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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, November 5, 2007, at 12.30 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2007

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Give our Senators this day, O God, reverence to realize Your presence, humility to know their own needs, trust to ask for Your help, and obedience to accept Your plan. Walk with them as they labor. Help them to remember that there is no purity without vigilance, no learning without study, and no mastery without discipline. Remind them also that there is no joy without service, no discipleship without devotion, and no crown without a cross.

Help our lawmakers to be willing, Lord, to pay the price required to honor You. May they know that true wisdom is to fear You and true understanding is to shun evil. Strengthen their resolve to always choose the right and to refuse the wrong.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SHERROD BROWN 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, November 2, 2007.

To the Senate:

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

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWN thereupon 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. REID. Mr. President, the Senate will be in a period of morning business today, with Members allowed to speak therein for whatever time they feel is appropriate.

There will be no rollcall votes today or tomorrow as a result of our being able to work something out on a very contentious Children's Health Initiative Program.

Next week, it is expected the Senate will receive the veto message on the water resources conference report. This measure passed with overwhelming votes in both the House and Senate. If it continues to have broad, bipartisan support, the veto will be overridden.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2293 AND S. 2294

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2293) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the individual alternative minimum tax, and for other purposes.

A bill (S. 2294) to strengthen immigration enforcement and border security, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to these bills.

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

MUST DO LEGISLATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I had a long meeting last night with the Speaker of the House and Senate Members, which lasted several hours. It is very clear that next week is going to be a very difficult week. The following week is going to be very difficult—important but difficult.

The reason I mention this is we had the obligation, procedurally, to vote this morning at 1 a.m., but we were able to work that out as a result of a unanimous consent request, which was very helpful. It avoided the necessity of our working this weekend. We only have one weekend left until Thanksgiving. I hope we can work everything out.

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



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I don't think we can. I have a very busy, difficult schedule next weekend, but I am not sure I am going to meet the obligations I have already committed myself to—I want everybody else to understand—including parades and other events on Veterans Day. What do we have to do? We have to send appropriations bills to the President. At least the Labor/HHS bill, which is now tied in with the VA military construction—we need to send that to the President. We have a time schedule to do that.

We have to do the Defense appropriations bill. It is something we have to consider getting to the President as soon as possible. We have to do a continuing resolution. There is some talk about doing a bridge fund for Iraq. Chairman BYRD is talking about marking up in a week or 10 days the supplemental appropriations bill. We have numerous other things. It is very difficult.

Monday is not a vote day, so we have 4 days next week. So I say, with all sincerity, I am going to call our Presidential candidates and let them know they better look at their schedules because these are not votes you can miss—Defense appropriations; the first appropriations bill, Labor/HHS, with benefits for veterans tied into it, which we need to do before Veterans Day; the CR, which funds our Government; and whatever we decide to do with the bridge funds or the supplemental appropriations bill.

So everyone should be alerted to the fact that they better have their schedules somewhat loose for this coming weekend and, I repeat, Monday. There is always a way, it seems, to try to work out some of these difficulties. I hope we can find a way to not do it next Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, but we have to be prepared.

The things I have talked about doing are not things we can do some other time. We have to do them before we leave for the Thanksgiving holiday.

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 of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The senior Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

SCHIP REAUTHORIZATION

Mr. REED. Mr. President, yesterday I voted with great enthusiasm for the SCHIP reauthorization bill. I think the present version is commendable and a version we should support. I particularly thank Leader REID, Chairman

BAUCUS, and Senator ROCKEFELLER for their efforts, and I commend them.

The bill provides an additional \$35 billion to preserve coverage for all 6.6 million children currently enrolled, and it expands coverage to an additional 4 million children.

The President and House Republicans have already denied these children access to health care once, by first vetoing the legislation and then sustaining the veto in the House of Representatives. I hope this version can pass without a veto. If it is vetoed, I hope the veto can be overridden.

