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Senate

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CRAIG THOMAS, a Senator from the State of Wyoming.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Sovereign Lord, guide our Senators today. Teach them to express in word and deed the spirit of justice. Teach them to discharge their duties that other nations may see our true value and honor our decisions. Teach them to labor with such integrity that this Nation will be one we profess, a land of liberty and justice for all. Teach them to work not only for time but also for eternity. So order their steps with Your wisdom that Your will might be done on Earth. We pray in Your holy Name, Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CRAIG THOMAS 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 22, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CRAIG THOMAS, a Senator from the State of Wyoming, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CRAIG assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today we will be debating the comprehensive immigration bill. Several Senators will be coming over throughout the day to discuss either pending amendments or amendments to be proposed. At this point we have at least two amendments scheduled for votes beginning at 5:30 today. The first vote will be on the Chambliss amendment relating to wage requirements for agricultural workers. The second vote will be on the Ensign amendment which relates to the use of the National Guard.

Other amendments may be offered today, and we hope to schedule debate and votes on those amendments.

I thank my colleagues for helping us move the bill forward to this point. We will finish the bill this week, and I believe Senators will agree to reasonable debate on amendments and we can finish that bill in relatively short order.

We have other issues to consider this week prior to the recess. We will address a supplemental appropriations conference report when that measure is available for floor action. We also will be considering other conference reports that may be raised this week.

We have several important nominations that are available, or soon will be available, after committee action for the full Senate to consider. The Kavanaugh nomination is on the Executive Calendar and will be voted on this week. Other nominations are in committee and will become available.

We have the nomination, for example, of Dirk Kempthorne, our former

colleague, to be Secretary of the Interior. This week the Hayden nomination may be available from the Intelligence Committee as well.

We have the nominations of Sue Schwab for the USTR and Rob Portman for OMB—a number of nominations.

Needless to say, the days will go quickly, and we will need to work together in a collaborative, collegial way to get our business completed prior to the start of the recess.

Finally, in order to get all of this done, Friday votes are likely if we are to complete this busy agenda.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION AND SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if I could ask the distinguished majority leader a couple of questions, we had a lot of trouble last year and we finally worked something out on the Defense authorization bill. This is such an important bill, and I hope in the planning which is taking place that we will find some time to spend on that most important piece of legislation. I ask the majority leader if we have an idea how the supplemental is coming along? The reason I ask the question is there is no end of questions coming to me and people saying it is really important to get this done before we leave.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, on the Defense authorization, I have talked to both the chairman and ranking member, as I am sure the Democratic leader has, and have asked them to do their very best to address how we can best bring that bill to the floor and have

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



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reasonable time for debate and amendment where we don't have to be starting and stopping and starting and stopping like we had to do over the last several years. Both of them are working very hard in that regard. It is a high priority.

I agree with the Democratic leader. We want to address it as soon as possible. The supplemental bill is in committee now. I have met with leadership involved in that bill, in terms of the managers on Thursday night and with the House as well. I was advised to let them work hard and aggressively over these last what has now been 3 or 4 days, and I will get a report back later today.

I, too, have been both advised and called by a number of people, both from the Department of Defense, our military, and it is clear that this money is needed. We need to work together to accomplish that this week. That is my intention.

After I talk to our conferees later today, I can get back in terms of whether that is going to be possible, but we are working very hard.

Mr. President, I see the Senator from Iowa. I want to make a statement. If the Senator from Iowa would allow me to suggest the absence of a quorum so I can speak to the leader, and I will be back and talk, it shouldn't be too long. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS JOHN LUKAC AND
CORPORAL WILLIAM SALAZAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I just finished a meeting in my office. It was emotional, to say the least. Two mothers—both mothers of Marine Corps men—came to my office to tell me about their boys who were killed in Iraq. I asked each of them to tell me about their sons.

Helena Lukac, of Hungarian ancestry, a beautiful woman, spoke with an accent telling me about her boy. He had better than a 4-point grade average at Durango High School. He loved math and science. He wanted to be an FBI agent or a CIA operative.

He told his mom: I am not sure I can do that because we came from a Communist country. I am not sure they would let me do that.

He joined the Marine Corps when he was 18, and at 19 years old he was killed.

