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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable E. BENJAMIN NELSON, a Senator from the State of Nebraska.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of glory, center of unbroken praise, Your wonderful deeds of old shine forth even to our day. For the beauty of the Earth and the glory of the sky, we thank You. For the opportunity our lawmakers have each day to labor for liberty, we praise You.

Guide the work of our Senators. Empower them to do Your will on Earth as it is done in heaven. May their lives provide models of exemplary excellence that will inspire thousands. Let Your compassion protect them and Your grace sustain them. Give them a new sense of power and purpose as they do what is right no matter the cost. We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable E. BENJAMIN NELSON 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, December 10, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable E. BENJAMIN NELSON,

a Senator from the State of Nebraska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska 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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following the leaders' remarks, I ask unanimous consent that we stand in a period of morning business until 12:30 today; and that from 12:30 to 2:15 the Senate stand in recess.

The Republicans are going to hold a caucus at that time. I ask unanimous consent that be approved.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this is Wednesday, and each day we come here and say the document that is going to be the bill that we are going to report on is done. Now I understand it is done. But the piece of paper is not before the Senate. There are two provisions I have instructed Senator DODD—and he has agreed—to take out of the document we are moving forward on, and that should be done momentarily.

I understand, in fairness, that all parties, Democrats and Republicans, deserve the opportunity to study this bill. It is about 25 pages long, as I understand it. But even though we have some speed readers in the Senate, they still need time to study it. In speaking with various Senators today, it appears pretty clear that the minority, the Republicans, are not going to move forward on this unless there is a lot of opportunity to study this legislation.

Therefore, it appears unlikely we will be able to have a vote on this today. That being the case, let me say I will file the work done by the Banking Committee, the Senate Banking Committee, because they are not totally in agreement with what is done by the House.

That way I will have it here, we will file the necessary motions on that, which would mean we would have a cloture vote on Friday on a motion to proceed to it. Now, we can always move that forward with unanimous consent. But everyone should understand, if this is something that everyone is going to make us dot every I and cross every T, then we would have that cloture vote early Friday morning, maybe as early as 9 o'clock.

If we did that, then the second vote would not take place until Saturday afternoon at about 3 o'clock, give or take a little bit of time. Then everyone can do the math as well as I can. The next vote would probably take place about 9 o'clock on Sunday. So the point is, if everybody is not cooperative and wants to create problems, we would not be able to complete this until Saturday or Sunday, but we are going to complete it. And when I say "complete it," that means we are going to have our final vote on it, it will either pass or fail, but we are going to give Senators an opportunity to vote.

As indicated in the press today, Senator BIDEN said he would be willing to come back and vote if his vote were necessary. I apologize to everyone but not too sincerely, because I have done the best I can to move this forward. It is difficult.

We have the House, the Senate, the White House, and once in a while we hear from the new administration. So it has made it real difficult to come up with a final piece of paper, which I hope will be forthcoming in the next few minutes. But I think I have done the best I can to alert everyone. I know there are lots of people, Democrats and

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



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Republicans have a lot of important work to do. But this is also important business we are dealing with, dealing with the Detroit automobile manufacturers.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

AUTOMOBILE PACKAGE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me pick up on the issue the majority leader was discussing. Of course, we are not going to agree to expedite a procedure to a bill we have not read. The fundamental problem here—I know this is not the majority leader's fault—is we have not been able to get a copy of the bill that we believe represents an agreement that has been reached between congressional Democrats and the White House on the automobile package.

Until we get the actual bill and can read it, it is unrealistic to expect that I can ask my Members to advance consideration of the bill until we know what is in it. So as soon as we can have a look at it—we will be having a conference today on my side. Hopefully, we will have the bill by then. But as of this morning, we still have not seen a final version of the bill. Once we do, we will review it and see if it meets our standard for support, which will be the taxpayers' standard for support.

But as I indicated—and the majority leader has already picked up on that—there cannot be a vote on the legislation today because we do not know what it looks like.

On a bill this critical, with so much taxpayer money at stake, we cannot rush this through without adequate review. We are happy to begin the review process as soon as we get a product. My Members will be discussing the merits of the latest version of the plan, as I indicated, at our weekly policy lunch, which will occur today around noon. So this afternoon I expect to have some more substantive thoughts on this latest proposal's chances for support within the Republican conference. We will address this issue before the end of the week. I agree with the majority leader on that.

