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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 28, 2006, at 2 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2006

The Senate met at 1 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.

Lord of life, King of our hearts and Ruler of all, teach us how to lay up treasures in heaven. Empower us to see the importance of setting our affections on the things above. Strengthen our lawmakers for today's challenges. Give them hearts eager to do Your will. Help them to know Your ways and teach them Your paths.

Today, comfort us as we mourn the deaths of David Lee Hamlett, a Senate police officer, and Erma James Byrd, wife of Senator ROBERT BYRD. Help us to bring You our wounded hearts and to tell You our anguish. Remind us that Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal. Infuse us with a faith that will not shrink though tossed by the winds of trial.

We pray in Your loving 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today, we will resume consideration of the lobbying reform measure. As I mentioned before the break, it is my expectation the Senate will consider the lobbying reform bill and the border control legislation during the next 2 weeks. This should allow sufficient time to work through these bills, and I hope we can focus our efforts and work together across the aisle on both of these bills. These bills are nonpartisan, and we should be able to address them in a bipartisan way working together.

On the lobbying reform bill today, first, I hope the Senator from New York will withdraw his unrelated amendment. That would then allow the two managers to find a way to begin to schedule some of the lobbying-related amendments for debate and votes. In addition, we have Senator WYDEN's amendment currently pending, and we are working to set a time certain for a vote on that amendment.

On the border control bill, we have a cloture vote scheduled for tomorrow on the motion to proceed to that bill. I will be talking to the Democratic leader later today on the precise timing of that vote, as we await the work of the Judiciary Committee under Chairman SPECTER that is meeting today.

With respect to today, I wish to remind my colleagues that we are work-

ing to set up a vote this afternoon, either on an amendment or a nomination. We are expecting that vote to begin at approximately 5:15. We will likely have to drag that vote a little bit for a few minutes because we are starting that vote 15 minutes earlier than most of our colleagues had anticipated.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, while the managers of the lobbying reform bill sort through some of the amendments and because we have some Members who want to speak on other subjects today, I now ask unanimous consent that there be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ERMA ORA JAMES BYRD

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I would like to open today with respects paid to Erma Byrd, the wife of our dear friend and colleague, Senator ROBERT BYRD. As the Chaplain mentioned in his prayer, Mrs. Byrd passed away recently—in fact, on Saturday night.

Erma Ora James Byrd was the devoted wife of Senator BYRD for nearly 69 years. Born in Virginia in 1917, Erma and her family moved to West Virginia when she was a child. It was there that she met her future husband at the Mark Twain Grade School in Raleigh County.

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



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The couple married when they were 19 years old. The daughter of coal miners, Erma never forgot her humble beginnings.

As a young couple, the BYRDS enjoyed a simple existence. They could often be found at community square dances where Senator BYRD would be playing his fiddle and Erma would be dancing. From those local dances, to running a grocery business, to raising a family, Erma and Senator BYRD were partners in everything they did.

When Senator BYRD decided to come to the House of Representatives in 1952 and then later entered law school, Erma took the lead in handling the house and bringing up their daughters.

Throughout her life, Mrs. Byrd focused on her family. The Byrds were the proud parents to two daughters, Mona and Marjorie. And they were blessed with six grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Mrs. Byrd's love of children extended far beyond her family. In West Virginia, Erma Byrd was known far and wide for her advocacy for children and for helping young people get ahead.

Dedicated, determined, loving, and loyal—these were the words many used to describe Erma Byrd. And they are the qualities that our colleague cherished dearly in his wife.

On their 65th wedding anniversary, Senator BYRD said:

Erma and I are complete and whole, a total that is more than the sum of its parts. In my life, Erma Ora Byrd is the diamond. She is a priceless treasure, a multifaceted woman of great insight and wisdom, of quiet humor and common sense. I wish that more people could know the joy I have had in finding one's soul mate early in life and then sharing that deep companionship over many happy years.

Senator BYRD, our thoughts and our prayers are with you and your family. We mourn your loss, and we celebrate the life of the wonderful woman who stood by your side.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this week, if there are no obstructionist tactics, the Senate will begin debate on protecting our country and fixing a broken immigration system.

