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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).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, fill us with Your power and might. Give us pure hearts that will drive out evil thoughts. Give us power to overcome sin and to conquer temptations. Empower the Members of this body with strength for the complex challenges they face. Infuse them with a love that banishes bitterness and creates a servant's heart. Remind them to forgive others as You have forgiven them. Guard their hearts and purify their speech.

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.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we have set aside the first hour for a period of morning business. After that time, there will be 20 minutes allocated to the chairman and the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee for their closing remarks on the emergency supplemental. We will then vote on the Thune amendment on VA medical facilities, to be followed by a vote on passage of the bill. Senators can expect those votes to begin sometime around 11 o'clock this morning.

We are also working to clear some nominations that are on the Executive Calendar, including two district judges that will require rollcall votes this afternoon. I will have more to say on the schedule for this afternoon and tomorrow after discussions with the Democratic leader over the course of the morning.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today marks the 55th National Day of Prayer, as established in 1952 by President Truman. All across America, in homes and churches and small towns and crowded cities, millions of people of many faiths will gather together to pray for the peace, prosperity, and protection of our Nation. They will pray for their leaders—and goodness knows we need those prayers—and they will thank the Creator for blessing us with a nation that recognizes the God-given dignity and worth of each and every person and our basic fundamental right to be free.

America is a nation forged in prayer. The very first official act of the Continental Congress was a call for prayer. Two years later, the fledgling body called for a national day of fasting and prayer.

From the very first settlers who arrived at Jamestown to each morning here—as we just did—in the Senate when the Chaplain opens each and every day with a prayer, faith has al-

ways been at the heart of the American project. That is because at the heart of the American idea of liberty is belief—belief that our freedom springs not from the state or the benevolence of men but from the one true Creator whose love is boundless.

It is so fundamental, so essential to our founding principles that, in the words of the Founding Fathers, it is “self-evident.”

Our first President, George Washington, was a profoundly religious man. He began and ended each day with a prayer. As President, he would go to his library and humbly kneel before an open Bible to ask for guidance and grace. In his Thanksgiving proclamation, President George Washington told his fellow citizens with words that ring out to us today:

It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and to humbly implore His protection and favor.

America has faced dark and grave moments, but in these moments, prayer has united us and given us strength.

I recall the startling image of 9/11, those crossbeams being lifted up by the New York City firemen amidst the rubble and ruin of the Twin Towers. All around was destruction. But in that one iconic symbol of hope—hope and a prayer that though the wounds of 9/11 may never heal and though we will always carry with us the grief of that terrible day, as people and as a nation we will endure.

So today, on our National Day of Prayer, we thank our Creator for our liberty. We ask Him for His grace and His guidance.

And on behalf of my Senate colleagues, I thank my fellow Americans for the prayers they are sending out to us. God bless you and God bless America.

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



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RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE CHAPLAIN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I very much appreciate the statement of the distinguished majority leader. We are very fortunate in the Senate to have as our Chaplain a man who has certainly earned the right to pray for our country, an admiral in the Navy, head of the chaplain service in the United States Navy, Dr. Barry Black.

I try to be here every day, as the majority leader, to listen to the prayers Dr. Black has prepared for the Senate and the country. They are always very good. I am grateful to him for what he pronounces through his prayers for us. Again I appreciate the statement of the majority leader today.

STEM CELL RESEARCH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, growing up in the little town of Searchlight, there are a number of things that stand out in my mind. One is I remember so vividly a man by the name of Elwin Kent. Elwin was a friend of my father's. They grew up together. But Elwin as a little boy was stricken with polio. Elwin was very deformed. He walked with a very significant limp, and he had on his back a huge hump. I don't know, but it was at least a foot. It stuck out his back about a foot. He was a very handsome man, but he was terribly handicapped.

I came as a boy to realize how he got sick because when I was growing up, the scourge was Elwin's disease, polio. Infantile paralysis we called it. I worried about that as most young people of my age did. In Searchlight, as I was growing up we had no cases, but that didn't prevent my worrying about the disease.

My wife and I a short time ago—a matter of a month or so ago—were surprised when we got in the mail a letter sent to me in Searchlight, NV. I opened the letter, and it was from a girl I had heard about from my wife, in our conversations, with whom she had spent her early days. That was maybe in the second grade. Two little girls. My wife used to tell me about her red-haired friend Gail and how much she cared about her.

Gail found out where Landra, my wife, had gone. She learned that I was serving in the Senate, and she heard that I was from Searchlight and took a chance and wrote that letter.

