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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 5, 2001, at 2 p.m.

Senate

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2001

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable HARRY REID, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

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

Gracious Father, You are the source of strength when we trust You, the source of courage when we ask for Your help, the source of hope when we wonder if we can make a difference, the source of peace in the stresses and strains of applying truth to the formation of public policy. Bless the Senators as they return from the August recess to a heavy and demanding fall schedule of the ongoing challenges and opportunities in this 107th Congress. Help them to reaffirm the basic absolutes of faithfulness and obedience to You: Remind them that they are here by Your permission; rekindle in them a holy passion for social righteousness; restore a profound patriotism for this Nation You have blessed so magnificently; and refract the eyes of their minds to see Your plan for America spelled out in the specifics of the legislation to be debated and decided in these next weeks.

We ask for Your encouraging presence and enabling power for TOM DASCHLE and TRENT LOTT, HARRY REID and DON NICKLES as they exemplify greatness in cooperative leadership of the Senate. All of us—Senators, officers, and the over 6,000 people who form the Senate family—humble ourselves to receive Your inspiration and dedicate our work to serve You as the only sovereign of this land.

We express our profound sympathy to the family of former House of Representatives Chaplain, James Ford. Comfort and bless them in this time of grief and loss. You are our only Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable HARRY REID 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. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 4, 2001.

To the Senate:

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

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DURBIN). 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 not to extend beyond the hour of 11 a.m. with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes. Under the previous order, the time until 10:30 a.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS, or his designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m. as has been announced by the Chair. At 11 a.m. today, the Senate will begin consideration of S. 149, the Export Administration Act. There will be at least one rollcall vote today that will occur at 5 p.m.

ORDER FOR RECESS

I ask unanimous consent that the recess scheduled for 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. today be vitiated and the Senate recess tomorrow, Wednesday, September 15, from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. for the weekly party conferences.

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

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



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The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I request the opportunity to speak in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

THE SENATE AGENDA

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, all of us are pleased to be back, able to go on and finish the business we have yet to do. There is a lot of it, of course. I have read from time to time that we have been on vacation. I have to tell you, it is scarcely a vacation. All of us spend this time, as we should, traveling in our States and visiting with the people we represent. Frankly, it is a real pleasure and honor to travel about Wyoming this time of year. It is important that we reflect on what we have heard, some of the issues laid before us, some of the notions of the people at home. After all, it is our responsibility to be here to represent those people.

There are a number of things we all hear about and hear about repeatedly while we are in our States. One of them is the tax issue, the idea of tax reduction, and specifically the returns that have been made during this period of time. Many people have received their \$600 or \$300. I heard a great deal about that. I heard a great deal of praise and support for tax relief, having an opportunity to receive those dollars that were deemed to be surplus. They were not dollars that belonged to Washington; they were dollars that belonged to the taxpayers.

I heard that quite often. Frankly, I was very pleased to hear that and also to share the belief that the return of tax dollars certainly is appropriate in a time of a slowing-down economy.

We also hear a great deal about budgets. Most people do understand that, depending on your point of view about the size of government and the involvement of government, sticking to budgets is a very important issue. Of course, it is very significant now as we enter into this last month. We are supposed to pass all the appropriations bills and come up with next year's spending outline during these next several weeks. That is a relatively short time to do that.

The majority of people I spoke with said: You passed a budget; stay with the budget and a 4 percent increase, which is a reasonable increase; stay with it. Of course, that is not what we have done over the last number of years. I think that shows a good deal of knowledge about what is happening.

In Wyoming, where we are involved in the production of energy, whether it be gas or oil or coal, there is a great deal of interest in energy policy. That is something we have not had for a very long time. The President set one forth and, as a matter of fact, the House has passed an energy bill. We have not. It is one of the issues that ought to be a priority. The folks at home indicated to me it ought to be a priority.

