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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.

O God, most holy, You are more ready to hear us than we are to pray, for You know our needs before we ask for help. Give us listening ears, responsive hearts, and willing spirits.

Bless our Senators. Fill their lives with meaning and shower them with Your wisdom. Reveal the issues that matter most so their labors will glorify You. Let Your love sustain them through the welter and variety of the legislative process. Finally, keep them from becoming weary in well doing. As they listen to Your commands, give them the assurance of a sure harvest.

We pray in Your righteous 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, November 6, 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 Sen-

ator 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for 1 hour today. Senators are permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the times equally divided and controlled, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

At the close of morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2419, the farm bill. As a reminder, the Senate will stand in recess today from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. for the respective party conference meetings.

I mentioned yesterday that we have a lot to do this week, and we do. I have spoken with the Republican leader. The House is going to pass the conference report on Labor-HHS. As part of that conference report, there will also be military construction and the veterans' benefits. I have been told there is going to be a point of order raised against the military construction-VA aspect of that bill. In fact, if that is the case, we can set it up very quickly, as I explained to my Republican counterpart, to find out if there are 60 votes for that bill without the necessity of filing cloture. If, in fact, there are not 60 votes, that part, of course, will be peeled off, and we will pass the Labor-HHS bill, and it will go back to the House. The House will concur in what we had done, and the President would be sent the Labor-HHS bill alone. We

need to accomplish that work this week. We need to get our first appropriations bill to him—or bills, whatever the result.

As we speak—we started 5 minutes ago—the House and Senate conferees are meeting on the Defense appropriations bill. That conference will be wrapped up fairly soon. There has been a lot of preconference work done on the bill. We have Senators STEVENS and INOUE who have worked that bill for many years. They do very well with their House counterparts.

It is a huge bill. I don't know the exact amount—\$470 billion or some such amount. In addition to that, I think, as I told my friend, the Republican leader, the senior Senator from Kentucky, a continuing resolution will be put on the Defense bill just as it was done last year when Senator FRIST was majority leader. That we should get soon. We will get it in the next couple of days. And we have to finish that legislation before we leave this week.

It is extremely important that we don't wait until the last minute next week to take care of the Defense appropriations bill and the continuing resolution. That will leave us plenty to do next week. We have a lot to do, not the least of which is the Mukasey nomination which the Judiciary Committee will take care of this morning. That meeting also started 5 minutes ago.

We are on the farm bill. I will have more to say about the farm bill a little later, but I do want to say this regarding procedures and the farm bill. I have had some real good teachers over the years as to how to handle legislation. Some of those teachers have been my Republican counterparts. No one was more versed in so-called filling the tree than my friend, the distinguished Senator from Mississippi, Mr. LOTT.

We have just a few days until we break for Thanksgiving. This bill, the farm bill, is a tax bill. It has tax provisions in it. So I want to make sure everyone understands we should do all

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



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relevant amendments to the farm bill. There is no problem with that. That is what I said we would do. But this bill, as I have indicated, as I learned from my friends in past years from teachers such as Senator LOTT, Senator DOLE, and Democratic leaders, of course, is you have to be very careful in the waning days of any work period because any one Senator can shut this place down.

So on the farm bill, that is not going to be the case. We are going to work to complete the farm bill. It is a good, bipartisan bill. There should be amendments offered. We have a number of bipartisan amendments that must be offered. We have one amendment that Senator DORGAN and Senator GRASSLEY are ready to offer on payment limits. We have Senators LUGAR and LAUTENBERG who want to offer a whole substitute for this legislation. So I hope we can get to this legislation.

I have been told one of the things the Republicans will do in protest of what I am doing, which has been done countless other times in the past, is to go into a quorum call and prevent us from doing work on the farm bill. Everyone has a right to do that. We will have a few live quorums. If people don't want to do work on the farm bill, that is their right as a Senator.

The farm bill is something I believe we should do. I am certainly not going to file cloture on the farm bill this week. So if my friends on the other side of the aisle just want to have us sit in a quorum call and not do any work on the farm bill and not do our other work, that is fine. I don't think it is very productive when I have indicated the farm bill is certainly one where we can offer amendments relating to it, that will be relevant to the farm bill.

I, at a subsequent time prior to our getting on the bill, which will be an hour or so from now, will make sure I ask consent that we handle this bill with relevant amendments.

I ask unanimous consent that the time I use and the time my distinguished friend uses not count against the hour for morning business.

