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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.

Lord of wisdom who reigns forever, judging the nations with righteousness and Your people by Your truth, Your steadfast love endures forever and Your faithfulness to all generations. Thank You for the gift of this new day and for the opportunities to promote good will and understanding here at home and unto the ends of the Earth.

Lord, forgive us when we have slept in the face of opportunity or refused to shoulder the responsibilities that come with the privileges of freedom. Today, deliver our Senators from any short-sighted policies and enable them to live up to their lofty vocation. May each of our lives ever glorify Your wonderful and 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 the Senate will resume consideration of the highway bill. There are several amendments pending to the legislation and it is hoped that we can consider and dispose of those amendments during today's session. Although it appears as though we have not made

as much progress on the floor as most of us would like, the chairman and ranking member have been working with a number of Senators on their amendments—as we said, working through the weekend and through yesterday. Thus, work continues on that front. And, again, on behalf of the managers, I encourage Senators to come forward and offer their amendments and discuss those amendments with the managers.

Rollcall votes are possible today as we continue to look for ways to make progress on the bill. I have been talking to the chairman about the continued desire to finish the bill this week. Although last week was a challenge in the Senate, the bill has been pending since that time, and we had hoped to have considered more floor amendments under the regular order.

We have now been on the bill 7 days. Again, there has been a lot of discussion, but I do ask our colleagues to accelerate the process of the consideration of amendments. And they must be brought forward now.

I will continue with discussions with the managers to look for an appropriate avenue for completing this bill this week. I will notify all Senators as we proceed as to when rollcall votes can be expected.

I thank everybody for their attention.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will the distinguished majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. President, I say, through you to the majority leader, one of the things we have appreciated on this side during the tenure of the Senator from Tennessee as majority leader is that you have been very good to us, with rare exception, in allowing us to offer amendments. You have given us ample time to offer relevant amendments and nonrelevant amendments prior to doing something procedurally to stop the debate.

I recognize, as does Senator INHOFE, that it is not the Republican leadership

that has thrown the roadblocks up to the amendment process on this bill. We acknowledge that. There are a number of Senators, for various reasons, who have prevented this bill from moving forward.

Speaking only for this Senator, I do not hold the Republican leadership responsible for these dilatory activities. I think the majority leader, in conjunction with the minority leader, the Democratic leader, has to assess how best to proceed in the immediate future.

This, as the majority leader has said, is an important piece of legislation. As Senator LOTT said yesterday, this could be the most important piece of legislation we will handle this year. Whether that is right or not, I do not know, but I know it is a very important piece of legislation. I hope there is a way we can move forward on this bill.

Mr. FRIST. I thank the Senator.

Mr. President, in closing, I do stress the importance to leadership on both sides of the aisle—we have been in constant communication—that people have the opportunity to express themselves and to have that appropriate debate on the floor. Again, we were on the bill all last week. Yes, we had some interruptions last week with extraneous circumstances, but resilience came through and we had the opportunity with the floor open, as it will be all this week.

At the end of the day, our obligation is to have that opportunity to debate, have our ideas reflected, and then give people an opportunity to choose. That is, again, my goal over the course of the debate during this 2-week period.

With that, I would like very much to finish the bill this week and give each of our colleagues the opportunity to choose and reflect their opinions on this bill.

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



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