When we first started talking about energy 6 or 8 months ago, California was undergoing an energy shortage. It certainly seemed that it was a crisis. Then we got over that a little bit; some of the gas prices began to go down some, although they are coming back up again now, but the problem still remains. We have not resolved the energy problem at all. I hope that will be a high priority for us during these closing weeks. Some of us had hoped it would have been a priority before now, but it has not been. Now I think it is clear it needs to be.

One of the other things I heard a great deal about, which I suppose is a little different in a State such as Wyoming where 50 percent of the State belongs to the Federal Government, is that this administration has indicated and is beginning to demonstrate that they are willing and anxious to have more local input into the decisions that affect public land and affect the people who live by and depend on public land. That is not saying it is going to protect the environment. It says that each area, each park, and each forest is unique, and to try to set nationwide standards from Washington, as has been done in the recent past, is not a workable situation. Our folks are very pleased about that.

Finally, I will take a moment to say, as someone who feels some responsibility, that I like the idea that we are paying down the debt. That is good.

We have a number of things to do. Certainly this whole business of appropriations needs to be done.

I have already mentioned energy.

I hope we are able to work some more on simplifying and making Medicare a little more workable and putting pharmaceuticals into it. We are working on that, of course, in the Finance Committee, and we will continue to do so. There are dollars in the budget to do those things.

Education: We need to complete our work on education, of course. Sometimes it seems the only solution to education is the dollars. Dollars are necessary, but dollars alone do not work. We need to have some accountability. We need to have some local control.

In any event, I think we have some real challenges before us and an opportunity to accomplish them. Frankly, I am a little discouraged about what I read and hear—that we are entering into a time when many people, particularly I think on the other side of the aisle, are more interested in developing issues for their upcoming campaigns than they are in solving the problems. I hope that is not the case. We are trying to, of course, work towards midterm, which becomes very political, a little more than a year from now. Politi-ticking is fine, issues are fine, but when a political issue becomes more important than resolving the problem before us, I think that is a mistake. I think we are going to see some of that.

Certainly, there are different views about how we go forward. There is no

question about that. Some in this body, of course, want more government. Some want more spending. Some are very sorry about tax relief because it may reduce the spending.

I have to tell you that I think we really ought to stay within the budget we passed, which is about a 4-percent increase. I hope we don't go back to last year's history and increase it by 14 or 15 percent. I think that is a mistake. Certainly, things are a little different now when we are faced with this slowing of the economy.

Speaking of the political issue, back in April, for example, there was a lot of talk about tax relief. There was a Democrat amendment to increase the amount of tax relief to \$85 billion. It was defeated by 94 to 6. In July there was another Democrat amendment that would repeal the immediate tax rebate. It failed 91 to 3.

The idea that there is now an effort to move some responsibility to the White House for added tax reduction and so on is just not the case. It is just a political kind of issue. We hear all kinds of political views in the Senate, and various Senators on the other side of the aisle have said it should have been larger and kicked in sooner. Some are using radio programs to say to their constituents that this was a great thing to do. Indeed, it was.

We are going to have a lot of talk about the surplus, of course, and about the differences between OMB and the Congressional Budget Office. The fact is that both sets of figures show that this is the second largest surplus in history. It is. The new numbers, of course, really say that what is most important is that we do not have irresponsible spending. If we can follow the budget we passed and say that is what we want to do, then we will be in good shape.

The President's budget protects Social Security and Medicare. Besides, the surplus, frankly, has no impact on those trust funds. The President's priorities are to protect Social Security and Medicare. We are going to improve Medicare to help seniors. We are going to work on that.

We are paying down a good deal of publicly held debt. Sometimes we have to review what happens to a surplus. If we use it to pay down publicly held debt, then debts are created for the various programs under the trust funds. That is the way it works. It is the only place to put the money to have a return on the money that is there and meeting the needs that are set forth.

I hope we can hold the political rhetoric to a minimum and deal with the real issues and the fact that we have the second largest surplus in history. Besides, the budget surplus really has no impact on the trust funds. It has been that way over the years. We have to pay down a historic amount of publicly held debt and work to foster economic growth. That is one of the ways to do that.