Since last fall, when I announced the Senate would take up this issue, the Judiciary Committee has spent over 5 weeks, and, as of today, they are in their sixth markup on it. I thank Chairman SPECTER for his leadership throughout this process, during these six markups over the last 5 weeks. The Judiciary Committee members and their staff have worked long and hard under his guidance. As we speak, his committee is in session trying to finish the task set out for them. I, as leader, appreciate that and appreciate their efforts and the tremendous work they have done thus far.

America needs secure borders. Right now, we do not have them. Every day, thousands of people violate our frontiers.

We do not know who they are and quite often we cannot stop them. As a nation of immigrants which honors the rule of law, we must secure our borders to make America safe, so we can fix our country's immigration system.

We are a nation of immigrants. We all came from somewhere else, and we have all benefited from America's uniquely inclusive ethos. But America is also a nation of laws. Our laws bind and protect us. They transform us from seekers into citizens and are the very foundation of our democracy.

A nation that cannot secure its borders cannot secure its destiny or administer its laws. The situation along our southern border now ranks as a national security challenge second only to the war on terror.

Before we left for last week's recess, I introduced the Securing America's Borders Act, or SABA, so that the Senate would be able to take up border security and interior law enforcement and allow the Senate to focus on comprehensive illegal immigration reform. It includes a number of commonsense, consensus measures that improve security along our physical border, crack down on human smugglers, simplify the process of deporting wrongdoers, and make it easier for employers to confirm their employees' legal status. And many of its provisions are built from ideas in the 9/11 Commission report.

Why should we act and why should we act now? Well, every day we delay we discover new facts that show us waiting makes America less safe and less secure. To take just one example, in January, officials discovered a massive tunnel stretching nearly a half a mile from Tijuana to San Diego. We do not know how many, or who, snuck in through this tunnel. We do not know what materials came into our country, or when, through this tunnel.

When people break our laws and come through our borders, we do know that mixed in with families looking for a better life are drug dealers, human traffickers, terrorists, and common criminals who cross into our country. Increasing our border security reduces that threat to our country and to our citizens.

The danger is not only to America; there is danger to those who try to cross our borders as well. Unofficial data collected along the Arizona border—the only area for which we have information—show that nearly 225 people died along the border in 2005 alone. About 10 percent perished under circumstances that suggest foul play. And we all know the terrible stories of those who prey on vulnerable migrants, who charge outrageous prices to smuggle them across the border and then, often, abandon them the moment trouble strikes. That is wrong. We must act. And we will do so over the next 2 weeks.

We need better enforcement and more manpower on the ground. Last year, the Senate led the charge to pro-

vide funding to hire 1,000 additional officers, more equipment, and more detention beds. This was a start but only a start.

My proposal adds nearly 15,000 more officers over the next few years in a sustained and focused effort to buttress the 20,000 already deployed to work on border issues. It also requires new investments in unmanned aerial vehicles, cameras, and sensors, and a comprehensive national border security strategy. It establishes the long-term project of building a virtual barrier to cover every mile of the 1,951-mile long border with Mexico. This will both make America safer and reduce the number of people endangering themselves trying to come into this country.

In addition to physically strengthening the border, the bill makes it easier for the Department of Homeland Security to catch people who violate our immigration laws. It enhances the collection of biometric data about who enters the country and allows the Homeland Security Department to set up additional border checkpoints.

The law creates tough, new penalties for human smugglers and document forgers. And under this bill, terrorists, dangerous gang members, and others with serious criminal connections face expedited removal from the United States.

But my bill doesn't just draw on the common sense of the American people for its provisions; it also looks to the 9/11 Commission report for guidance.

Many of the bill's provisions reflect the guidance of that commission. For example, the commission recommended that we consolidate border screening systems. SABA does that. It encouraged the use of biometric data to keep track of who was coming and going. SABA does that. It identified the need of State and local officials to work with Federal agencies to identify terrorist suspects. SABA does that as well.

Securing the border and enforcing our laws are crucial first steps to making America safer. But much more remains to be done. There are over 11 million people in this country illegally today. Congress cannot turn a blind eye to this growing number. We need to act.

As many know, I oppose amnesty. With our economy at full employment, many who break our laws come to this country to do the work others won't do so as to make a better life for themselves and their families. I honor that. America has always been the place where one can come to live out a dream of improvement and renewal. But while we welcome those who refresh and restore our American spirit, we have always done so within a framework of law. The full Senate should have the chance to discuss and to debate and to decide how we balance that rule of law with the situation as we find it today.

I am here to solve problems, not stand around. All Members come here