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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray:

Lord, we thank You for touching our Senators' lives. Continue to guide and inspire them. Help them to stand up for truth. Instill in them courage to lead us toward peace and unity. Fill their minds with wisdom and compassion as they strive to give You their best. Protect them from danger. May the desire to do Your will become their highest priority.

Bless America. Turn the hearts of our citizens toward You. Remind us that righteousness exalts a nation but sin destroys.

All this we pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU 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, June 29, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SUNUNU thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 2 hours, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee, the next 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee, the next 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee, and with the final 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning, we have set aside 2 hours of morning business in 30-minute increments. At the conclusion of morning business, we will begin the U.S.-Oman free trade agreement, which has a 20-hour debate limitation. However, we are expecting to yield back much of that time. Senators can expect a vote on final passage of that bill when we finish all debate on the measure.

We also will be trying to clear some nominations this afternoon as we finish our work before the Fourth of July recess.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION AND NOTIFICATION ACT

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I will take a few moments to address legislation to create a national sex offender registry and to protect our children from sexual predators.

On May 4, the Senate unanimously passed S. 1086, the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act. This bill, which was introduced by our colleague, Senator HATCH, would create a national sex offender registry and would do what you would suspect, and that is protect our kids from these child predators.

A similar bill has also passed the House of Representatives. Over the last several weeks, the House and Senate have been working diligently to bridge the differences between those two bills. I am pleased with the progress that has been made so far, but I am concerned that the time is running short in the legislative session.

Because time is of the essence, I sent a letter to Chairman SPECTER and Chairman SENENBRENNER in the House asking them to have such legislation ready for signature by the President no later than July 27, 2006. That is about a month from now. That particular date is in honor of the 25th anniversary of the tragic abduction and murder of Adam Walsh, the 6-year-old son of John and Revé Walsh, who are the founders of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

I ask unanimous consent that the full text of the letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

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



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U.S. SENATE,
OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER,
Washington, DC, June 27, 2006.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.
Hon. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, Jr.,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SPECTER AND CHAIRMAN SENSENBRENNER: Thank you for your diligent efforts to bring the Senate and the House of Representatives together on legislation to create a national sex offender registry and protect children from sexual predators. While I am pleased with the progress made so far, I remain concerned that time may be running short in this legislative session. So today, I urge you to join me in setting a clear goal to have sexual predators legislation ready for signature by the President no later than July 27, 2006—in honor of the 25th anniversary of the tragic abduction and murder of Adam Walsh, the 6-year-old son of John and Revé Walsh, who are the founders of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

John and Revé have transformed the tragedy of Adam's death into a lifelong commitment to protecting children from abduction, abuse, and exploitation. They have been at the forefront of most major child protection legislation passed by Congress over the last quarter century—from the Missing Children's Act in 1982, which improved law enforcement information sharing in missing child cases, to the Protect Act in 2003, which established a nationwide Amber Alert network to coordinate rapid emergency responses to missing child alerts. Their tireless dedication has been an inspiration to parents of child victims and millions of American families.

I know we share a commitment to strengthen laws that protect our children from sexual predators lurking in our neighborhoods or enticing our children online. Currently, there are more than 550,000 registered sex offenders in the United States and at least 100,000 are missing from the system. The loopholes in the current system allow some sexual predators to evade law enforcement and put our children at risk. In addition, we must do more to address an emerging global crisis in child pornography, an estimated \$20 billion commercial industry fueled by the Internet. The Internet has become an anonymous gateway for sexual predators to initiate contact with children, win their confidence, and attempt to victimize them. By passing legislation that establishes a national sex offender registry, toughens criminal penalties for sexual predators, and cracks down on child pornography, we can take another step forward in making America safer.

The Senate and the House have both passed bills addressing these issues. It is time to bridge any remaining differences and finish the job. We should not allow extraneous issues to delay the bill.