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

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday we reached another tragic milestone in Iraq. It seems it never stops. We lost five young American soldiers. That means 2007 has been the deadliest year for our troops in the entire war. In just a few months, we will be starting the sixth year of this war. We have almost completed 5 years of the war. Our thoughts have to be, as they should be, with the families of the five latest American victims of the civil war in Iraq. Our hearts go out to the families—several score have been Nevada families—a total of about almost 3,900 now, young men and women who have

lost their lives, and to the more than 30,000 who have been gravely wounded.

This war has caused so much suffering in America where losses continue to rise, not only in the loss of life and injury to our valiant troops but our Treasury. The Joint Economic Committee is going to come out with a report soon showing it to be in the trillions of dollars this war has cost our country. That means our Treasury is going to be depleted for generations to come.

No one doubts that our military is battered, scarred, and stretched to the limit. And let's not forget about what is going on in Iraq. It is estimated that 2 million people have left the country. This was a country of about 25 million people when the invasion took place. We learned today that 2.3 million civilians are now displaced, fleeing from their homes, their neighborhoods, their schools, places of worship. Violence is down, and certainly that is important and good, but many of the experts are saying one reason the violence is down is that so much ethnic cleansing has already taken place. It is true they found 35 or 40 dead bodies today, and they are still finding them—not to the amount they were finding before. They were finding more than 100 a day. Many of the areas have been ethnically cleansed.

Two-thirds of the displaced are children under the age of 12. This humanitarian crisis rages with no end in sight. Two-thirds of the 2.3 million displaced are kids under 12. By the most critical benchmarks, President Bush's flawed strategy on Iraq is making America not more secure but less secure.

We are seeing no signs of meaningful progress on political reconciliation, which is the key to success in Iraq. We have a civil war going on with the Palestinians. Two factions are at war. We have Lebanon, in effect, with an election that cannot be held because of civil strife in that country. We have Iran which is causing trouble in the whole region. And if a civil war in Iraq were not bad enough, now we have 100,000 Turkish troops who have gathered on the northern borders of Iraq.

Our brave troops, more than 160,000 of them, are giving everything they have to this war. Far too many of them have been buried; far too many face lives forever marred by physical and psychological wounds. Yet for all of our troops' sacrifice and suffering, Iraqi politicians are doing basically nothing. President Bush has said: As they step up, we stand down. They have not stepped up.

What better reminder do we need than the crisis in Pakistan that the world can change overnight? It is time to rebuild our military to refocus on the war on terror and the grave challenges that face us throughout the globe, not just in Iraq. We must repair the readiness of the Army and Marine Corps, the finest fighting force in the world, but a force that is under great strain. One only need look at the lead-

er of the Army, General Casey. He is saying that right now, and he has testified under oath to that effect. We must be prepared to respond to new challenges. We must have the strength and flexibility to promote freedom and defend human rights when they are attacked. We must refocus our efforts on bin Laden and al-Qaida who threaten our safety, and it is long past time to give our troops the hero's welcome they so bravely earned. They need to come home.

After years of the Republican underfunding of veterans' care, Democrats have provided \$4 billion above the President's request to make this failure right. President Bush remains obstinate. His allies in Congress have remained loyal. They have blocked our efforts so far, but we will continue fighting to give our troops and all Americans the new course in Iraq they deserve.

FARM BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on the farm bill, it is a 5-year bill, scored at about \$280 billion. It is a bill we need to look at the positive aspects of, and I have done that on a number of occasions.

The nutrition title is one of the bright spots of the bill. Food stamp recipients under the bill will be allowed to spend more on childcare and remain eligible, as well as save more for education and retirement without losing their benefits. Minimum benefits will rise. Funding for buying surplus food stuffs for food banks and other relief organizations have increased by \$100 million each year. That includes over \$1 billion for the School Lunch Program to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to these schools.

There are many other good things in this bill, and I was disappointed the President again talked about a veto. This is a new word in his vocabulary, because in the first 6 years of his Presidency, he basically never used the word. I should say the first 7 years. One year from today, we will have elections for a new President. So in the last 12 months, in this man's Presidency, he has come up with a new word, "veto." Everything is veto—CHIP, WRDA, appropriations bills, farm bills.

Yesterday, I came to the floor to express my optimism for the farm bill. I said the bill is an example of the good work that can come when both sides of the aisle work together. Chairman HARKIN and Senators BAUCUS, CHAMBLISS, and GRASSLEY have done that. I also said this bill would receive floor time for amendments dealing with the farm bill. Apparently, the good work and good faith put toward this bill by Democrats and Republicans does not count for much for the President. Yesterday afternoon, Acting Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Connors announced the President's intent to veto the farm bill—before it has been debated, before amendments are offered, and before, of course, it is passed.