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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).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will be led in prayer this morning by our guest chaplain, Rev. Kenneth Leal Harrington of Hope United Church of Christ in Alexandria, VA.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving God of all people, we give You thanks for the gift of this day, for all the opportunity it holds to know and embrace Your love. You have given us a world filled with diversity so that we might never forget there are varied ways of knowing You. We pray along with the evangelist John, that we might love one another because You have first loved us.

In this season of repentance You offer us freedom and liberation from our mistakes and You set us on a path of new life. For this gift we give You thanks. Teach us to seek You in all times of our life and to always put You first. Help us never forget that You are the God of second chances.

We pray today for our Senators and the awesome task You have given them in this service to our great country.

You have called people throughout the history of our Nation to come to this room and make the hard decisions that will ensure peace and prosperity for all. For those You have called to be here in this moment in time, we ask that You remind them of the need for humility, compassion, and truthfulness so that they might accomplish the task that is before them. Give them the gift of Your wisdom and integrity that will guide them in their discussions, debates, and dialogues. Help them to recall that in all circumstances it is Your Holy Spirit that guides them.

We offer this prayer in Your Name that unites more than it divides. 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

THANKING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I thank our visiting chaplain, the Rev. Kenneth L. Harrington, for giving the opening prayer this morning, and Chaplain Black who joined me to make this possible.

Rev. Ken Harrington is the popular and beloved, respected and well-credentialed pastor of Hope United Church of Christ in Alexandria, my church away from home. Ken is a graduate of the State University of New York, Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, and the Seminary of Drew University in New Jersey.

Hope Church has been my church away from home for three decades. It was my good fortune to be invited to the church many years ago by my late and cherished friend, Mahina Bailey, and his dear wife, Linda. Mahina was a Hawaiian born in Hawaii, who spent his adult life here.

Over the years, I have gone to many services at Hope and have always been uplifted by the sermons, and since 2000, by the inspiring sermons delivered by Reverend Harrington. Hope Church is a family-friendly church, dedicated to teaching the values of tolerance and inclusivity.

You can actually see this reflected on the diverse faces of its congregation, the result no doubt of the sincerity of

its message of inclusivity. The diversity of its congregation is so much like mine at home. Together with inspirational sermons come seeds for thought to be thought through and digested, and practiced in daily life. Foremost among these thoughts, in my mind, is how we can make this a better world for all of us.

I think this is particularly true for Members of Congress in whom a great trust has been placed by our constituents.

As we go through on a daily basis to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number, and have succeeded for the most part but been frustrated at times on issues so dear and right in our hearts, it is good to open our daily session with a prayer and have the spiritual support and guidance of a divine being, to each from his or her own faith.

To end on a lighter note with a ray of optimism for the passage of bills that are near and dear to our hearts, let me say that with all the seriousness that the mission of a church involves, intertwined in its spiritual voyage are social programs. One of Hope's most popular social events is its annual luau, complete with Hawaiian food and entertainment.

An oversold event every year where congregants and friends thank the Lord for his bounty.

Reverend Harrington, thank you for being here this morning and thank you for your stewardship of Hope United Church of Christ.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Would the distinguished majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. FRIST. I yield.

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



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Mr. REID. Through the Chair, to my distinguished friend, at 9:45 or thereabouts, we are supposed to talk on the mad cow resolution before the Senate. We have no morning business, as I understand it. I am not going to be here, but I would have a standing objection to any morning business. We have had very few amendments completed on the bankruptcy matter. Maybe the time on morning business could be yielded off the resolution in opposition to that.

It is my understanding the Senator from Iowa is here to speak in morning business.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Five minutes on the beef resolution because I have to go to a committee meeting.

Mr. REID. Fine. I want to make sure we do not get into extended time on morning business because we do not have time.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I understand the Senator from Iowa will speak on the resolution. For scheduling purposes, he will make that statement even if it is before 9:45. Otherwise, as we have discussed, we will proceed after my leader statement to Senator GRASSLEY and then on to the resolution.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning following the leader time we will proceed to consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 4, which is a disapproval resolution relating to a Department of Agriculture rule regarding Canadian cattle. The agreement reached last night provides for up to 3 hours of debate on the resolution prior to a vote. We hope to be able to yield back some of that debate time and vote earlier so we can resume consideration of the bankruptcy bill for further progress.

Last night's order also allows for two more stacked votes on bankruptcy-related amendments; therefore, we will have three votes today, sometime around noon, depending on the amount of time consumed for the disapproval resolution. In other words, we hope as much of that can be yielded back as possible after debate on the resolution.

