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Senate

The Senate met at 2:30 p.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, we thank You for the beauty and wonder of life. Thank You for the people we know and love. Thank You for the opportunity to experience life's richest joys. Sustain our lawmakers today. Deepen and cultivate their understanding of primary things. Deliver them from majoring in minors and minoring in majors. Bless the thousands who labor for liberty on Capitol Hill. Keep them from becoming weary in doing well, as You remind them that their perseverance will bring a productive harvest.

We pray today for our military men and women and their families who sacrifice so much to keep us free. Protect them from the dangers of the sea, land, and air, and from the violence of the enemy.

We pray in Your mighty 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

DEPARTMENT OF STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will re-

sume consideration of H.R. 3057, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3057) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today, we return to the consideration of the Foreign Operations appropriations bill. We began that bill last Friday with opening statements. Senators MCCONNELL and LEAHY are ready for Members to offer their amendments during today's session. They are not encouraging amendments, but if Senators do want to offer amendments, we do ask they come forward as soon as possible. I am very hopeful we can complete this bill tomorrow. I think it is likely we can do that if Senators will come forward today and offer amendments, if they have any.

We will be voting this afternoon at about 5:30, and we will be announcing a little bit later today what the nature of that vote will be. Senators will be notified once we lock in the time. It will be around 5:30 today.

As a reminder, tomorrow, at 10 o'clock in the morning, there will be a joint meeting with the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, will be speaking to both Houses of Congress at that joint meeting.

We have 2 weeks remaining before our next recess. We have a lot of business over the next 2 weeks to conduct. The Democratic leader and I were just talking, going through our objectives, and will be sharing that and consulting with our colleagues as to how these next 2 weeks will play out. The floor schedule is going to be very busy. It will take precedence over other schedules, so we do ask Senators to keep

their schedules flexible so we can accomplish the many tasks before us.

HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mr. President, on another issue, briefly—but it is an issue that means a lot to me as one who sees the real advantage in legislating in this arena—I want to comment on the issue of electronic medical records and the increasing necessity, if we are going to eliminate the waste and abuse in our health care system today, of focusing on ways to share information throughout our health care system, which has been too fragmented and too disjointed in terms of communication.

I want to share with our colleagues that we have worked a lot on this issue over the last 4 to 5 days, including the weekend, and that we have made real progress and have come very close to achieving the goal of having privacy-protected electronic health records legislation come before this body.

Senator CLINTON and I introduced legislation last June. Senators ENZI and KENNEDY have been working on legislation. Our goal has been to pull this legislation together. Indeed, we have made real progress in agreeing to outlines of strong legislation, which I am absolutely convinced will eliminate a lot of waste in the system, will improve quality, will increase efficiencies in the delivery of health care, will empower payments, and will improve patient safety throughout our health care system. So I am very excited about it.

We promote the use of electronic health records by adopting standards. You have to have similar standards throughout the system if people are going to come in and participate and share information. So we approached standards. We ensure quality measurement. We eliminate barriers to the adoption of this technology of electronic health records. And we incentivize providers and those throughout the system who use this information to actually adopt the standards with lowered barriers so the advantages can be realized.

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



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I thank Senators CLINTON, ENZI, and KENNEDY for all of their tremendous work. Chairman ENZI plans to take that legislation to the HELP Committee, I believe, on Wednesday morning. Following that, I look forward to working with my colleagues for Senate passage.

Mr. President, we have a very busy week before us. Again, we will be turning to the foreign operations legislation shortly.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 3130

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before my distinguished colleague leaves the floor, I ask unanimous consent that the Appropriations Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 3130, the veterans health care supplemental bill, that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, and that the bill be amended to increase the funding level to \$1.5 billion; that the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we have been here before. Indeed, the Senate has voted twice, most recently on the Homeland Security appropriations bill we finished last week, and then a week before that on the Interior appropriations bill, to provide \$1.5 billion for veterans health programs for the current fiscal year, with the remainder of it to be used until expended.

I supported those amendments, as did the Democratic leader.

The conference on the Interior bill, I understand, is well underway and will be completed by the end of this week. I fully expect that the \$1.5 billion in additional funding for veterans health care will be on the President's desk for his signature before we leave in 2 weeks for the August recess.

In addition, I should also mention it is important that no veteran right now—no single veteran—is being denied needed health care. The other thing I want to mention to the Democratic leader, because I have not mentioned it before, is that if, for some unexpected reason, the Interior appropriations conference report is not finished, then I think he and I could join together and sponsor legislation, stand-alone legislation if need be, to accomplish the same thing that he requests. I do not believe it is necessary today because we will accomplish this goal before we leave. The conference on the Interior bill is underway and will provide that funding.

Therefore, I object to the unanimous consent request by the minority leader.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if I could just briefly say, I appreciate the statement of the distinguished majority leader. I want this matter to stay before the attention of the Senate. I think it would be better to do it this way and send it to the House. I think that would be so much better. It would be done, I believe, more quickly.

But I also say at this stage the veterans programs are being cannibalized. Those programs for capital construction are being used for health care. I think it would be better if we dispose of this. I will watch the conference committee very closely. It is really not a place for veterans funding programs, but we will take it wherever we get it. Again, I am sorry we were not able to work it out more quickly, but I do look forward to completing it in this work period.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a question I want to ask my friend.

The money in the Interior bill, I hope it is additional money, not money coming from other programs. Does the distinguished majority leader know about that? Do you understand my question? I hope it is new money. I hope it is not money we are taking from other programs.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, in response, I will check with Chairman BURNS to see where specifically the money comes from. I am not exactly aware where the money comes from.

Mr. REID. Because if it is going to come from other Interior programs, I would even go so far as to suggest maybe the Presiding Officer would not want \$1.5 billion to come out of the Interior bill for programs that are not within the Interior bill. I know I would not like that.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, it is all new money. It is not being taken from other programs.

Mr. REID. That is real good news.

I suggest the absence of a quorum, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent

that at 5:15 this evening the Senate proceed to executive session for 30 minutes of debate equally divided in relation to calendar No. 172, Lester Crawford to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs; provided further that following that time the Senate proceed to a vote on the nomination, with no intervening action or debate. I further ask that following the vote the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING THE PASSENGERS AND CREW OF UNITED AIRLINES FLIGHT 93

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Con. Res. 26 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will state the concurrent resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 26) honoring and memorializing the passengers and crew of the United Airlines Flight 93.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk be agreed to, the concurrent resolution, as amended, be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1228) was agreed to, as follows:

On page 3, line 2, strike "and the minority leader of the Senate" and insert "the minority leader of the Senate, the Chairman and the Ranking Member of the Committee on Rules and Administration of the Senate, and the Chairman and the Ranking Member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives".

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 26), as amended, was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The concurrent resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. CON. RES. 26

Whereas on September 11, 2001, acts of war involving the hijacking of commercial airplanes were committed against the United States, killing and injuring thousands of innocent people;

Whereas 1 of the hijacked planes, United Airlines Flight 93, crashed in a field in Pennsylvania;

Whereas while Flight 93 was still in the air, the passengers and crew, through cellular phone conversations with loved ones on the ground, learned that other hijacked airplanes had been used to attack the United States;

Whereas during those phone conversations, several of the passengers indicated that there was an agreement among the passengers and crew to try to overpower the hijackers who had taken over Flight 93;