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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the State of Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we are gratefully aware that You are the giver of every good and perfect gift. We are further aware of our own unworthiness of Your goodness.

As our Senators labor today, make them extensions of Your power in our world. May they arrange their priorities according to Your will and view their challenges from an ethical perspective. Lord, use our lawmakers to bring relief to the suffering and to work for greater peace in our world. Help them to walk in Your way, that You may prolong their days and prosper their work. Give them the wisdom to be worthy of respect, self-controlled, and willing to endure. Sustain them in their challenging moments by renewing their faith in You.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM WEBB 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, November 5, 2007.

To the Senate:

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

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WEBB 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, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3 p.m. Senators are allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Then, at 3 p.m. today, the Senate will proceed to the farm bill. Once the managers offer the substitute amendment, the bill will be up for debate only for the remainder of today's session. That is the previous order that was entered by the Chair. As I previously announced, there will be no rollcall votes today as a result of what we were able to accomplish last week.

On Tuesday, the House is expected to vote on overriding the President's veto of the water resources bill, which is a very bipartisan bill which passed overwhelmingly both in the House and the Senate. I anticipate the Senate will debate that veto message sometime this week, and a vote on overriding could be as early as Wednesday.

I would remind Members that the President of France will address a joint meeting of Congress Wednesday morning at 11 a.m.

Also this week, the Senate has a lot of other work to do. I have had a lengthy conversation, just a few min-

utes ago, with the Republican leader. He is aware of the many obligations we have, and it is going to be difficult to get our work done this week. We can get it done, but the reason I mention this, I know Veterans Day is coming and people have a very busy schedule Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. I know I do, and I am sure, like everyone else, they also are obligated. But there are certain things we have to finish. We are going to be out of here for the Thanksgiving recess to go back to our States, to our families, but there is work that obligates us to stay until we finish, and we only have this week and next week to do that.

APPROPRIATIONS

This week, we will receive the conference report for the Veterans and Labor, Health, and Education appropriations bill. This legislation was again supported on a bipartisan basis. It provides the greatest funding increase ever to care for our troops and veterans, who have sacrificed so much for our country. It repairs the woeful conditions we have seen at Walter Reed and at other medical centers. It helps reduce the logjam that is keeping thousands of veterans from receiving health care because the VA has been underfunded during the Bush years.

This bill makes critical investments in America's children and substantially increases the Federal financial commitment to medical research for a multitude of diseases, which the Bush budget goes backward on rather than increasing.

This legislation passed the Senate overwhelmingly because they are good priorities for America. Unfortunately, the President has said he is going to veto this bill. That is unfortunate because this is the same President who has underfunded and shortchanged our troops, our veterans, and other domestic priorities here at home. He argues this bill costs too much. Yet, in the same breath, he reported last week that there is \$100 billion being spent in

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



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Iraq on infrastructure. And only this much of it is still standing. Most of the money has been wasted. What was attempted to be constructed has been destroyed or construction has been so faulty it simply is not usable. The President is wrong.

It appears the Republicans will attempt to separate the VA portion of the bill. I think that is unfortunate. The minority supported the VA bill and the Labor bill overwhelmingly, and it would be a shame to put up roadblocks to their passage. So I urge all my colleagues to reject that effort so we can pass and send this crucial legislation to the President as soon as possible.

THE FARM BILL

The farm bill. Chairman HARKIN, Senator BAUCUS, and Ranking Members CHAMBLISS and GRASSLEY deserve a lot of credit for working among their caucuses to write the bill we are debating this week. In the 24 years I have been in the Congress, first in the House and now in the Senate—actually, 25 years—no farm bill has embodied as much reform as this one. There are some who say this bill doesn't go far enough in the direction of reform. To those critics, it should be clear there will be an opportunity for Senators to offer amendments during debate. Would I personally like more reform? Of course I would. But I would like to focus on the positive and forward-looking elements that lie at the heart of this bill.

This bill saves billions of dollars by reforming existing programs, which allows new investment to expand food and nutrition programs for families, the elderly, and the disabled, as well as an expansion of the fresh fruits and vegetables programs to all 50 States to improve the health and wellness of America's children. It invests more than \$4 billion in conservation programs to protect wetlands, grasslands, and working farms. More than 60 percent of this bill is simply nutrition programs.

This bill takes us a step closer to the vital goal of energy independence, with more than \$1 billion for programs that are environmentally responsible while growing the farming economy. We import about 70 percent of our oil. We don't import 70 percent of our food. One reason we don't is because we have farm programs that work. Could they be made better? Of course they could be. But this bill does do some extremely important things.

