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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN ENSIGN, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, You are our hiding place. You alone are our mighty rock and fortress. Thank You for providing us with shelter from life's storms and for making us Your children. Teach us to serve and honor You.

Strengthen our Senators and give them inward peace. Infuse them with the wisdom that strives for faithfulness. Let that faithfulness so energize them that harmony will overcome discord. May the effects of this unity be felt in our Nation, inspiring people to seek for common ground.

Bless and protect America. Make it a land that provides freedom's lamp to our world. Sustain our military and provide for its needs, according to Your glorious riches and power. We pray this in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN ENSIGN 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. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, September 23, 2004.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JOHN ENSIGN, a Senator from the State of Nevada, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ENSIGN thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning, the Senate will conduct a period of morning business for up to 30 minutes, with the first 15 minutes under the control of the majority and the following 15 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee. Following morning business, we hope to begin consideration of the Foreign Operations appropriations bill under a limited agreement on amendments. It is very important we address that bill. We have made good progress this week on the appropriations bills. As we set out last week, for this week the focus needed to be to address as many of the appropriations bills as possible. It is my hope that following morning business we can go directly to the Foreign Operations appropriations bill, deal with those amendments today, and vote on that bill today.

We are also waiting to receive the family friendly tax cut conference report from the House of Representatives later today. We will complete action on that measure before we adjourn for the Yom Kippur holiday, which begins tomorrow evening.

I know both of these issues are issues people have been addressing and have thought about, and I am confident we can do those over the course of the day and/or tomorrow morning. I do want, because I know people have travel

plans for tomorrow afternoon, to be able to complete that either this afternoon or tonight or tomorrow. Again, I think we can do them both today. I just want all of our Senators to work together and talk to the managers of both bills, if people have concerns, over the course of the morning.

SPEECH OF PRIME MINISTER ALLAWI OF IRAQ

We have just completed a wonderful and, I should add, inspiring joint meeting of Congress with Prime Minister Allawi, just 15 or 20 minutes ago. Indeed, he laid out both the great progress that has been made but his absolute commitment to free and fair elections in January in Iraq, making the statement that he understands that, because of the intent of terrorists to disrupt those elections, it is going to be very tough.

He looked at it very realistically. He said the elections will be fair and free, recognizing that in other great countries today, when they had their first elections, as they moved toward democracy, it was challenging. He recognizes those challenges. But again and again, to standing rounds of applause, he expressed his commitment to those elections in January.

Mr. President, I will close by saying Members can expect a busy afternoon with votes throughout the day. If we are to finish those bills, and we cannot do them over the course of the afternoon, we might well stay into this evening. So I encourage people to keep their schedules flexible. If we finish our business today, of course, we would not have to vote tomorrow morning. But these are two important pieces of legislation that we need to address.

Next week—and the reason there is this time sensitivity—we will have an issue which really rises above all others; that is, the safety and security of the American people. We have been addressing appropriate intelligence reform, addressing it in committee very satisfactorily in a very productive way

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



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over the course of this week. That intelligence reform is now out of committee and ready to be brought to the floor, or will be shortly after the appropriate paperwork and processing is done. The intent would be to go to that Monday as the next order of business. That is why we really need, as leadership from both sides of the aisle, to have people focused on the immediate business before us, in an orderly, systematic way, so we can turn our attention on the floor to the report that has come out of the Governmental Affairs Committee as it deals with intelligence.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when we move to morning business Senator KENNEDY have the first 15 minutes of the time allotted to the Democratic caucus.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SPEECH OF PRIME MINISTER ALLAWI

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I share the view of the majority leader that we have just experienced a historic moment. Prime Minister Allawi spoke for all of us as he expressed the hope and vision for democracy in his country. His speech was eloquent, and I believe it was a stirring reminder of the importance that we all must place on the ongoing effort to ensure that the people of Iraq have an opportunity to experience democracy for the first time in their history.

I ask unanimous consent that the speech be made a part of the RECORD.

(The speech is printed in today's RECORD of the House Proceedings at page H7446.)

COMPLETING SENATE BUSINESS

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I also note the interest of leadership on both sides in following through with what the majority leader has just described. I think it is important for us to complete the work on the tax bill this morning, or this afternoon at the latest. I have no indication there is an objection to bringing up the conference report. I hope we could have a short period for deliberation and a vote.