The President's proposal, rather than expanding coverage, would in fact dramatically restrict coverage, dropping 1.4 million children and pregnant women. That is according to the Congressional Budget Office. So there is a very stark choice between an administration that wants to restrict coverage for children and this legislation, which would maintain, and indeed expand, that coverage to cover 10 million children in the United States.

With respect to Rhode Island, this bill adds an additional \$75 million in Federal funds on the table. It has to be matched, but this would allow the State of Rhode Island to maintain its program of health care for children. The bill would prevent shortfalls that have periodically cropped up, where the State found itself expending all of its funds and hoping there would be a redistribution of funds from other States that have not used their funds.

Last year, and again early this year, I fought for \$56 million in Federal funds to cover Rhode Island's shortfall. But these 11th-hour stopgap measures are not sustainable. The legislation we passed yesterday would prevent my State from being in a constant situation of shortfalls, hoping that other States have excess funds, and depending upon individuals in our delegation to get those funds for Rhode Island.

If President Bush and the House Republicans fail to enact this bill—if he vetoes it, and they sustain that veto—21 States will be at risk of shortfalls, totaling \$1.6 billion. Rhode Island will have a shortfall of \$44.1 million, beginning next March. We can predict that today. I don't know where my State would get that \$44 million. It is in a severe budget crisis. State leaders are talking about trying to find \$100 million to \$200 million in cuts, which in our budget is a significant amount of money. So the idea that they would have to come up with \$44 million on top of that is something that would be a very difficult challenge for Rhode Island.

If Republicans do not enact this bill, we must fully fund an extension that covers these shortfalls. We will be back next spring scrambling to find money to keep these programs functioning. I hope we can prevail at this juncture to create a program and funding that will be sustainable, predictable, and supportive of efforts in my State, and many States across the country, to

reach out and insure children for their health care needs.

The President's opposition is not based on fact or common sense or, indeed, even common decency; it seems to be based on ideology. He says families would switch from private insurance to government-run health care. But the number of uninsured is rising because private insurance is too expensive. In Rhode Island, the average family premium for a year is \$11,924. If you look at a typical working family in Rhode Island, it is struggling now to pay its mortgage. We have seen what is happening in the mortgage market, where many of these families, in order to get into a home, signed up for what are termed an "exotic" mortgage. In my State, foreclosures are at record-high levels. People cannot keep up with their mortgage payments. Then, added to that dilemma, wages have essentially been flat over the last 5 to 6 years, mortgage payments are going up, the price of gasoline is now reaching significant heights, and it is estimated that this winter heating oil in New England will be 20 percent more expensive than last winter. Are you then going to tell them: Oh, just go out and buy private health insurance for \$11,000 a year?

That makes no sense for working families in Rhode Island. They are struggling to keep their homes and, literally, to keep the lights on and keep it a little warm during the wintertime. For many of these people, private health insurance, at \$11,000 a year, is way beyond their reach. So to sit there and seriously insist that this is a real choice for these families—a choice of getting into a public program or buying private insurance—verges on the ridiculous.

Without the SCHIP program, thousands of families in my State—and millions of children across the country—will not have health care. There is no choice.

There is also the President's argument that this is socialized medicine. I believe that is a gross misrepresentation. In Rhode Island, children are enrolled in private plans, and enrollees can choose their doctor. In fact, there is another program like this, called Medicare. I don't see the President rallying against Medicare, saying how it is socialized medicine. In fact, I can recall he proposed—and this Congress supported—one of the largest expansions of Medicare by adopting a drug benefit. That costs the Federal Government billions of dollars, and there is no discussion about that.

These arguments are baseless. The President says this bill costs too much. In fact, this bill is fully paid for; it is one of the few things in the last 6 to 7 years that has been fully paid for. It is paid for by a cigarette tax, and it is in sharp contrast to the President's repeated request for money for Iraq and Afghanistan, which is not paid for. He is spending about \$12 billion a month. Of that money, over the last several