

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHNNY ISAKSON 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, December 20, 2005.

To the Senate:

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

TED STEVENS,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. ISAKSON 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 we will resume debate on the deficit reduction conference report. There is 8 hours remaining for debate under the 10-hour time limit. If Senators desire to speak on the package, they should contact the chairman or ranking member so we can schedule an orderly debate on the pending conference report. Both parties will have their policy luncheons today, and we will recess for those meetings if Senators are not prepared to speak during that time and if we can count that time against the debate limitation.

I remind everyone that I filed two cloture motions on two conference reports yesterday—first, Defense appropriations and, second, Defense authorization. Those votes will occur tomorrow morning, and Senators can expect votes early tomorrow morning on those.

I will be talking to the Democratic leader about the timing of the vote on the deficit reduction measure. We will need to confer with those managers to see how much of the 8 hours will be necessary so we can alert Members as to when they can anticipate the vote.

Senators should be around and ready to be here on time over the next day or two as we schedule these votes. We are attempting to finish these last few items to close out the session and, therefore, Senators should not stray far. I thank everybody for their continued patience as we wrap up.

## RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

## VOTE SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have, for example, Governor-elect CORZINE who is doing work in New Jersey, and we need some notice as to when the vote will take place to get him back here. He is, of course, coming. It appears very likely that the Vice President may need to vote on this himself. From the numbers we have, it is going to be extremely close. It would be important we have some notice as to when the leader would like to handle and have that vote. If all the hours are used and even if we charged the time for debate during our caucus lunches, it would be 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock. If all time remaining is used on this, when would the vote take place if we go straight through?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. About 6 p.m.

Mr. REID. I know the Vice President has been in Pakistan. At least I have been told he is coming back. Does the leader know when?

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I do not, but we will be able to decide shortly after talking among everyone when that vote will be. For sure we will have these cloture votes tomorrow morning. We need to make sure all Members are back for the postcloture votes with regard to the deficit reduction bill. If we use all time, it would be 6 o'clock, but over the course of the morning we can decide when the most appropriate time for that vote would be.

Mr. REID. One of the things that could be done to make sure everyone is here, when we move to the Defense appropriations bill we could have that cloture and point of order. I am thinking at this time, even though the leader has filed cloture on the Defense authorization, I don't think we would have to have cloture on that. We could have final passage. One of the things the leader should think about is maybe doing them all at once. We could start fairly early in the morning and try to get them all done.

If that were the case, I assume we could speed through them fairly quickly tomorrow if things turned out the way we think.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, a couple of things. First, we do not want to delay any votes that will delay when we finally are able to depart. Within the next 48 hours we will have a number of votes. We will work on scheduling so we can let people know with certainty. I have told our people to be around and ready to vote when we decide. I don't want Members staying in New Jersey, New York, California, or Texas waiting for us to give a final time. We need to have people accessible and ready to get back.

Having said that, let's try to consolidate these votes at a time where people can come back, can be here, and we vote all at once or in a series.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I think I have outlined the major votes I know of. There would be some housekeeping stuff to do. Who knows, we might get lucky and be able to do some other things.

Mr. FRIST. And with regard to that, we have a number of nominations, we have a number of judges, as well, we very much would like to be able to address. There are other issues with regard to the PATRIOT Act, Labor-HHS. We have a lot to do, all of which we need to address in the next day, 2 days.

We will maximize, from a scheduling standpoint, when everyone can be back.

Mr. REID. The other thing I mention is, in a meeting I had this morning, I think it is fairly clear it will not be necessary, even though we do not like the conference report on HHS, I don't think there will be a necessity for cloture on that. The leader should anticipate having a straight up-or-down vote on that at some time.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I will speak on another issue and then we can come back and talk further.

Mr. BAUCUS. Will the leader yield for a question on the last subject of scheduling votes?

Mr. FRIST. I am happy to yield.

Mr. BAUCUS. I don't see any reason why we can't finish all our voting tomorrow. We all know what the issues are. We all know what the votes are. I don't see any reason to delay. We ought to vote.

There are so many families here, so many spouses, so many children, families want to get together. This is, after all, Christmas. I don't know why in the world we don't schedule all of our votes by tomorrow so at the very least by tomorrow we can start to head home with our loved ones. Can't the leader work that out?

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, indeed, he is going to do his very best.

Votes tomorrow, where the other side of the aisle causes us to have rollcall votes on motions to proceed and then cause us to file cloture, make it difficult. I was ready to get out 2 days ago. If we could do the up-or-down votes instead of filing the cloture motions, I am all for it.

Mr. BAUCUS. All the cloture votes can occur tomorrow.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, my goal would be to be out, for sure, tomorrow. I think we can work on that. I appreciate the appeal from that side of aisle to be out tomorrow. We can't have obstruction. Getting the votes done and finishing everything tomorrow would be a good goal. I am all for it. It means we cannot have delay and obstruction.

Mrs. BOXER. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. FRIST. Let me make a statement now. I ask unanimous consent

my statement be made on our time on the reconciliation.

