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Senate

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.

Eternal Lord God, how excellent is Your Name in all the Earth. As our Senators face today's challenges, help them to trust in Your goodness. May their faith in You prompt them to wait for the unfolding of Your providence. Remind them that all things work together for good to those who love You and strive to do Your will. Continue to be their refuge, an ever-present help for life's challenges. Renew their strength, enabling them to soar like an eagle, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. Infuse them with a reverential awe that will strengthen them to honor You with their thoughts and words. When facing temptations, enable them to keep themselves pure.

And, Lord, we pause to remember today the supreme sacrifice of Officer Jacob Chestnut and Detective John Gibson, who died defending this Capitol against an armed intruder. Bless the families they left behind with Your divine comfort.

We pray in Your sacred 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 24, 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, we are going to conclude action today—in fact, this morning—on the higher education authorization measure. It is a very important piece of legislation. We have not done this in 3 years. It is important this be completed.

The good news I received walking into the Chamber today is it appears we will not have a vote on final passage. So that is really good work. Further, it underscores my repeated compliments of Senators KENNEDY and ENZI for their true bipartisanship. This is the second bill in a row they have managed, and they have done a tremendously important and good job in getting the bills done in regular order.

Once we complete action on this education matter, we will move to the Homeland Security appropriations bill. Today, at 3:40 p.m., the Senate will observe a moment of silence in memory of Detective Gibson and Officer Chestnut. A wreath-laying ceremony will take place at the Memorial Door at 3:30 p.m. I encourage Members to come to the Chamber at 3:40 p.m. to observe this moment of silence.

ORDER FOR MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate observe a moment of silence at 3:40 p.m. today.

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

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I also ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess today from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. for our weekly party conferences.

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

REMEMBERING DETECTIVE JOHN GIBSON AND OFFICER J.J. CHESTNUT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to say a brief word about a couple of matters. As we heard in the prayer offered by Admiral Black, some will remember that day 9 years ago when these two officers were killed. I remember it for a number of reasons, not the least of which, when I attended law school, I went to law school during the daytime and worked a full-time swing shift, a night shift, as a Capitol police officer. My service as a Capitol policeman was not one where I showed any bravery or courage or any valor; I was directing traffic much of the time. That was the most dangerous job I did.

But 9 years ago today, two police officers did exemplify courage and valor. These two Capitol police officers, Special Agent Gibson and Officer Jacob Chestnut, were stationed by the east entrance on the House side. At 3:40 in the afternoon, a man with a gun tried

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



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to force his way past them. When Officer Chestnut blocked his path, the gunman shot him point-blank in the chest and killed him. Special Agent Gibson then warned nearby tourists and staff to seek cover. In fact, he chased the gunman down the hallway. He was headed for the House leadership's office. When they exchanged gunfire, one tourist was hit. Officer Gibson was also hit and died from his wounds, as did Officer Chestnut.

A plaque has been placed in the Capitol Building where the confrontation took place, and their names are carved in the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial recognizing their sacrifice.

I knew Officer Gibson. Senate Democrats had a retreat. During that retreat, my wife became very ill one night. Special Agent Gibson was the first one there. He was carrying all the resuscitation equipment. He was sweating. He had run from the office where the police were stationed to take care of my wife. I remember how kind, thoughtful, and considerate he was, and how gentle he was.

I didn't know Officer Chestnut other than exchanging greetings when I met him, but his reputation was outstanding, and his actions that day proved his enormous strength of character.

I think of the brave police officers who protect me every day, Mr. President, with the skill and hard work I see firsthand each day. I also think of all the law enforcement men and women who keep this building and those who serve within it safe. We should all be grateful, but I am grateful beyond words.

So on this somber anniversary, I will lay a wreath and observe a moment of silence for these two heroic men we lost. Our hearts, and certainly our thoughts, are with the families of Special Agent Gibson and Officer Chestnut. I have met their families on a number of occasions. We hope that remembering them is some comfort to them that the sacrifice of their loved ones will be forever remembered with our gratitude and utmost respect.

SENATE SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have not had a chance to convey this information to the distinguished Republican leader. I have not had time because the decision was just made this morning. I want to go over the calendar for the remainder of this year.

We, of course, know what we have to do this week and next week. We need to complete the work on the Homeland Security appropriations bill, which is so important, with the 9/11 recommendations to become effective soon, and we have the National Intelligence Estimate report just rendered which indicates we have to be vigilant at home. We must complete the appropriations bill dealing with homeland security before we leave this work period.

