for FY02)

On page 36, line 6, increase the amount by \$967,000,000.

On page 36, line 7, increase the amount by \$967,000,000.

On page 43, line 15, decrease the amount by \$967,000,000.

On page 43, line 16, decrease the amount by \$967,000,000.

On page 48, line 8, increase the amount by \$967,000,000.

On page 48, line 9, increase the amount by \$967,000,000.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, this underlying amendment, as others before and after, chips away at the tax relief package proposed by the President. All citizens, including our veterans, deserve tax relief. This amendment that I have just offered on behalf of Senator DOMENICI would increase veterans' discretionary spending for the coming year by almost \$2 billion, including a \$1.7 billion increase for medical care. This is the highest increase ever; this is the first increase in recent years.

Let me make a point that the President's budget request for VA is an excellent one. This body should recall from previous years that the prior administration proposed to freeze veterans' medical care with no increase at all.

This amendment also provides the highest increase ever for the Veterans' Benefit Administration, where a backlog of claims continues to mount. This is a problem that the prior administration refused to address.

Finally, this amendment does not assume spending beyond fiscal year 2002 because VA has a new administration, new management, and a massive strategic review.

I urge support of the second-degree amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 269

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President and colleagues, please follow the arithmetic. The President's budget is opposed by so many veterans organizations.

With \$1 billion for the whole VA budget, medical inflation alone is \$900 million. We passed a millennium bill with a commitment to elderly veterans with another \$100 million. We talk about mental health services, and another \$100 million for treating veterans with hepatitis C. That provides more resources.

I do not know, in all due respect, where my colleague gets his numbers. I am glad that we have an amendment on the other side of the aisle that calls for a \$900 million increase. I am pleased we are pushing this forward. But, in all due respect, the President's budget is no way to say thanks to veterans. Sure, we can take a little bit out of tax cuts with 40 percent going to the top 1 percent and make the commitment to veterans' health care.

This is a clear vote.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All time has expired.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute out of order.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Senator MIKULSKI, who has waited patiently for 2 days to offer her amendment, came to us a few minutes ago and said, because of the rush