We would be prepared to move to the Foreign Operations bill with or without an agreement. There is no opposition to moving to the bill on our side. Again, it provides an opportunity to

complete yet one more appropriations bill this week.

So I am hopeful we can complete our work on time. I would hope we could do so this afternoon. I do think that in respect for the Jewish holiday it is important for us to complete our work to allow Senators the opportunity to travel tomorrow.

Next week, we look forward to the debate on the legislation passed out of the Governmental Affairs Committee regarding recommendations from the 9/11 Commission. Again, as I have said several times this week, I think that our two leaders, Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN, have done an outstanding job. I would hope that the spirit of bipartisanship that was so clearly on display during those deliberations could be achieved in equal form here on the Senate floor next week and, I might say, as we go to conference.

I heard some disconcerting news this morning that there are some in the House of Representatives who may want to insert in this legislation extremely divisive and counterproductive language having to do with expansion of the PATRIOT Act. Whether we ought to expand the PATRIOT Act is certainly a matter for debate, but if we are going to maintain that kind of bipartisan spirit, provisions such as those could be extraordinarily counterproductive. I think we need to be very concerned as we complete our work that we do so in as broad a bipartisan fashion as was demonstrated in the Governmental Affairs Committee.

NEED TO VOTE ON REIMPORTATION

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, we have just two short weeks before the Senate is scheduled to adjourn. Regrettably, this Congress seems on track to be remembered for all the different challenges it failed to confront.

Forty-five million Americans lack health insurance, and this Congress has done nothing to lower the cost of health care. Medicare premiums are set to rise 17 percent next year, and yet this Congress has done nothing to keep these increases from eating into seniors' Social Security benefits. Eight million Americans are out of work, and we have let a jobs bill that would stop the flow of American jobs overseas languish on the shelf.

America deserves better.

Today I want to talk specifically about an issue that has strong bipartisan support, is vitally important to millions of Americans, and one that we felt the majority leader was committed to considering. I am talking, of course, about the price of prescription drugs.

Each year, the cost of prescription drugs outpaces inflation and moves further out of reach for far too many Americans. This is particularly tough on seniors, many of whom are living on fixed incomes. The AARP revealed last week that during the first quarter of 2004, drug prices rose more than three-

and-a-half times the rate of inflation, and there is no end in sight.

The typical senior will pay \$191 more for their drugs this year than they did in 2003. This has sent a lot of seniors looking for solutions, and many are looking to Canada.

Recently, a man in the town of Mitchell, SD contacted my office with a question: Was the prescription drug card he was considering better than the savings he was getting in Canada? The answer is that it wasn't. He and his wife were saving 50 percent when they got their drugs from Canada, much more of a benefit than they would get from the drug card.

His doctor told him what he was doing was safe; his wife's quilting group was very excited about the savings they could get. There was only one problem: they were afraid what they were doing was illegal. Technically, what they wanted to do—purchase in Canada the same, safe, doctor-prescribed and FDA approved drugs that they would get in America—is illegal. And the only reason that it is illegal is because there are those who would put the profits of drug companies over the needs of America's seniors. That needs to change.

The drug companies and their friends in Congress have tried to stop straightforward reforms by making the issue of health care appear complicated or even dangerous. The White House tells us that reimportation wouldn't be safe. But just the other day, an executive from Pfizer said it was "outright derogatory" to suggest that reimportation wasn't safe. These are the same drugs, manufactured to the same safety standards.

What is not safe is when seniors skip doses or split pills because they can't afford their full prescription. That is the real safety issue.

There is not mystery to bringing down drug costs. You don't need a PhD in economics. You just need common sense. If two stores offer the exact same product, you save money if you buy it from the store that is selling it for less.

It works the same for medicine. Drug companies charge American consumers the highest prices in the world. Some medicines cost American patients five times more than they cost patients in other countries.

By giving Americans the freedom to find the best price, we can lower the cost of prescription drugs for all Americans. This isn't a Republican solution or a Democratic solution. It is a common-sense solution.

What doesn't make sense is why we haven't done this already. In March, the Republican leader said that we would begin a process of "developing proposals to allow for the safe reimportation of FDA-approved prescription drugs." But, the Republican leader was quoted as saying it was doubtful that we would have the opportunity to vote on prescription drug reimportation legislation.