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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, for Your marvelous grace that enables us to live victoriously, we thank You. Thank You for strength during life's monotony and emergencies. Help us to express our gratitude by promoting Your work in our world.

Lord, guide our lawmakers with Your higher wisdom. Empower them to walk the path that surrenders to Your will. Replace their fear with faith, their confusion with clarity, and their error with truth. Let love prevail over hate, justice triumph over greed, and harmony defeat discord. Make them willing to listen both to You and to each other. O God, give them tough faith for troubled times.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JON TESTER 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 16, 2007.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. TESTER 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

Mr. REID. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are going to be in a period of morning business for an hour. The time will be equally divided and controlled. The Republicans have the first half. We have the second half. Following morning business, Senators MIKULSKI and SHELBY, as managers of the bill, will resume consideration of H.R. 3093, the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations Act.

Last night, I indicated we would work and complete this bill, either tonight or in the morning—and by “in the morning,” I mean after midnight. We are going to work until we complete this bill, if, in fact, it is ever going to be completed. I am not filing cloture on the legislation. We have a finite number of amendments, and we are going to work through these amendments.

As I indicated last night, we have had good cooperation from the minority on our appropriations bills, and I hope that continues. I am confident it will. But if anyone who is mischievous

thinks they will stop us from voting tonight, we will have votes. I do not need to be voting on these matters of this bill. If people think they can stop us from voting, we will have votes. Even if we have to instruct the Sergeant at Arms or do whatever is necessary, we are going to have votes tonight, unless this bill moves forward more quickly than some have said.

We need to complete this legislation. We have things that are so very important. The President yesterday said he wants appropriations bills. We cannot do the appropriations bills unless we have cooperation from Democrats and Republicans. Right now, we have 29 amendments that are here that Republicans want to deal with. There are eight Democratic amendments. We want to get this bill done. We need to do Labor-HHS, and, hopefully, by that time we can have something ready to send to the President—any one of the six bills we would have passed. I think it is important we get this process done. The President said he wants to veto a bill. We will send him one he wants to veto if, in fact, that is what he wants to do. Hopefully, that may not be the case. But if it is, that is where we have to start with him. So there are going to be votes. There probably will be votes before our 12:30 mandated recess time.

There are other items we need to work on. For example, one reason we need to finish this bill and the Labor-HHS bill is the manager of the farm bill is HARKIN from Iowa, and we have to have him free so he can do the markup of the farm bill next week—a very important piece of legislation. In the Democratic caucus—I do not know of the Republican caucus—more than half of the Democrats are vitally interested in the farm bill because it affects their States. We have to do a farm bill. We have not done one in 5 years. I think it would be negligent on our part to leave here without doing a farm bill.

There are many important issues. There are people who want to change

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



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the standard farm bill we have done in years past. This is what legislating is all about. It is extremely important we work toward completing this legislation. So that is why we have the press we are having now.

I would also say, after we finish this week, we only have 4 weeks left until Thanksgiving, and then we have 2 weeks we will be out for Thanksgiving, and then, if we come back, we are going to have only 3 weeks before Christmas. We have a lot to do. I will not go through the list of what we are obligated to do, but it is a lot of stuff. I hope everyone would understand that and be thoughtful and considerate of others.

We may have to work some late nights. We may have to work some weekends. We have been very fortunate this whole year. We talked about working weekends a lot, and we have not had to do it except on a couple of occasions. The reason we have not had to do it more is because of the press of the weekend coming upon us we get our work done. That may be the case this week. I hope so. But if not, everyone should understand, if they have obligations at home, they better have some alternatives or consider missing some votes.

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, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes within our allotment of morning business.

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

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I have, as the saying goes, some good news and some bad news. The good news is the budget deficit has dropped in the last year from 1.9 percent of the gross domestic product of this Nation down to 1.2 percent—a historic low level for the budget deficit. But as Members of the Senate know, the budget deficit is just a year-to-year statement of what the financial obligations are of the Federal Government. The figure that is the bad news is the debt; that is, the bills, if you will, owed by the American people to finance the cost of Government. The bad news is on September 27—a short time ago—this Congress voted to increase the debt ceiling for the United States of America from \$8.965 trillion to \$9.82 trillion.

