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Senate

The Senate met at 9:45 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.

O God of courage, make us brave in facing the challenges of our time. Show us how to meet each difficulty with faith and wisdom. Make us faithful in the small things that matter in order to prepare us to face greater obstacles with trust in Your power.

Guide our lawmakers in their daunting work. May they live with such honor that they will be ready to be tested in life's storms. Infuse them with an ethical courage that will make them passionate about staying on the right path.

We pray in Your holy 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEMINT). The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning following the opening remarks of the two leaders we will proceed to the consideration of a nomination to the Ninth Circuit Court. We have set aside up to 15 minutes for comments on that nomination prior to the rollcall vote. Therefore, I expect the vote to occur after 10 a.m., but it should not be too long after 10 a.m. this morning.

Following that vote, we will resume debate on the comprehensive immigration bill and the pending amendment proposed by Senator ISAKSON. This amendment was offered yesterday and had been pending from our earlier consideration of the immigration bill. It was my hope to lock in a vote to occur shortly after the judge vote of this morning, and we want to allow a few minutes for closing remarks and we want to accommodate a few minutes before that vote. I will be in discussion with the Democratic leader about that. There may be a Democratic alternative which I believe may have been just submitted. We will take a look at that and plan the vote on this accordingly. I do want to alert Members that we could expect a vote or two prior to our luncheons today.

As Senators return for the first vote of the week, they should be reminded—which I believe may have been just submitted. We will take a look at that and plan the vote on this accordingly. I do want to alert Members that we could expect a vote or two prior to our luncheons today.

We have this week and next week prior to the next recess to complete this bill. We have a supplemental bill, a pensions bill, and the Kavanaugh nomination—all which is a heavy load which I believe can be accomplished.

I will also add, the manager of the bill yesterday—both managers, I believe—stated we want these votes to be 20-minute votes, when we are actually voting and recognize that 20 minutes is a short period of time, but it is plenty of time if people know as soon as the bell goes off that they need to start coming here.

I have a statement—it will be brief—on immigration, but I turn to the

Democratic leader if he has anything in terms of scheduling?

Mr. REID. No.

IMMIGRATION AND BORDER SECURITY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, last night the President of the United States addressed the Nation on the need to fix a broken immigration system, the focus of that speech last night being on securing the borders. The President was very clear on the fact that our borders have to be secure, we have to stop the hemorrhaging of people coming across-the-border for an immigration plan to really work. I applaud the President's leadership on this important issue, this pressing issue, especially because we are in the middle of this debate on the floor of the Senate. I support the proposal in terms of turning to the National Guard as a short-term, an interim, stopgap measure to secure our borders because anything we do does take time.

The President outlined the progress that has been made over the last 4 to 5 years on the border. Yet the problem gets worse and worse, in spite of the fact that we do have more people on the border. Our infrastructure is getting better, and we are building barriers. The fact is, as the President said last night, our borders are out of control, and we are failing the American people until we bring them back under control. Our border agents down there are stretched too far. They are over-stretched. Technology has not been fully applied to the degree that it should be. Each year we have millions of undocumented immigrants, illegal immigrants once they cross that border, who come across the southern border and indeed our other borders as well.

We catch more than we did in the past, but the numbers coming are increasing even faster than the numbers

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



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we catch, and far too many escape detection, and then, unfortunately, because of a catch-and-release program which is not working to the degree it should, as the President mentioned last night, they are then released into the country.

We need to beef up the electronic surveillance and physical barriers where appropriate. Bottom line, we need to stop the hemorrhaging, and the President laid out a five-point plan very specifically last night, as to how we might do that. The reality of his remarks last night is that we are debating that very issue on the floor and this body must act, and will act, over the next 9 or 10 days to secure those borders and further the comprehensive immigration reform plan that addresses the issue of security and enforcement at the workplace, a strong temporary worker program, and addressing—a lot of the amendments will focus on this—the situation of 12 million people who are here illegally.

Our supplemental appropriations bill we passed a few weeks ago included almost \$2 billion to repair fences in high-traffic areas, to replace broken Border Patrol aircraft for lower traffic areas, and for supporting training of additional customs and Border Protection agents. We paid for this additional spending by cuts in other areas. The Senate—and we will hear this debated over the next several days—is near consensus on putting nearly 15,000 new border security agents in the field over the next 6 years.

We are taking action. We are taking control. But these changes are going to take time. It is not a matter of just money, it is a matter of training and support and applying that technology. That is why I strongly support the President's proposal last night of sending a contingent of National Guardsmen now as an interim measure.

