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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, from whom all blessings flow, we receive today as a gift from Your bounty. Help us to use these precious hours and minutes for Your glory. Teach us to number our days that we may have hearts of wisdom.

Lord, guide our Senators with strength, courage, hope, and love. Empower them to build bridges that will keep America strong. Pull down walls of contention and replace them with gates that lead to a productive harvest.

Let this season of peace on Earth bring joy to our world and healing and hope to our hearts.

Continue to bless our military men and women. Protect them from the dangers of the sea, land, and air, and from the violence of the enemy. Console all for whom December 7 is an annual reminder of pain and loss. We pray this in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning we return for what I personally hope—and we all hope—is a very short and productive session. We are currently waiting on House action on the intelligence reform conference report, and that should occur today. We will consider that measure whenever it arrives from the House. After consultations with the Democratic leadership,

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By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

ROBERT W. NEY, *Chairman*.

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



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we announced yesterday that there will be no rollcall votes today. We recognize people's schedules are complex and people are coming back but that people are literally all over the country right now and waiting on House action. Therefore, we felt it would be next to impossible to have a rollcall vote today and so we let people know yesterday.

Further, we are in discussions and it is still possible for us to consider the intelligence reform conference report without the need for a rollcall vote. That is under discussion, and we are talking to all our Members. I did want to mention that publicly early on so we can continue that discussion over the course of today.

With regard to the schedule, because there is some uncertainty, by necessity, given the fact we must wait on House action before bringing it to a vote, I encourage all Members who wish to speak on this legislation to come to the floor today and speak. Earlier is preferable, in the event that when a vote is scheduled, we would like to move to that vote in a relatively expeditious way.

If we are able to complete or able to clear the conference report, then it is my hope we could pass the measure in short order, and it would be my preference to deal with it on a voice vote, without a rollcall vote, if that is possible and if our colleagues agree to that.

If a vote becomes necessary, then we would, in all likelihood, schedule that vote for sometime tomorrow, and in discussions with the Democratic leadership, we would pick an appropriate time to do that. Again, we will do our best to accommodate all our Members' schedules, and we are working on that right now.

In the interim, there are a few remaining legislative and executive matters we may be able to clear. We have been working on that over the course of yesterday and today, and we will continue to do that. We will process many of those cleared items before we finish our business. We will not be taking up new business. We will be stressing the importance of finishing business for this Congress, and, in all likelihood, we will be doing that by the end of the day tomorrow. We could even finish by the end of the day today. It depends on the House activity.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the acting Democratic leader.

COMPLETING SENATE ACTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, while the distinguished Republican leader is on the floor, I wish to make a couple of statements. It is good we finished, finally, the bill on which the Presiding Officer worked so hard, the Omnibus

spending bill. It will now be sent to the President. It is a few weeks overdue, but at least it is done right.

The provision dealing with the Internal Revenue Service is out of that bill. We learned how it was put in the bill. I am confident and hopeful that will not happen in the future.

I extend my appreciation to the Democratic leader of the House of Representatives, Representative PELOSI, for making sure there was a vote on this measure. It sends a good message to the people of America.

I also extend my congratulations to Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS for their brilliant work on this 9/11 bill. We had a true conference on that bill. No one can dispute there was anything done in the darkness of night. The people appointed to that conference committee worked long and hard to come up with what we will vote on either tonight or tomorrow.

There have been times when, on this side, we have complained how the conferences have worked. On that bill, it worked the way it is supposed to work. Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS have worked well together. This legislation, while imperfect, is still in keeping with the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, and the American people are going to be safer as soon as this legislation is signed by the President.

I say to my distinguished colleague, the Republican leader, on our side the only two requests for speeches I have on the 9/11 bill are Senator LEAHY, who wants to speak for a relatively short period of time, and Senator BYRD, who will want to speak for a fairly long period of time.

In addition, I have had requests from Senator DORGAN and Senator GRAHAM of Florida that they want to be able to speak sometime during the day as in morning business.

Those are the only indications we have today on this side of the aisle. As I indicated, Senator BYRD may want to speak for an extended period of time. I do not know if that means an hour, 2 hours, or 3 hours, whatever it is. We will check with him and find out when he will be able to speak.

It is my understanding we could get the bill from the House sometime as early as this afternoon. If that is the case, then I hope there is a decision made by those who, in the past, have said they want a vote on this measure whether they are going to require a vote. If they do, as I indicated to the Democrats, some people have to fly a long way to get back here for a vote tomorrow. We will keep the Republican leader advised during the day as to what we have on our side.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, as you have just heard from both leaders, requests have been made for people to come to the floor today. Although I know people's schedules are so complicated, we will do our best to keep people posted over the course of the

day and come to the floor and make periodic announcements as to progress being made.

INTELLIGENCE REFORM LEGISLATION

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I wish to make a statement with regard to what I regard as a truly historic point for our Nation's security as we complete action on the National Security Intelligence Reform Act of 2004.

Those people who have not been directly involved in the negotiations have followed it from afar and are aware that an agreement—some people would say a tentative agreement but an agreement—has been reached on this National Security Intelligence Reform Act.

As just mentioned, it is our understanding that the conference report in all likelihood will be introduced and passed in the House today. The Senate will then address the bill and send it to the President for his signature.

I extend my deep thanks and appreciation to Senators SUSAN COLLINS and JOSEPH LIEBERMAN. Their steady leadership, their continued commitment, and their constant focus on passage of this bill kept the whole process moving forward from day one, and I will review that history shortly. I thank them on behalf of leadership, and America thanks them.

The 9/11 intelligence bill constitutes the most comprehensive and sweeping reform of the intelligence community since the National Security Act of 1947. This bill sets into motion a variety of reforms that over time will greatly improve our Nation's ability to fight the war on terror. I thank Governor Thomas Kean and Representative Lee Hamilton for their dedicated leadership of the 9/11 Commission. They have done a truly outstanding job. Their hard work and thorough analysis forms the basis of the 9/11 bill.

The 9/11 Commission's main recommendations that are addressed in this bill include the following: establishment of a new director of national intelligence who will oversee the intelligence community with enhanced budgetary and personnel authorities; creation of a national counterterrorism center that will coordinate and unify our counterterrorism efforts; ensure effective information sharing and conduct strategic operation planning; initiation of a wide range of other measures to improve information sharing, cooperation and coordination and team work between agencies in the intelligence community, such as the CIA and the FBI; establishment of a civil liberties board and authority to designate an IG; and a provision that will ensure that the chain of command is preserved and that statutory responsibilities on the heads of departments are not abrogated.

The legislation will also improve the functioning of the FBI, enhance our