For those who need a refresher, let me remind everyone of the Republican criteria for this legislation: First and foremost, we will not let taxpayers spend their hard-earned money on ailing car makers unless these companies are forced to reform their bad habits, either inside or outside bankruptcy.

This means workers will not be paid not to work, it means a final bill would not interfere with pending environmental lawsuits in a one-sided manner, and it means struggling car companies will have to rationalize their cost structures because a company that does not respond to market conditions is a company that is doomed to failure

anyway. Republicans will not allow taxpayers to subsidize failure.

As I have said repeatedly, my Republican colleagues and I wish to put struggling car makers on a path to long-term success, but, obviously, there will not be widespread support for a plan that does not do that.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say in response to my friend, the distinguished Republican leader, we have had cooperation in moving forward on this legislation. I have not been a big fan of the White House, as everyone knows, for the last 8 years. But they have, in good faith, worked with us trying to get a piece of legislation we can bring before this body.

That is one reason it has taken so long. But President Bush is still President of the United States. He has tremendous power and rightfully so. Senator Obama is not, in any way, wanting to step on that. So this is something that is important. I totally understand what the Republican leader is saying. If I were in his place, I would do the same thing. It is not fair to ask that we move forward on this legislation without people having the opportunity to read it and study it and talk to others about what is in it.

I would hope, through, after we get the legislation, we can work something out to expedite the procedural matters. No one is under the illusion that we can do it on a simple majority; we are going to have to get 60 votes. I hope there is support from both sides of the aisle. I am fairly confident there will be. We will, later tonight, revisit what we might be able to do tomorrow and/or Friday to complete this legislation. We will do our very utmost to get this legislation completed so the Republican leader can take to his caucus the document so people can start, hopefully even before that, poring through it.

I have said so many times this thing is done, it is on its way, and have been disappointed when my staff says: Well, there are a few more issues that have come up. I think that has ended. I certainly hope so. I hope that at 12:30, when we recess, both the Republicans and the Democrats have a piece of legislation they can look at.

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, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

FAREWELL

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the floor of this Chamber for the final time in my service as a Senator from the State of North Carolina. As I do, I cannot help but think back some 12 and a half years ago, when I sat up in the Senate Gallery to watch another Senator Dole, my husband Bob, deliver his farewell speech in this Chamber after nearly three decades of service.

Bob began his remarks by reflecting on words spoken by Abraham Lincoln in 1860, when a delegation arrived in Springfield, IL, to officially inform him he had been nominated by his party for the Presidency. Lincoln spoke just two sentences, and then he said to the large crowd of friends and neighbors gathered on his lawn:

Now I will no longer defer the pleasure of taking each of you by the hand.

I rise with a heart full of gratitude, and, like President Lincoln and like Bob Dole, what I wish I could do is to take the hand of all those who have helped me on my life's journey and to express my heartfelt thanks. I would begin with friends from my home State. I have been blessed to serve the public in numerous capacities during my career. Without question, the highest honor has been representing North Carolina in the Senate. I thank my fellow Tar Heels for granting me the privilege of serving them.

Then there are a number of North Carolinians now gone whom I wish I could take by the hand again to thank them for the examples they set, the values they instilled in me and the love, guidance, and support they provided.

There is my grandmother, Mom Cathey. I can still vividly recall the Sunday afternoons spent with other neighborhood children at her home. We would enjoy lemonade and homemade cookies while Mom Cathey read from her Bible, which is now one of my most cherished possessions. My grandmother practiced what she preached, and she truly lived her life for others.

My beloved father John Hanford always supported my interests and taught me that anything worth doing deserved my best effort. When I wanted to run for president of my high school, which was not something girls did in those days, he stood right behind me cheering me on. He was protective but not overbearing.

My precious mother Mary, who passed away just shy of 103 years old, was also front and center in my life. She taught me at a very young age that the real joy in life is giving back to your community and helping those around you, and she was always there to urge me to go the extra mile: You finished your homework early. Have you thought about entering that essay contest? Unbeknownst to her, mother's example of hard work and dedication drew me toward public service as my mission field, my passion. She was a constant source of inspiration.