But that is an interim measure, and securing our border is only one part—a very important part and many argue it is the most important part—of a comprehensive immigration reform plan that has to be tough, it has to be fair, and that does have to be comprehensive.

We started the debate once again yesterday, and we will continue today and throughout the course of this week. I am confident that by staying focused under the leadership of our tremendous managers, Chairman SPECTER and Ranking Member LEAHY, we will be able to pass a bipartisan comprehensive plan before Memorial Day.

I, also, thank Senators HAGEL and MARTINEZ for their determined efforts to bring consensus to the issue at hand. Under their leadership, we have developed, building on the work of others—namely, Senator MCCAIN and Senator KENNEDY—a fair, workable plan to help deal with each of the four components of the comprehensive immigration proposal, but most specifically to address the 12 million people who currently live in the United States illegally.

The overall approach deals with the diversity of this population. We know that 40 percent of these 12 million people have been here longer than 10 years. Many are fully assimilated into our society today. We know we can't give people who have broken the law a leg up in applying for American citizenship, but they must be treated fairly, must be treated compassionately, and that is what this bill intends to do. And it may be modified in making it even a little better over the next several days.

Law breakers should not be able to cut in line, as the President mentioned last night. People in this category need to be put at the end of the line.

I am confident that as we proceed with the debate, as long as we consider these amendments in a fair and open way, and we have that well underway today, we will have a comprehensive bill. Immigration is not a Republican issue, it is not a Democratic issue, it is a sensitive issue that touches on our values as a nation. We should not have to choose between respect for history as a country of immigrants with the respect for our laws. I am confident we will be able to pass this comprehensive plan in the days to come.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEMINT). The minority leader is recognized.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday morning I talked about this being the summer season, new movies—there is a blockbuster out, starting this Friday it is, "The Da Vinci Code," with Tom Hanks. I suggested yesterday that in the third week of May, on the Senate floor, we have our own blockbuster that is part 2 of immigration.

We had part 1. It didn't go very well. I suggested yesterday that in the President's speech he was going to give, he should become a player, an actor in this part 2 of the Senate blockbuster.

Last night the President, I thought, did a commendable job in laying out what he felt was a path to solving this immigration situation.

I acknowledge the President's statement, and I support the direction the President has taken. I want the President to continue to be a player in all of this. I remind everyone, however, that much of what the President talked about we should already have done. For example, the President talked—and rightfully so—about the fact that we don't have enough beds. We have the so-called catch-and-release program where we find people who are here illegally and we let them go because we have no place to put them.

Following the 9/11 Commission, there was a recommendation that we provide additional beds for the illegals, and we did. We authorized 18,000. But even

though we have tried, the President and the majority have not supported our position in this regard. We only have 1,800 beds. We have to move forward and do all of that. I certainly hope that can be done.

It is important that we have additional Border Patrol agents. We have already called for them. In fact, our request has only been filled to 75 percent capacity. The President has said we need more beds. Let's move on that now. The President said we need more Border Patrol agents. Let's move on that now.

The National Guard: Yesterday, I asked the President to give us a timetable. He said within the next year. I hope we can take care of that situation so that we don't need to have National Guardsmen there. But in this interim period, I support the National Guard being on our border.

It is important that we move forward as quickly as possible with this very important legislation. I hope in the days to come that the President will also acknowledge how wrong the Republican House approach is to this. They are still talking the same way. They haven't backed down. They think their approach is the best, from what I have seen by a couple of speeches the chairman of the Judiciary Committee gave last week.

The President needs to stay engaged. He needs to recognize how bad the House bill really is and speak to the American public about how bad it is.

Yesterday, there were some remarks on both sides on this issue which I thought were good. Here is an opportunity. We always talk about bipartisanship.

Interestingly, I was just talking to a member of the Republican staff coming into the building today. We exchanged greetings. He said on the Republican side they are just going to vote their conscience. I said that is an interesting way to legislate. That is what we all need to do. We should have been doing it more in the past. This is the week in which we need to vote our conscience. We don't need to vote the Democratic way or the Republican way. We need to vote the American way and move this most important legislation down the road. I hope we can do that.

STEM CELLS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let me also talk about one other important issue; that is, the American people are not only counting on us to finish the immigration bill—which we need to do—but they are also counting on us to finish the stem cells bill.

Today, in the New York Times there is a letter from Nancy Reagan to Senator HATCH in which she writes:

For those who are waiting every day for scientific progress to help their loved ones, the wait for the U.S. Senate action has been very difficult and very hard to comprehend.

Yes, it really has.

Last Thursday, the Republican leadership concluded the only week they