I look forward to working with you in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM H. FRIST, M.D.
Majority Leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with my colleague, Senator REID, who is endorsing this July 27 date as a goal as well. The reason why it is important for us to speak to this now is that there are a number of issues out there that are unrelated to the sex offender registry bill, which are important issues in and of themselves, but in some ways they impede or lessen

the likelihood that we are going to get this particular bill through.

The registry is important. By creating a national registry, we are going to make it easier for law enforcement to act if they get a tip and to be able to identify and stop these offenders before they can commit repeat crimes and victimize more children.

Many States, including my State of Tennessee, have registries, but that information is not shared with other States. Therefore, you have these sex offenders simply going from State to State. If a sex offender is registered in Florida and then moves to Tennessee, there is no way to track him today. Under the new law, Florida would have to notify Tennessee law enforcement that the sex offender is moving. It is a big problem.

There are currently 550,000 registered sex offenders in the U.S. and at least 100,000 of them are missing from the system. Every day that we don't have this national sex offender registry, these missing sex predators are out there somewhere. We don't know where they are or whether or who they are victimizing.

So there is a lot we can do. Now is the time for us to do it. The national sex offender registry will save the lives of thousands of children. By passing this legislation, we can take another major step forward to making the country safer. I thank Senator HATCH, and especially Senator REID, for their leadership.

I urge our colleagues in the Senate and in the House to act quickly and get this bill done by July 27. It is for law enforcement officers, it is for parents, and it is especially for our Nation's children.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRATION AND NOTIFICATION ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, first of all, I appreciate very much the statement of the majority leader. I understand that he has other matters, and I will speak to him later about a number of other things.

On the issue of sex offender legislation, yesterday, rightfully so, the majority leader sent a letter to Chairmen SPECTER and SENSENBRENNER asking them to bridge their differences and finish the legislation. I commend Senator FRIST for making this bill a priority.

I agree that this is important legislation, and it should not be stalled by disagreements over controversial, extraneous matters. Specifically, the leader asked the two chairmen to complete work on the bill by the end of July. That timetable seems perfect for me. The Senate passed its version by

unanimous consent on May 4. There should be no further delay. I believe this is an urgent matter.

I remind my colleagues that when the Senate passed this version of the bill 2 months ago, Senator KENNEDY—even though he felt very strongly about the hate crime bill—agreed to set that aside. That was a major concession by all of us who favor the hate crimes bill. We made the decision that the sex offender bill should not be delayed by unrelated matters.

Since that time, I am sorry to report that some Members of the House have held up the sex offender bill by trying to add their own pet projects related to the death penalty, habeas corpus, and other matters. They are all important matters, but we have to move forward with this sex crime legislation.

As the majority leader correctly wrote in his letter, "We should not allow extraneous issues to delay this bill."

Why is the sex offender bill so important? Because the safety of children is at stake. The national sex offender registry will make it easier for local law enforcement to track sex offenders and prevent repeat offenses. The bill authorizes much-needed grants to local law enforcement agencies to establish and integrate sex offender registry systems.

Is it going to take another news story about yet another brutal assault and murder of some young child to make it clear that we need to act now? I hope not.

Obviously, there are still issues to work out between the House and Senate. I understand that. I favor, of course, the Senate-passed bill, S. 1086, which I think did a better job of distinguishing among types of offenders. We need to move forward without delays or distractions on unrelated issues.

Finally, if anyone ever doubts that one person can make a difference in our country and our world, one only need to look at John Walsh. Because of the tragic event dealing with his son Adam, we now have a National Center for Missing Children. We have a TV program called "America's Most Wanted," and because of that program, we have gotten scores of felons who have done very bad things. I have never met John Walsh, but a former Governor of Nevada was a good friend of his. He told me years ago about this good man. I applaud John Walsh. It is because of him that we are moving forward on this legislation.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I know the Democratic leader has other statements to make. I think the signal that we are both sending is that this is significant legislation. It will directly impact families all over the United States of America. It is an obvious need. We have made huge progress and, as the Democratic leader said, much of that is to be attributed to John Walsh, his family, because of the tragedy they suffered with the loss of their child.

Again, the Democratic leader and I are joined at the hip pushing this