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Senate

The Senate met at 2:30 p.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.

Eternal spirit, You are the "ancient of days," yet the ever new God. Thank You for Your mercy and faithfulness. As the dew refreshes the Earth, so You restore us each day to newness of life.

Sustain our lawmakers today in their labors. Give them guidance and inspiration to focus on issues that truly matter. Give them the wisdom to meet needs, solve problems, and lift burdens. May the talents possessed by the Members of this legislative body help in the awesome task of making the world better. Lord, to those who are given the responsibility of seeking the ways of peace, give creative stamina equal to this difficult task. We pray in Your powerful 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 12, 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 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 with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. There will be no rollcall votes today. The time is not divided by the majority or minority; people can come and speak whenever they choose.

I am hopeful today some of the remaining pending amendments to the 9/11 legislation can be disposed of by voice vote. If that is not the case, then 10 amendments remain in order for rollcall votes during tomorrow's session. Under an agreement entered into last week, once we have disposed of those amendments and the substitute, we will proceed to vote on passage of S. 4.

Members are on notice there will be a couple of rollcall votes in the morning prior to the Senate recessing for respective party conferences.

It is my intention to move to proceed to S.J. Res. 9, which is a joint resolution regarding Iraq, and I will file cloture on that motion hopefully tonight, setting up a cloture vote for Wednesday morning.

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on January 11, 2 months ago—it seems incredible it has been that long ago, but it has

been—President Bush announced his new war plan, the so-called surge. At that time, administration officials gave the American people the strong impression the President's plan would require the temporary—temporary—deployment of 21,500 new troops in Iraq. During the last several days, news reports confirm this new plan was nothing more than a bait and switch, a new name for an old, failed policy.

First we learned that 21,500 troops cited by the President did not include support in other elements and the true number of additional troops associated with his proposal could have been as many as 40,000 troops. Then, over the weekend, we learned two other troubling facts about the President's plan.

In the wake of continued violence in Iraq that prompted one of our top generals there to call for more troops, the American commander in Iraq, General Petraeus, made it clear still more troops are needed. Even more disconcerting, according to a recent New York Times report:

Military officials in Iraq have indicated they would need a large American troop presence for at least a year and probably for longer to achieve lasting stability.

President Bush is not surging; he is sustaining his failed policy. The consequences of the President's flawed policy in Iraq are staggering. Yesterday, three more American troops were killed. We are fast approaching 3,200 dead Americans. We may be there; last count was 3,195. More than 25,000 now have been wounded. It has stretched our military, it has eroded our veterans health care system, and plunged Iraq deeper and deeper into chaos. No matter how one looks at it, America is less safe today because this President has waged war in Iraq. We must change course, and it is time for the Senate to demand he do it.

Soon, the Senate will again have that opportunity to tell the President to change course. We have been blocked in efforts to have the debate on Iraq.

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



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Last week we offered the Republicans yet another opportunity to debate. It is my hope they will agree to this debate on Wednesday morning.

I appreciate very much the Republican leader voting for cloture. We are going to finish that bill tomorrow.

It is my hope they will agree to this debate so we can complete this important work; that is, the 9/11 bill, and then turn our attention to the war.

America is losing about 20 soldiers a week, about 3 a day, and spending \$280 million a day in Iraq. It is a downward spiral that will continue unless the Senate joins the American people in demanding a new direction in Iraq.

The war hangs over all we do in the Senate this year. Even if we debate this week, we will not be done. We are getting something from the House on the supplemental and we will return to this issue of the supplemental, very likely, and we will continue until there is a change of course. There is very much work to do—the priorities everyone knows about, such as immigration, stem cell; we have the budget ahead of us. There are also issues such as the crisis in the judiciary and the intelligence authorization bill, that will demand our attention in the weeks ahead. I hope we can promptly complete action on the 9/11 bill tomorrow, and I am confident we will do that. We have so much to do.