It responds to the urgent need for permanent disaster assistance, which will help farmers respond and recover from future unavoidable disasters. It invests about \$2 billion in specialty crops. What are specialty crops? Strawberries, apples, and those programs that are so important to our country, so that it stops us from having to import as much as we would have to if we didn't have these programs. But with weather changes, some of these farmers have had tremendous losses from which they have not been able to recover. It

offers a reasonable compromise on country-of-origin labeling, and it improves competition in the livestock industry.

There will be a number of amendments offered during the floor debate. Senators DORGAN and GRASSLEY will offer an amendment on payment limits. Senators LAUTENBERG and LUGAR will offer an alternative farm bill amendment. Senator McCONNELL and I understand these amendments are important to Members on both sides of the aisle, and we will work together to ensure ample time is given for consideration.

I am confident and hopeful that this process will result in a truly bipartisan bill which will support our agricultural communities, promote a cleaner environment, and grow our economy. But I do say and alert everybody to this fact: We have had a really good legislative session. Once we get to a bill, we have basically offered amendments on most every bill. I think this bill is going to have trouble with that. We have to complete our work by next Friday, so we will make sure the amendments correctly relate to this bill and everybody will have an opportunity to offer those. We will do our very best to see that is the case. But this bill is a tax bill, and there could be a lot of mischievous amendments offered if it were an open amendment process. I think, with it being late in this year's session of Congress, everyone understands we can't do that. We have work we must complete.

The farm bill is a very bipartisan bill. I think we could seek cloture on the bill right now and probably do a pretty good job because it is really a bipartisan bill. I don't want to have to do it now, but I do want everyone to know we are not going to have an open amendment process, and I have explained that to the Republican leader.

PAKISTAN

Mr. President, this weekend we have seen a crisis unfold in Pakistan. It is an ongoing crisis which has become much more difficult. A leader whom the administration considered a partner in the fight against terrorism and extremism has taken steps away from the path of democracy, and he has suspended fundamental human rights in the process. I have had great hope for Pakistan. Senator Daschle and I took a trip to that part of the world right after Musharraf took power, and we were impressed with him. We came back to the United States, and the State Department had told President Clinton he shouldn't go to Pakistan. He was already headed for India. We prevailed upon him to go to Pakistan, and I am glad the President did go to Pakistan. But things haven't worked out the way I would have hoped.

This unfolding crisis must be watched carefully, and we must be prepared to respond to protect our security and our national interests. I hope all sides will show restraint. Musharraf must keep the promise he made when

Senator Daschle and I met with him and when he took power almost 8 years ago—to put Pakistan back on a path toward democracy.

I call upon General Musharraf to return to the constitutional rule of law, release the lawyers and other peaceful protestors he has imprisoned, and restore the path to free and fair elections as soon as possible.

This situation is also a reminder of why we must change the course in Iraq. We have been so focused on Iraq that we have had this situation develop in Israel with the Palestinians. I was stunned this morning to hear the Secretary of State on the news say this is our first meeting, the one that is going to take place in Annapolis. That isn't anything she should boast about.

For 7 years, this administration basically ignored the crisis we have had in the Middle East. We have a bad situation in Iran that we have ignored—no diplomacy, only threats of war. We have this intractable civil war in Iraq which is ongoing and now made more complicated as a result of what is going on in northern Iraq with the Kurds. We have not focused on our diplomacy. Look what has happened in Pakistan because we placed all our emphasis on a person rather than on a country. By staying so bogged down in the Iraq civil war, President Bush has made it harder to respond to the Pakistani problem and other challenges throughout the world.

The Iraq war leaves Secretary Rice and other officials responsible for the Middle East and South Asia with no strategic reserve to respond to humanitarian and other crisis situations. We are reminded that, while the administration has been focused on Iraq, it has failed to craft an effective strategy for eliminating what a recent National Intelligence Estimate described as an al-Qaida safe haven in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions, and it has failed to catch Osama bin Laden or his No. 2—Zawahiri.

So today I also call upon President Bush to conduct an expedited end-to-end review of his national security strategy as it relates to the war on terror and Pakistan, including a review of U.S. aid to Pakistan and how we are going to get our troops out of Iraq. I hope President Bush will take a good look at the costs and missed opportunities caused by his stay-the-course approach in Iraq and take steps to craft a more effective strategy for addressing the threats and challenges America faces across the globe.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that time for morning business be a full hour.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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