The reason I mention that letter, which was such a surprise and made my wife feel so good, is that one of the things Landra remembers about Gail, in addition to her bright red hair, is the fact that as a little girl she had polio and was taken out of school and placed in a hospital, as my wife remembers, in an iron lung. So, of

course, my wife growing up worried about that. But Gail was gone, and she didn't really know how her life turned out.

Without belaboring the point, these two women who had known each other 50 years ago were able to spend time on the telephone. It was as if they had never been separated.

So Elwin Kent and Gail Randolph growing up contracted infantile paralysis. It was there. It was something we worried about, as did all people of our vintage.

Today is different. We have been able, through science, to eradicate polio in most every place in the world, but I still receive letters in my Senate offices from people who are concerned about other issues. I will read three of these letters addressed to me:

... My son 22 years old was in a diving accident just two weeks after graduating from high school and is now a quadriplegic. So instead of heading off to college on a soccer scholarship that autumn, he found himself being fitted for a wheelchair and a life of total dependency on others. ... while they [stem cells] may not cure him to the point of walking again, they will certainly provide him with an opportunity to improve the quality of his life. He wants to be able to feed himself, brush his own teeth, wash his hands and face when he wants to. ... I know you support stem cell research, but I just wanted to give you my support and the support of our entire family as you fight the fight for those who can't fight for themselves. ...

Mr. President, I want the record to reflect that I will use leader time so I don't take time from Senators on this side of the aisle. So I am using leader time.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. It is so noted.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have another letter from Yerington, NV. Here is what it says:

I am asking you again to do your best for my son and the millions of others who need a cure for diabetes. ... My son was in the hospital yesterday. ... I can't tell you how hard and painful it is to see your son like that. ... my wife and I would give our lives to ensure that our son can beat diabetes. ... The Senate will soon vote on the stem cell bill that you still support. Please try to change the minds of those that are not for it.

Then one final letter from a man in Las Vegas:

I have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). ... my family doesn't want me to leave them. At the least, my family wants some hope that science will be allowed to use all means available to them, to try to find some treatment that will extend life until a cure is found. I would like to have those people who are opposed to federal assistance for embryonic stem cell research for therapeutic purposes, explain to my family why they are being denied hope that might be available if the federal government funds all reasonable medical research for my illness and those other illnesses that today provide no hope for the future.

Mr. President, these families are not asking for anything except hope—hope—for a better future for them and their loved ones.

Stem cell research holds a promise for medical breakthroughs. As former

First Lady Nancy Reagan said so clearly, vividly, and who watched with great courage as her husband's Alzheimer's overtook this good man, she said:

I just don't see how we can turn our backs on this ... We have lost so much time already. She gave this statement in 2004:

I just really can't bear to lose any more time.

Unfortunately, more than 2 years have passed since Nancy Reagan said this, and this Republican-controlled Congress has been unable and unwilling to reach agreement on how to expand the President's restrictive stem cell policy that is hindering scientific progress toward possible cures and treatments for a wide variety of diseases and conditions.

We are rapidly approaching the 1-year anniversary of the date of the House of Representatives passing H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act. This act would expand President Bush's 2001 policy for Federal funding for stem cell research and permit Federal researchers at NIH, the National Institutes of Health, which has the capability of the strongest oversight in the world, to finally explore the many possibilities stem cell research holds for America.

Over the past year, I have repeatedly asked the majority leader to find time to consider this bill which has a bipartisan majority of the Senate supporting it. My request for action has been met by delay and inaction. One year may not seem like a lot to people, especially in the Senate—we seem to have our days, weeks, months, and years run together—but 1 year is an eternity if someone you love is suffering from a condition where stem cell research, according to the experts, can offer help.

There are a number of very important issues this body ought to consider this session. I say, Mr. President, none—none—even though we have deficit problems, problems with our environment, education, health care, the war in Iraq—I say nothing is more important to the American people than legislation that could provide medical breakthroughs that would benefit millions—millions—of Americans. We can certainly do better than what we have done. We can do better for the Nevadans whose letters I have read.

I can see in my mind a man who was the chief executive officer of Nevada Power, the largest power company in Nevada, who contracted Lou Gehrig's disease. This young man lived 18 months—very difficult months. People are counting on the promise of this groundbreaking research. The passage of the House stem cell bill on May 24 of last year was a rare victory for bipartisanship here. It is my hope that we will embrace the same spirit of bipartisanship in the Senate and pass this legislation.

Immediately after the House passed its stem cell bill, I spoke with the majority leader about the need to take up