There is a lot of negativity about what we do here in the Senate, but when you sort through all of it, and I recognize the war in Iraq is hanging over everything we have done—but when you look at what we have done these past few weeks in the history of the 110th Congress, we have done OK. We have been able to do the work on ethics and lobbying. We have done the minimum wage bill. We completed the continuing resolution and we are going to complete 9/11 legislation soon. It appears we are going to be able to do the reform of the Attorney General's problems that have been so much in the press recently. We have confirmed the only appellate court judge who has been brought to the floor. We hope to do another one within the next week or so. We now have another one on the calendar, so we will do that. The Judiciary Committee has three over there they are looking at now. I know the distinguished Republican leader is very concerned about moving appellate judges. We are going to do our best to cooperate with him in that regard.

Simply in closing my remarks today, I recognize we have a difficult situation with Iraq. Sometimes we need to sort through all that and recognize we have been able to accomplish a lot, and it has been done—the only way it can get done—on a bipartisan basis. We have had a few bumps in the road, but if we are patient and willing to recognize there will be bumps in the future, even having both sides not hold any grudges—legislative grudges, at least—I think we have the ability to do a lot more in this Congress.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

WAR ON TERROR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we are fortunate it has been almost 6 years since we have been attacked here at home. There is only one reason for that: We have been on the offense in Afghanistan and in Iraq. A lot of the terrorists who murdered over 3,000 of our innocent civilians in New York on that fateful day are dead. Others of them are incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay, and many others are on the run and dodging our military. That part of the war on terror has been an extraordinary success.

Iraq has not come together in terms of the Government as quickly as we had hoped, and Afghanistan is still a challenge. But I wonder if our good friends on the other side of the aisle have any answers to the question: What happens if we precipitously leave? I gather the most recent—in fact, the 17th—different version of Iraq resolutions we are going to see later this week anticipates basically telling the enemy a date on which we will depart. I can remember when most of our friends on the other side of the aisle thought that was a bad idea, but I gather their views must be evolving as to what kind of strategy might be helpful. One thing is clear: If we announce to the enemy when we are leaving, they will come back on that day.

So we will have another Iraq debate this week, and as the majority leader indicated, there will be yet another Iraq debate when the supplemental is before us in a few weeks. This is a debate we are more than willing to engage in.

I would say to the majority leader, as I indicated last week, it would have been possible, I think, to have gotten a unanimous consent agreement to deal with the stem cell issue in a rather short period of time had we chosen to take up another issue that was in the six in 2006 list of commitments the new Democratic majority made to the American people. Having said that, I will be in discussions with the majority leader today and tomorrow about how we might go forward on the Iraq debate. It is certainly his prerogative as the leader of the majority to determine what issue we proceed to, and he and I will meet later today and be discussing that today and tomorrow.

As far as the 9/11 bill is concerned, I supported cloture on that bill. We are anxious to go on and finish it and we should be able to do that after lunch tomorrow.

Mr. President, 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 with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak in morning business for about 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WEBB). Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRESS IN IRAQ

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, for weeks, I have been coming to the floor to discuss the signs of progress we are beginning to see as the military implements our new strategy in Iraq. Recent developments are encouraging. They include the following:

First of all, the Iraqi Cabinet approved a national oil compact, which is the beginning of a resolution of what to do with the revenues that are produced from the oil that is produced in Iraq. It is a vital step in ensuring a united Iraq, and Prime Minister Maliki called it a “gift to all of the Iraqi people.” This is expected to be approved by the Iraqi legislature this spring.

Next is the capture recently of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, the successor to al-Zarqawi, in the western outskirts of Baghdad. This represents a continuing increase in the number of terrorist chiefs who have been killed or captured.

Just last week, the Iraqi neighbors meeting was held. It generated a lot of press because both U.S. and Iranian representatives were present. It involved all 16 nations involved in the conflict. It was the neighbors of Iraq, as well as countries such as Great Britain and the United States. It was the largest meeting of foreign countries in Iraq since the summit meeting of the Arab League members in March of 1990. There were working groups established to work on various problems all the countries had—for example, refugees from Iraq who have gone into Syria or Jordan. A special working group was created to try to deal with that issue.

This represents a step forward, all of which illustrates the fact that not only is the new strategy being implemented a military one but it involves diplomatic and economic and political factors as well.