Once those votes are completed, I expect the Senate will stay on the bankruptcy bill through the day and possibly into the evening. We will continue to have votes this afternoon and into the evening as necessary to move toward passage of this bill. We have made great progress on the bill thus far. We had five amendments yesterday. We look forward to many amendments today so we can bring this very soon to a resolution. By the end of today, I hope we will have some indication as to when we can complete the bankruptcy legislation.

Members should plan their day today around what will be a very busy session today in that although we will be in session in all likelihood tomorrow, we will not be having rollcall votes tomorrow. We have a lot of work to do.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I have a brief statement on an issue that is receiving a lot of attention, a lot of work, and a lot of engagement, both in the Senate and the House of Representatives, by the President of the United States and, indeed, all across America. It is on Social Security.

When the 109th Congress convened, I stated that our mission in this Congress over the next 2 years would be to govern with meaningful solutions. Working together, both sides of the aisle, we made a fast start, very effective start, confirming the President's Cabinet and enacting, 2 weeks ago, class action legislation. We are making good progress on the bankruptcy legislation, as I just mentioned, and very soon we will be turning our attention to writing the Government's spending blueprint for the coming year; that is, governing with meaningful solutions.

Congress, at the same time that activity is going on in the Chamber, is tackling many problems and will be tackling these problems in the weeks and months ahead, including Social Security, which we are engaged on in this body every day, whether it is working in our own caucuses or conference or in committees.

Social Security, a critically important, great program which does serve as the cornerstone of support for senior citizens, now faces challenges that threaten its long-term stability and well-being. The facts are there. The facts are crystal clear. They are grounded in demographics that were defined two generations ago. Those demographics cannot be changed.

What the facts lead to is that in 3 years, the baby boomers arrive on the Social Security rolls. That will begin an almost 30-year period where we will have a doubling of the number of seniors compared to what it is today—up to 77 million Americans who will begin to collect those Social Security benefits.

Second, we all know we have fewer and fewer workers paying into the system, also driven by demographics. Forty years ago we had 16 people paying in for every retiree. Today we have three people paying in for every retiree. In 20 or 30 years, we will only have two paying into the system. Those facts cannot be changed.

With this President, this Congress, the 109th Congress, is facing this challenge. The challenge is to fix Social Security for seniors and for near-retirees and for that next generation. We need to do it, and we will do it this year—this year—and not next year. We are working toward that goal.

In just the past 2 months, the majority has worked aggressively and thoroughly to fully understand the nature of the problem. We have worked hard to begin to engage the American people in a dialog about the program. In town meetings all across the country, we have put some of the best minds at work to create solutions. That activity is underway.

We talked about this repeatedly in our own conferences. We have interacted with administration officials. We have interacted with leading experts on the Social Security system. Our Members are hard at work to fix the underlying problems. That is the heart of the challenge in this 70-year-old program we will address this year.

So far, I report to the Senate and my colleagues that together with the President we agree that retirees and near-retirees who entered the system before the scope of this problem became so large will not see benefit changes. The retirees or near-retirees will see no benefit changes.

Second, together with the President, we agree that we must harness the power of the market and give younger Americans the choice—it is voluntary—to give them the choice of personal retirement accounts whose rate of growth—therefore, we know, ultimately, the rate of benefits—will grow faster than traditional Social Security.

Third, together, with the President, we agree that all ideas should be on the table. It is too early for people to be drawing rigid lines in the sand. Thus, we encourage people to continue the discussion, the debate, the understanding of the issue, and the nature of the problem.

Fourth, together, with the President, we agree that we should act this year and not put it off to the future.

For those who insist there is no problem, I simply say, look at the facts. As people increasingly look at the facts—and we are seeing the response around the country—people see the problem is real, that it is significant, and that it is growing.

For those who say we do not need any action, well, if you have a problem that is growing, it is much easier to act now, to take some medicine to cure the problem, than to have some radical surgery in the future.

We need to test the ideas with regard to the scope of the problem and the ideas for solutions in that crucible of public debate. We need to put them to a vote. We must let the people ultimately judge.

I say all this so people will know that our majority is hard at work, every day, on this vital issue. In consultation with the administration and the House of Representatives, we will continue to bring before the Senate meaningful solutions that will make a difference in the lives of our seniors. The assurances of Social Security should be guaranteed. To be able to guarantee those assurances, we must diagnose the problem, and then we must act. We must govern with meaningful solutions, and that is exactly what this Congress will do.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Does the Senator from Iowa seek recognition?

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, with the permission of the Senator from Georgia, I yield myself 5 minutes.