Now a “trillion” is more money than any of us can possibly imagine, but let me break it down to what it means for every man, woman, and child in America. It means today, every man, woman, and child in America owes \$30,000 of the Federal debt—the cost of the Federal Government doing business.

So instead of passing on to our children and grandchildren the kind of prosperity and opportunity to start on a level playing field and to reach their God-given potential to achieve their dreams, we are burdening our children and grandchildren today, if we do not do anything about it, with a minimum of \$30,000 of debt.

The fact of the matter is, it is actually worse than that. As to Social Security, we understand from the Social Security trust fund, they will be running red ink by the year 2017, unless we do something about that. In other words, as to the Social Security taxes that are deducted from your paycheck and mine and everybody’s in America to help pay our share of Social Security, the money that has to be paid out will exceed the amount of money coming in as a result of those Social Security taxes by 2017, if we do not do anything about it.

In addition, Medicare is even in worse shape. By 2013, the amount of money coming in to pay for Medicare for seniors will be exceeded by the outflow of funds. So instead of being in the black and being able to sustain itself, both Social Security and Medicare are on the road to insolvency and worse.

Just when you think the story, the financial picture, could not be any worse, there comes the revelation that actually Congress is spending the current surplus for Social Security, for Medicare, for Civil Service Retirement, and the Transportation trust fund, spending money that is a surplus now and issuing debt to be paid by our children and grandchildren—in other words, funding out of the Civil Service Retirement Fund, Medicare, Social Security, and the Transportation trust fund, taking money out of that to pay the current bills of the Federal Government.

This is a dire financial circumstance that only the Federal Government could ignore. No family, no business, no one in America could run their finances this way and get by with it, except for the Federal Government because the Federal Government can continue to issue debt to borrow from surpluses in one fund to pay for bills in another. Frankly, this is a train wreck we are beginning to see in slow motion taking place right before our eyes and will be played out over the next few years, unless we act in a more fiscally responsible way right now.

The President has vetoed the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, and I want to talk about that in a minute. Thursday, I believe the House will vote on whether to override that veto and there has been a lot of mis-

conceptions about that and I wish to clarify that with my remarks.

But I want to suggest to you that before Congress votes to expand current programs, even successful programs, beyond their original scope, such as the SCHIP program, which has been enormously successful, targeted at low-income kids whose families earn too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to buy private health insurance—before we expand that, not by 40 percent, which I support, but by 140 percent, to cover adults in 14 States, and with a combination of waivers that can be issued by the executive branch of Government to potentially cover people up to 400 percent of the poverty level, displacing private health insurance and taking individuals who currently have health insurance and replacing it with Government—read “taxpayer”—subsidized free health care for people, families making up to \$82,000 a year—before Congress should attempt to expand programs in this sort of irresponsible manner, in my view, we ought to take a look at the programs that have been rated by the Federal Government in terms of their effectiveness and look at opportunities for cost savings there.

I think the American people do not resent paying their fair share of taxes for efficient Government and for a consensus role in what Government should be doing as opposed to the private sector. What they have a right to resent is the fact the Federal Government wastes their money and grows Government at the expense of the private sector in ways that crowd out the private sector.

I would like to suggest to my colleagues they look at a Web site called Expectmore.org. This is a Government Web site that, through the Office of Management and Budget, rates various Federal programs and agencies. What they have concluded—the Office of Management and Budget—is that out of 1,016 programs they have evaluated, 22 percent—almost a quarter of them—have been rated as ineffective or, perhaps even worse, we cannot tell whether they are working as intended—22 percent.

Only 18 percent have been rated as effective; 31 percent, moderately effective; and 29 percent, adequate. This is a miserable scorecard for the Federal Government in terms of the taxpayers’ dollars actually delivering the kind of services we should expect Government to deliver, efficient use and respectful use of the taxpayers’ dollars.

Before we talk about growing any program—even the SCHIP program—by 140 percent to cover adults and people in the upper middle class with free taxpayer-subsidized health insurance, should we not try to eliminate some of these ineffective programs that have been inconclusive in terms of the evaluation?

As it turns out, I have introduced legislation, along with some of my colleagues, designed to do this, building