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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.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 God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, thank You for the favor which You have given to humanity. We are grateful, Lord, for the nobility You have placed in human hearts that enables us to toil until we pass the breaking point and still not break. Thank You that You have enabled us to love until even self is forgotten. Thank You also for those who willingly sacrifice even life itself for the things they hold dear. Thank You that goodness always haunts us and sin ever brings its remorse.

Thank You for the Members of this legislative body who labor to be Your ambassadors of reconciliation in a divided world. May they commit their time, effort, and resources to formulate public policy in keeping with Your will for our beloved Nation.

We pray in Your great 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 14, 2008.

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 THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader time, there will be a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 980, the collective bargaining legislation. Rollcall votes are expected to occur throughout the day.

Debate on this legislation has been exemplary. All amendments to this point that have been offered relate to labor issues. That is important. This is a bipartisan bill. We should be able to legislate on this, hopefully get it completed in the near future. There is a lot of pent-up desire on both sides to offer amendments on all different issues, but I think we would get more done if we could focus on this legislation.

I indicated to Senator ENZI, who was so involved in this, how we would proceed. He has been, as he always is, a gentleman. Senator KENNEDY and Senator ENZI didn't get everything worked out on this piece of legislation that

they wanted prior to coming to the floor; therefore, Senator ENZI feels an obligation to offer some amendments to take care of some of the issues he believes are important, and I support him on that.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S.J. RES. 32

Mr. REID. Mr. President, S.J. Res. 32 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the resolution by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 32) limiting the issuance of a letter of offer with respect to a certain proposed sale of defense articles and defense services to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings with respect to the joint resolution.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the joint resolution will be placed on the calendar.

FARM BILL CONFERENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before turning this over to the Republican leader, we have worked long and hard on the farm bill. It is a bipartisan bill. It has been a struggle to get where we are. I so appreciate the work done by Senators who are responsible for bringing this to the floor, Senators HARKIN and CHAMBLISS, BAUCUS, GRASSLEY, and a lot of other players who are involved. It is a very important piece of legislation. We expect to turn to the farm conference report as soon as we receive it from the House. We even will try to do it before it comes here, if we can get a consent agreement. We hope we can limit debate on this matter and get it out of here.

Remember, this week we have to hopefully dispose of the collective bargaining legislation. We have to take

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



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care of the farm bill. We have to appoint conferees on the budget. We also have to dispose of, because we have a statutory problem, the media cross-ownership issue. There are 10 hours of debate on that. I hope we can limit that significantly. Those are the items we need to complete this week—this week—and it is already Wednesday.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

COMMEMORATING 60 YEARS OF ISRAELI STATEHOOD

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, more than a hundred years ago, the Hungarian journalist Theodore Herzl set into motion a political movement that would change the world.

Herzl's vision for a Jewish homeland would not be realized in his own lifetime, but the nation that would become the modern State of Israel would have exceeded even his dreams of a prosperous home for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In the nearly 2,000 years that had passed since the exile, the Jewish people had remained faithful to their traditions, praying and hoping for their eventual return. That right was acknowledged in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and reaffirmed by the mandate of the League of Nations in 1922. The horrors of the Nazi Holocaust made Israel's establishment all the more urgent, and had created among the American people a deep sympathy for the aspirations of the Jewish people. At the stroke of midnight, on this day in 1948, the modern State of Israel was born, and just eleven minutes later, here in the U.S., President Truman recognized the new state, solidifying for all time the bond between our two countries.

A deep friendship between America and Israel is natural, given the many political and moral values we share. But our strong diplomatic ties were far from inevitable. Historians tell us that recognition was strenuously opposed by Secretary of State George Marshall, a foreign policy realist who valued strategic interests over humanitarian concerns. In this case, Marshall was overridden by his Commander in Chief, who, following the Holocaust, saw the moral and humanitarian imperative of the Jewish people having their own state. Despite President Truman's deep respect for Marshall, it was a decision that Truman would never regret.

