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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, a Senator from the State of Maryland.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, hear the cries of the needy. Listen to the voices of the lonely, sick, homeless, incarcerated, poor, and institutionalized. Incline Your ears to the pleading of those who need our love, especially the spiritually destitute. In response to these needs, stir us and the Members of this body to see Your face in the depressed, hungry, and deprived people of our world. Open our eyes to see poverty beneath diamonds of glitter or wealth of spirit beneath raiment of rags. May the work done in the Senate bring deliverance to the least, the lost, and lonely.

Lord, solve the problems of poverty of soul and purse by giving our leaders the wisdom to pursue Your purposes. Help them to remember that You answer the prayers prayed by millions, using legislative hearts and hands. In their efforts to help the hurting, inspire our lawmakers to attempt something they couldn't do without Your power.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN 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. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 3, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, a Senator from the State of Maryland, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

CHAPLAIN BLACK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, those of us in the Senate do not take for granted our Chaplain. I want those who were fortunate enough to hear his prayer this morning to understand that the Chaplain of the Senate, Barry Black, is a brilliant man. He has a photographic memory. He is a great writer, as indicated by the prayer he delivered. The prayer itself says it all about what our function should be as legislators.

His mother was a great mother. He talks about her all the time. He is from Baltimore. She used to give him pennies for memorization, and even at that, I am sure she lost a lot of money because he has such a great mind. He is the only person I have dealt with over the years with a memory that is comparable to Senator BYRD who has the ability to recite things.

I want to make sure those listening to this prayer understand that we don't take this great man for granted. He is a retired admiral from the U.S. Navy, a fine man.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2128

Mr. REID. It is my understanding that S. 2128 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2128) to make the moratorium on Internet access taxes and multiple and discriminatory taxes on electronic commerce permanent.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. This morning, following the time Senator MCCONNELL and I may use, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for an hour. The time is equally divided and controlled. The majority will control the first half; Republicans will control the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3222, the Department of Defense appropriations bill, and then conduct up to 30 minutes of debate with respect to the Graham amendment relating to emergency funding for border security. A vote in relation to that amendment will occur once the time is used or yielded back, around 11 or shortly thereafter.

I know I speak for the managers when I say that if Members have any amendments, they better get here because Senator STEVENS and Senator INOUE won't wait. In fact, I think they will ask consent when the bill is on the floor that at a certain time, if no other amendments are offered, the only amendments in order would be those filed up to that time. Cloture was filed—not that it is necessary. We hope it isn't. I hope we can finish this bill today. I have had a short conversation

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



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this morning with the Republican leader. We are moving along. If we can finish these two bills this week, we will have done half of what we are obligated to do regarding the appropriations bills.

I think at that stage—and I told the Republican leader—we are going to start conferences on all these bills we have passed, four already, starting today. We need to be in a position where we can start sending some of these bills to the President. As I indicated, I will confer with the Republican leader as to which ones we should send out first. We need to get moving along.

We have to do everything within our ability to try to finish our work by November 16. That is not going to be easy, but we should try. As I have indicated previously, there are a lot of things left to be done prior to the Senate recessing on November 16 and work to be done prior to our recess—hopefully, tomorrow—dealing with various work we think we can do by unanimous consent. I urge Members to continue the level of cooperation we have witnessed, as we consider other appropriations bills.

I have also explained this to Senator MCCONNELL, my desires in that regard; that is, as soon as we get back, that we start to complete the Labor-HHS bill. Before we leave here this week, we are going to do a circuit judge and a number of district court judges.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me indicate my concurrence with the suggestions of the majority leader about moving forward. It is a good plan. We will have the maximum amount of cooperation possible on this side to move forward on appropriations bills.

BURMA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, imagine living under a brutal regime that sends out troops to shoot and kill unarmed, innocent people in the streets.

Imagine living under a regime that rewards the winner of a popular election not with political office, but house arrest.

And imagine a regime that carelessly allows the bloody and bruised body of a Buddhist monk, whose only crime was presumably to protest on behalf of peace, to float down a river.

But we don't have to use imagination, Mr. President. These horrific events are real. They are occurring now.

They are actually taking place in Burma, a country ruled by an illegitimate

military junta, the State Peace and Development Council, or SPDC. And since their seizure of power, the Burmese people have seen very little peace or development.

The world was reminded of the SPDC's oppression recently as Burmese democracy activists, led by Buddhist monks, demonstrated for freedom.

The government's reaction was brutal and barbaric, like something rarely seen since the end of the Cold War. They unleashed soldiers to fire at the unarmed demonstrators, killing untold numbers.

No one can be sure of the exact number because of the secrecy in which the SPDC cloaks the entire country. Nor can we be sure how many activists the government has imprisoned.

But we do know the fate of democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, the winner of Burma's last free parliamentary elections in 1990. The SPDC has kept her under house arrest for 12 of the last 18 years.

We are reminded that such tyranny still exists in the 21st century. This despotic regime does not even pretend to seek to adhere to basic standards of human dignity.

The SPDC's reign of terror is so complete that even simply turning off the television set is an act of political courage for a Burmese citizen.

The AP reported yesterday that people in Rangoon are switching off the first 15 minutes of the government-run nightly news broadcast. It is one of the last acts of protest they have left, after the uniformed thugs and the barbed wire barricades have taken over the streets. "This is the least dangerous anti-government activity that I can take," the AP quoted one Rangoon woman, who was too afraid to reveal her name, as saying. "By doing this, I am showing that I am not listening to what the government is saying."

This Senate shares her contempt for the SPDC's empty words. Listen to how one SPDC ambassador explained events in Burma since the crackdown:

"As all are aware, things have calmed down. We are able to bring normalization to the situation."

Such a description, Mr. President, reminds me of the ancient Roman dictum, "They made a desert, and then called it peace."

Just because the protests have been ruthlessly suppressed, and Burma is fading from the pages of Western newspapers, does not mean the value of Burma's pro-democracy cause has diminished.

On the contrary, now more than ever, America and our allies must continue to press the members of the U.N. Security Council for a strong resolution against the Burmese regime.

And here in Washington, DC we're going to leave our televisions turned on, and continue to help in any way we can to support these brave people's cries for freedom.

I yield the floor.

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 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each and with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I was assured that I would be given more time than that. Let that be resolved.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the Senator is recognized.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN IRAQ

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, the calendar has just turned to October. The long-awaited month of September has passed. Why September? September, the month of the Petraeus report, was to be the month of accountability for Iraq, for its Government, and a time for accountability of the President's policy in Iraq. Instead, the result of the long-awaited month of September is that we are, once again, staying the course, as the President would have us do. We were not able to change course through the Defense authorization bill which passed yesterday, though many of us tried. Our efforts to change the mission away from deep involvement in Iraq's civil war and toward a more narrow focus on fighting al-Qaida failed, by a narrow margin, but failed. Efforts to enforce the transition with the power of the purse came up short as well.

Tragically, for well over 4 years into this war, at a time when the Army chief of staff is sounding the alarm about readiness of our Army, the Senate was not even able to provide our troops and their families with predictable deployment schedules—a stunning week. This is far less than the American people expect from us, when they elected us to do far more. Over the next few months, I implore my colleagues to use this time well and to think deeply about what our commitment in Iraq means to our future and the world. I especially want my colleagues and the American people to think about what might happen if there is another attack on the United States, which is always a possibility. The fact there has not been says there has been some interdiction and a lot of good luck, and al-Qaida takes its time in planning what it really cares about.

What if that attack has nothing to do with Iraq? What if the next attack is the result of planning and plotting