We also need to do our work on SCHIP, children's health care. The Finance Committee, on a very bipartisan vote—17 to 4—passed that matter out of committee. It was led by Senators GRASSLEY, BAUCUS, ROCKEFELLER, and HATCH. What came out of that committee has been a compromise. That is how bipartisanship works. As reported in the Congressional Daily yesterday, that matter should have more than 60 votes. So if there is, in fact, an effort to slow that bill down, it appears on a bipartisan basis we can move it forward. It is certainly important legislation, and we need to complete it.

We also, as I just mentioned, need to complete the conference report dealing with the 9/11 Commission recommendations. We expect that to be passed in the House this week. The conference committee, basically, has wrapped up all its work on that bill. It has been very heartwarming that the conference has been led by Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS, and we had an actual conference, just as we used to have around here all the time. The first conference committee meeting was mobbed with press looking in. That is the way it used to be. A real conference report will come out of that conference committee, and that is very important.

Finally, we are going to complete the ethics legislation. I want to tee up so that when we come back in September, we will have some work to do without looking for something to do. What I would like to do is move to the VA-Military Construction appropriations bill. We will do that one way or the other. I hope on a motion to proceed that I will not have to file cloture, but if I have to, that is what I will do. So when we get back in September, we will have something to work on.

Let's talk about September. Whenever we leave here, Mr. President—and, as I have indicated, I hope it is next Friday, but that may not be the case if we have to do some extra days to complete our work—when we come back, of course, September 3 is a holiday, so we will come back on September 4. September 4 will be treated as most of our Mondays are treated. We will have a vote at 5:15 p.m. or thereabouts that evening, and we will work that week.

On September 10—everyone is on notice—we will be in session that day, and we will have votes before noon. It is not going to be 5:15 p.m. Everyone knows that is going to be an early vote day. Why? Because on September 10, 11, and 12, we will have full work days. We have to complete our work by 6 o'clock on September 12 because that is the beginning of the Jewish holiday, Rosh Hashanah. We will be out of session September 13 and 14. There will be no votes on Monday, September 17. It will be a work day, but we will not have votes. And then we are going to work the remainder of that week, the remainder of the next week, and the remainder of the next week. We could have—and I will try to give the distinguished Republican leader and all Sen-

ators notice—we may, because of what we are working on, have to have some Monday votes earlier than 5:15 p.m. We will try to announce it a week ahead of time so people can make arrangements.

Then, on October 8, which is a holiday, Columbus Day, we are going to have that as a home State work period. That whole week, we are going to be out of session; that is, October 9, 10, 11, 12, we will be out of session. We will come back on October 15 and work that day. We will have votes on October 15. I don't expect early votes. We will have votes on the 15th. We hope we can complete work for the session by November 16. If we cannot, then we have to come back. We will come back on December 3 and complete our work. That will give us 3 weeks before Christmas. I hope we don't have to do that. I think it will be good for everybody if we can complete our work on November 16.

I say to my friend, the distinguished Republican leader, if he has any questions about this, I will be happy to answer them. I apologize for not being able to give this information to him first, but the decision I was waiting to make was what to do on September 17, as to whether that will be a vote day. We decided it will not. I am now in position to state this publicly.

WOUNDED WARRIOR AMENDMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before I leave the podium, I wish to say a couple words about another important piece of legislation.

Earlier this year, Americans were shocked by reports of the crisis at Walter Reed and other armed services medical facilities. It wasn't just Walter Reed, but that was the picture everyone saw. We learned that many of our courageous men and women wounded in service to our Nation were receiving unacceptably poor treatment and care upon their return to our shores.

I learned from this morning's news that there is a big lawsuit filed by Afghan and Iraqi veterans. Hundreds of thousands have joined together in a lawsuit against the Veterans' Administration. I do not procedurally understand how that is going to go forward, but it was in the morning headline news.

There is now, according to this news report, about a half a million backlog requests for Iraqi veterans to get care.

We learned during the early look at Walter Reed and other facilities not only was the veterans' care system ripe for bureaucratic failures, but even the physical facilities failed to meet a minimal level of acceptable quality.

The American people were outraged by these facts, and I am glad to say the Senate took prompt action. The Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs Committees held a rare joint hearing to identify the best ways to make right the existing failures and to prevent similar injustices from ever happening again. Members of these committees