



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 153

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007

No. 52

Senate

The Senate met at 2:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose power moves in the changes of the seasons and in the circuit of the stars, let Your gentle strength live in each of our hearts.

Today, infuse our Senators with Your wisdom so that in their coming and going they will walk in the path of Your will. Lord, keep them faithful. Amid the haste and hurry of their labors this week, remind them to spend time with You so that they experience You as the joy and strength of true living. Quicken their faith and hope; give them Your perfect calm as they aspire to honor You. Make their lives a gift of Your love to a hurting world.

Much like the gift of Bishop Gilbert Earl Patterson, Lord, we thank You and praise You for his life and witness. Today, comfort the millions who are mourning his death. We humbly pray these things in the Name of Him who was in the beginning and will be in the end. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK L. PRYOR 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 26, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PRYOR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be an extra 30 minutes for morning business.

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this afternoon, the Senate will be in a period for morning business. At 3:30 p.m., the Senate will proceed to consideration of the supplemental appropriations bill, H.R. 1591. As I announced earlier, there will be no rollcall votes today. This week is slated to be the last week of the work period prior to the Easter recess. However, we must work toward finishing the supplemental before we can do this, and I am going to be meeting in the next few minutes with the distinguished Republican leader to see if that is possible to do.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 545

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding that H.R. 545 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title for a second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 545) to amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to clarify that territories and Indian tribes are eligible to receive grants for confronting the use of methamphetamine.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now object to any further proceedings at this time.

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

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 until 3:30 p.m., 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to make a brief statement, but I believe the majority leader may have one as well.

Mr. REID. Please, go ahead.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S3727

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the House of Representatives passed an emergency war spending bill on Friday that includes tens of billions of dollars for projects that have no connection whatsoever to the needs of our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, that tells U.S. generals how to do their jobs, and which pulls out of thin air a date for evacuating U.S. troops from Iraq.

It was meant to send a message to the Commander in Chief, but its only real effect is to delay the delivery of urgent material support to our troops. The President has said he will veto any legislation that includes a surrender date and which substitutes the judgment of politicians in Washington for the judgment of commanders in the field. Those who voted for the House spending bill on Friday, therefore, knew it had no chance of being approved. It was an empty promise to the troops.

The Constitution gives Members of Congress a concrete way of expressing their opposition to a war, and that is to vote against funding it. But House Democrats are trying to have it both ways: They call their bill a statement against the very war it continues to fund, a promise of support for the troops that has no chance of being signed.

Who loses out in this strange calculus? American soldiers and marines deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq and their worried families here at home are the losers.

The Secretary of Defense said as much last week. He said delaying the approval of funds would slow the training of units already headed into Iraq and reduce the funds available for repairs to buildings and equipment. He said it would force the Army to consider cutting funds for renovations to barracks and cut off repairs to equipment that is needed to support troop deployment training.

The House brushed these concerns aside to express a point of view. But troops who have been sent into battle with assurances of support got another message: Don't count on it from us.

Some have said the Senate version of the war spending bill is more palatable. They say this because its date for withdrawal is only a goal. They think that by retaining this provision, they will eventually force Republicans to accept the notion that battlefield commanders should be tied to arbitrary timelines. Believe me, they are wrong.

The week before last, we prevented legislation that would have told our enemies the date on which we will give up. A majority in the Senate showed it won't approve a bill that shares our battle plan with the enemy or which tells soldiers and commanders how to do their jobs.

We won't let timelines be used as the toll booth for getting aid to the troops, and we need to send the President a bill that doesn't include them so he can

sign it without delay. I urge my colleagues to put an end to this unfortunate and misguided effort to set an arbitrary date upon which to withdraw from Iraq and to strip language from this emergency spending bill that only guarantees our troops will have to wait for the help they need and the support they deserve.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro temore. The majority leader.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the first 3 months of the 110th Congress have been very productive. We have shown the American people that when Democrats and Republicans work together results flow. It is interesting, when that happens, there are a lot of positives that can be said by both parties. When we don't accomplish something, there is a lot of criticism that is shared by both parties.

This productive work began in January when we passed the ethics bill, the most sweeping reform in the history of our country. Next we worked to raise the minimum wage for the first time in a decade. After minimum wage, we finished the fiscal work of the last Congress, the 109th Congress, by passing a responsible continuing resolution with no earmarks. Then we went to homeland security and ensured that 5 years after 9/11, all the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission will be implemented. Last week, we passed a balanced budget which includes over \$180 billion in tax breaks for middle-class families and says in the future, if you are going to lower taxes, if you are going to increase spending, you have to have some way to pay for it. Ethics, minimum wage, the continuing resolution, the 9/11 recommendations and the budget—it is a record of which all of us can be proud. But, of course, we have so much more to do. From stem cell to immigration to energy, there are challenges ahead, and this week the Senate will turn its attention to the most pressing challenge of them all—the debacle of Iraq.

Today we begin consideration of the 2007 supplemental appropriations bill. This legislation includes more than \$121 billion. The vast majority—90 percent of it—is for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is also for enhancing military readiness generally, for improving veterans health care—and certainly in the wake of Walter Reed and other scandals regarding how veterans are being taken care of, this is certainly something that is necessary—for national priorities such as rebuilding the gulf coast and homeland security and I mention, Mr. President, drought assistance, farm disaster.

In the western part of the United States, because of this global climate change, we have had millions—I am speaking directly—millions, not thousands, but millions—of acres burned,

and unless we figure out some way to restore that vegetation, that land is going foul, to say the least. That is what this is all about—farm aid assistance. Willie Nelson could sing for weeks about the need for this assistance to take place in the West. I am not an expert on wheat, corn, rice, and all those other products—a lot of people here are—but I am about range-lands and what has happened to Nevada.

The bill contains critical money, as I have indicated, for our troops. We need to get the money to them as quickly as we can. Our troops are serving under difficult conditions. The Senate will ensure they have everything they need to continue this fight as we have done.

Our support, though, for the troops does not stop at funding. We must also ensure our soldiers have a strategy for success. The Democratic-controlled Congress is listening to the American people and fighting to give our troops what they need and strategy—strategy worthy of their sacrifices. That is why in addition to the much needed changes for our troops, the bill also contains a strong message for President Bush: Change course in Iraq.

My friend, the distinguished Republican leader, criticized what is in this bill that will be reported to the floor shortly, saying it is not good for the troops. David Brooks, the very conservative editorial writer for the New York Times, said last Friday on the "Jim Lehrer NewsHour": This is ridiculous for anyone to criticize a democracy for debating the most important issue of the day, the war in Iraq. The very conservative David Brooks said this is what democracies are all about. The troops over there know this is good.

I have my BlackBerry on my hip. Someone BlackBerried his friend, one of my staff members, who is a full colonel in the Army National Guard out in Nevada. He keeps in touch with his friends. He said what happened in the House and what we put in our bill is good for the troops—this is a soldier emailing my friend from Iraq—because it lets the Iraqi Government know we are serious. He went on to say the deadline is important for the Iraqi people and the soldiers, and the Iraqi people know that.

Secretary Gates, when asked about this timeline, provisions in the bill relating to Iraq, said it doesn't affect the troops adversely at all.

Certainly the troops know we care about them. We give them everything they need. But last week, we entered the fifth year of this war. Think about that, the fifth year of this war, and there is no end in sight, I am sorry to say. The news this morning, when I first got up, was five more soldiers were killed yesterday, 238 this year alone. March 26, 238 dead Americans, just like the boy Raul Bravo, from Elko, NV. I talked to his mother—237 just like that young man. Three thousand two hundred forty-one so far in this war—dead Americans—25,000