Gloria Salazar's son was 23 when he was killed. He wanted to be in the Marine Corps from the time he was little, but at the first attempt he couldn't pass the physical. But he worked on his

deficiencies and came back and joined the Marine Corps. She was very proud of him. She showed me a picture of his arrival in Iraq with his camera that he used which was part of his job in Iraq.

The mothers told the same story. They knew when their sons had been killed.

Ms. Salazar was shopping in a mall, and that afternoon her son's picture kept falling out of her purse. She was so troubled she went home, and during the day she went to sleep, which was unusual. The time was assessed thereafter. She slept from the time he was injured until the time he died. The same thing happened to Helena Lukac. She was at work. She described her feeling as "a nut with nothing inside it." She felt empty.

I expressed to them my sorrow and sympathy and the appreciation of a grateful nation for these two young men having given their lives. It was a very emotional experience to hear the mothers talk about PFC John Lukac killed in Anbar Province and CPL William Salazar in Karabilah, Iraq.

FORMATION OF IRAQI GOVERNMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, like most Americans, I welcomed the news over the weekend that the Iraqi political leaders had created parts of a new government. It is certainly a useful step toward the kind of Iraq we all want to see.

Like most Americans, I hope this new government will be able to bring security and order to a country wracked by insurgency, extremist attacks, and sectarian strife. We know more work needs to be done, both with forming this government and with fashioning a secure and stable Iraq. Three of the most important security ministers are still unnamed. That is hard to comprehend. We have been waiting and waiting for a cabinet to be formed, but is it really a cabinet? As unbelievable as it may seem to many, there is even talk of disgraced Ahmed Chalabi filling one of those security posts. That is hard to comprehend, but that is what the news accounts indicate.

I wonder how much longer this administration will insist that the burden of securing Iraq continue to fall squarely on the backs of our heroic U.S. troops, troops such as John Lukac and William Salazar. Secretary Rumsfeld was asked the question in Senate hearings last week. It turned out to be a question he could not answer. This past weekend, when he was asked about the possible redeployment of U.S. forces in Iraq coming home, going someplace else, Secretary Rice said that it depends on the outcome of discussions with the Iraqi Government. Apparently, Secretary Rice believes Iraqi leaders should decide the fate of our troops.

We are almost at the midpoint of 2006, the year a bipartisan majority in

Congress said must be a year of significant transition. That is the law of the land. It passed on a bipartisan vote during the Defense authorization bill. An amendment was offered and passed on a bipartisan basis saying that the year 2006 must be a year of significant transition in Iraq, with Iraqis assuming responsibility for governing and securing their own country.

Unfortunately, there appears to be little evidence of this transition. In fact, we learned on Friday that there will be an increase in U.S. troops to deal with the recent surge in violence. But none of us should be surprised that this administration in this instance is not following the law. It hasn't on many other occasions.

April was the deadliest month of the year for coalition troops. If the current rate of violence is sustained, May will surpass April. The situation is similar for Iraq's security personnel. More Iraq military and police were killed in April than any time in the previous 6 months.

Economically, the trends are no better. Oil production is still about 400,000 barrels per day, less than it was prior to the war. Available electricity in Baghdad dropped from 16 hours per day prior to the war to its current average of 4 hours per day. Clean water is below prewar levels, and because of mismanagement and violence, only 49 of the 136 U.S. funded projects in the water sector will be completed. The rest have been abandoned. All of these factors reduce Iraq's support for our activities there and fuel anti-American sentiment and insurgent activity.

While we all should welcome this partially formed new government, we recall other political milestones that were achieved and quickly swallowed by more violence. For example, since the December election, 325 coalition troops have been killed.

In order to ensure the milestone produces a different, more lasting result, Iraqis, working with the Bush administration, must address outstanding issues surrounding their Constitution. They must form a police force and diffuse the sectarian conflicts which have left their country on the brink of civil war, if not in a civil war.

Let's not forget that while the President and his team have chosen to focus this Nation's attention on Iraq, we see resurgent Taliban activity in Afghanistan. Iran and North Korea are thumbing their noses at the international community, and there has been a surge in terror attacks across the globe. Also, the mastermind of the deadly attacks on this Nation, Osama bin Laden, remains at large, while his al-Qaida network has morphed into a global franchise operation.

This is a time of great challenge for our Nation and for the Iraqis. Great challenges require strong leadership. Today's speech by the President was yet another missed opportunity to provide that leadership. We heard little about his plan to engage Iraq's neighbors in finding a regional solution to