The U.S. Congress, it should be noted, had spoken out on the issue long before recognition was sought. As far back as 1922, Congress expressed its sympathy for a sovereign homeland for the Jewish people. It would take two more decades for that state to come about, but when it did Congress and the American people were ready once again to express overwhelming support.

In the decades since the birth of the modern State of Israel, much has changed. This desert land has in many ways become "a land that floweth with milk and honey." In this, it reflects the ingenuity and the resourcefulness of the Israeli people.

Over time, the U.S.-Israeli relationship has only grown stronger. A bond that was originally based largely on moral grounds and shared values has been fortified by shared strategic interests.

While some Arab states recognize Israel, most do not. And Israel faces numerous threats, including an existential threat from Iran.

Yet on this day of celebration, it is my fervent hope that Israel will soon celebrate its birth as a state that is recognized by all its Arab neighbors, safe from the threat of terror. Until then, I know my colleagues and I will do everything in our power to ensure that the U.S.-Israeli relationship is robust, and that the Jewish state has all it needs to defend itself.

On this anniversary, we send our best wishes and every expression of heartfelt goodwill and congratulations to the Jewish people.

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, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business for up to 1 hour, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Ohio.

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, in a little more than 2 hours, I will join members of the United States and Colombian labor organizations at a news conference speaking out against human rights abuses in Colombia, speaking out against the pending free-trade agreement that would ignore those abuses and, in some sense, excuse them. Much of the talk about this agreement centers around the violence and impunity in Colombia, especially as it relates to trade unionists. And for good reason. International organizations, human rights and religious groups look at Colombia's record with alarm and urgency. Human rights defenders, trade unionists, community leaders, and religious leaders are today, in too many cases, receiving death threats from rearmend paramilitary groups such as the Black Ea-

gles and are reeling from a new wave of violence.

Before, during, and after a country-wide rally on March 6, 2008, against paramilitary and all forms of violence, at least two march organizers were killed. Union leaders Carlo Burbano and Carmen Cecilia Carvajal were killed for simply trying to voice their views. Three other social leaders were killed in events that also were associated with the march. March organizers all over the country received death threats. One organizer's house was attacked with gunfire on February 29. Those human rights issues are serious. Yet the administration takes them in stride, barely acknowledging the Colombian culture of violence and then impunity, in too many cases, for those who committed those violent acts.

In a short while, I will stand with nearly a dozen brave women and men who have come to Washington to give witness to the horrific danger they and their loved ones face every day. These brave men and women face threats to their jobs, their families, their homes, and their lives. They are under threat because they have taken a stand. They have fought for labor and human rights in Colombia.

One message I want them to take back to Colombia is that we are not taking lightly what is happening to them. The administration may be taking it lightly, but an awful lot of people in the House and Senate and an awful lot of Americans don't take this lightly. We will push the Bush administration to take a stand against the violence occurring in Colombia instead of glossing over it.

The President must not forsake our Nation's values, our profound respect for the rule of law, and our Nation's hard-won progress on behalf of labor and human rights and basic rights. Again, the President must not forsake our Nation's values and our profound respect for the rule of law or our hard-won progress to establish labor, human, and basic rights. The President must not forsake our values or dismiss the sacrifices of so many.

The Colombian Government has taken steps to strengthen legal institutions and processes—I acknowledge that—but the bottom line is the violence is not subsiding. Murders of labor leaders continued at a pace of one per week already this year.

Some newspapers have said the violence is down—and although it was down last year, now it is back up—and we should move on with this Colombia trade agreement because the violence is down. But when there is one labor activist killed every single week, it is hard to say that is an acceptable level. That is what people in the administration are saying. That is what some newspapers are saying, that that is an acceptable level of violence. No, we should not approve a trade agreement when that kind of violence is aimed at too many labor activists.

For the sake of both our nations, the United States should not sign a trade