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

#### SMART GRANTS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, Thomas Friedman, in his book "The World Is Flat," concludes that jobs in this country—and he says this with a backdrop of global competitiveness—ultimately depend on education of our young people. More specifically, jobs of the future are going to depend on a prepared workforce of youth well educated in math, science, engineering, the sorts of fields that prepare people for the jobs of the future. He very nicely said in his book—and I wholeheartedly agree—that those jobs are going to require that preparation.

If we prepare our youth in math, science, engineering, we will prepare them for jobs for the future which will improve our global competitiveness. That means this competition will be addressed between China and India for jobs, for people who are trained or study in Virginia, in truth, will be competing with students in China and India.

In the legislation we are considering over the next 2 days, Congress is very specifically addressing this link between global competitiveness, jobs of the future, and education in this country—specifically math, science, and engineering education.

I will spend a couple of minutes on a new student aid program I created called the SMART grant. SMART grants very simply will provide \$4,000 per year to eligible low-income students who are majoring in math, in science, in engineering, in technology, in foreign languages, that are critical to our national security, during the third and fourth years of their higher education, those years of college. That is \$4,000 a year to eligible low-income students.

That means a low-income college student will obtain up to \$8,000 to pay for the cost of college if he or she chooses to major in one of those fields, those fields that are so necessary to preparing for jobs for the future and thus our global competitiveness. SMART grants mean low-income students save an average of 52 percent on the cost of college in this legislation we will pass over the next 48 hours.

These funds will encourage more students to major in these time-intensive studies. These funds will help America produce the workforce it needs to be able to compete in that global economy.

The bill also provides academic competitiveness grants to first and second-year college students; \$750 will go to first-year students who complete a rigorous high school curriculum, and \$1,300 to second-year students who complete a rigorous high school curriculum and maintain a 3.0 grade aver-

age in college. These are eligible low-income students. President Bush and Representative BOEHNER in the House deserve praise and credit for creating these grants.

These SMART grants and these academic competitiveness grants are authorized at \$3.7 billion over 5 years. They are paid for with program savings included in the budget deficit reduction bill we are currently debating in Congress.

Right now, America must be more competitive. We are targeting precious resources in a responsible way to meet that challenge. Indeed, these grants will sustain America's global legacy as a land of innovation, imagination, and initiative.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

#### DEFICIT REDUCTION ACT OF 2005—CONFERENCE REPORT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the conference report.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany S. 1932, an act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 202(a) of the current resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am not sure of the exact order of procedure on the floor, whether the ranking member is yielding time on this bill at this point.

Mr. CONRAD. That is correct.

Mr. DURBIN. I would like to be yielded 5 minutes to speak.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I ask the leader, the ranking member, that I be recognized after that.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I would be happy to yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Illinois. And then how much time would the Senator from Montana like?

Mr. BAUCUS. About 25 minutes.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent that after the Senator from Illinois, we go to the Senator from Montana for 25 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

The Chair hears none, and it is so ordered.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, those who followed the conversation on the floor of the Senate this morning are aware of the fact we are still in session, as the House has left at least for the time being. Of course, we are close to the holiday season, when most Members assumed they would be home with their families, where we want to be.

But instead we are here. I think it is worth noting why we are here.

At the risk of hurting some muscle in my body here, I want to lift what we are now considering in the Senate in the closing hours: 4,000 pages—4,000 pages—that come to us at the close of the session; 989 pages on the appropriations for the Department of Defense, about 1,628 pages on the Defense authorization bill, and roughly 1,400 pages on the Deficit Reduction Act.

I can tell you, having been around Congress for a few years, that within these pages are things which will come to embarrass us. Some of them we know. Some of them we will learn after we leave. Of course, people who are following this debate say: Well, Senator, haven't you sat down to read all this? The honest answer is, it is physically impossible because good craftsmen of legislation realize that changing punctuation in the law can change the meaning of the law, and so what appears to be just a cosmetic change on a page here turns out to have dramatic consequences. So we try our best. My staff has been working straight through since many of these bills have been produced to try to come up with an understanding of what is included in these bills.

But there are several things we do know about these bills. We know, for one thing, that the Defense bills are the last bills in the session, which is a dramatic change from the past. Historically, the Defense bills are passed early in the session, for obvious reasons. The argument is, for goodness' sake, before you get embroiled in a political controversy, take care of the troops. So historically we would pass a Defense authorization bill and a Defense appropriations bill early in the session and be done with them. That did not happen this time.

The Defense authorization bill was taken off the calendar by the Republican leadership in July so they could make room for special interest legislation from the gun lobby on the question of liability. So that bill was intentionally delayed by the Republican leadership, the bill for our troops. Now, here, in the closing hours of the session, the bill comes back in the form of an authorization bill of some 1,600 pages, at the close of the session.

The Defense appropriations bill has historically been a bill we considered first. It is the bill in which we want to make sure we take care of the troops, take care of the Department of Defense, and meet our obligation. Why is it last? Why is this 1,000-page bill coming at us at the last moment? I will tell you why. Because Senators have come to understand this bill has to pass. So they put some of the most controversial provisions, some of the most outrageous provisions in the bill for our troops and for our national defense.

There is a provision in here which is well known now and well reported, put in by the Senators from Alaska, for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife