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Senate

(Legislative day of Wednesday, July 9, 2008)

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by guest Chaplain Rev. Dr. Patricia Bryant Harris from Marshalltown United Methodist Church, Wilmington, DE.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our most gracious God, You, who are the creator of all humankind, You, who understand all the complexities that we encounter in our everyday lives, You, who understand the challenges faced by the women and the men in this Chamber as they care for Your people throughout this Nation and around the world—God, hear our prayer on this morning.

If it is wisdom that is needed, give the wisdom of Solomon. Where there may be lack of patience, give Senators the ability to tolerate with a heart of compassion. Should there be disagreement, send Your Holy Spirit with an attitude of peace. And, above all things, may the result of all the works within this place free Your people, free many nations from hunger, from grief, from pain.

May all the works of justice and love bring glory to Your Holy Name. This is our prayer in the Name of Jesus Christ. 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 10, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule 1, 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.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Delaware is recognized.

THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, Senator BIDEN and I are delighted to welcome to the Senate today the Rev. Dr. Patricia Bryant Harris, who pastors at a church not far from where Senator BIDEN and I live in northern Delaware.

In her prayer this morning, she called on God to grant us wisdom. It is not infrequently, when our Senators meet with our own Senate Chaplain, Barry Black, that he, too, prays for us for wisdom and encourages us to ask God for wisdom as we deliberate the issues that are before us. As Senator BIDEN and the Presiding Officer know, the issues before us this week have been difficult and we needed all the wisdom we could garner.

I have been privileged to know Reverend Harris for close to two decades. She has had a career that included remarkable accomplishments in the private sector and then, somewhere in the 1990s, she decided she felt a calling from God to enter the ministry. She has done that as a Methodist pastor in our State and a series of assignments—actually an assignment that led her down to Salisbury, MD, and the Delmarva Peninsula, where she oversaw a great number of churches.

As we could tell from her prayer, she is a loving, giving, caring, patient person. She is one who has reminded me, and I think reminds her congregants in her own home church in Marshalltown, that God wants us to do two things—if nothing else, to do two things: To love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind and to love thy neighbor as thyself.

Barry Black, our Chaplain, oftentimes reminds us in the Senate—as Senators we ask how do we use our faith to help inform what we do as Senators, and he always takes us back to that second great commandment, and so does Reverend Harris, that we have an obligation to love our neighbor as ourselves.

She also reminds me and reminds those who worship at her church that we have an obligation to those who are hungry—when they are hungry we have an obligation to feed them; when they are naked we have an obligation to clothe them; when they are thirsty we have an obligation to give them to drink; when they are sick and in prison we have an obligation, regardless of what our faith is, to visit them.

Those are wonderful lessons, not just for the people in her congregations over the years; not just for those who worship in our State but wonderful lessons for us in the Senate.

It is with great pride that Senator BIDEN and I welcome Reverend Harris today to help get us started on the right foot and to do not just the Senate's business, not just the business of our country but the Lord's business as well.

With that having been said, I know Senator BIDEN is here and he wants to comment. I am delighted to welcome Senator Harris—Senator Harris? There was a Senator Harris, there may be another one someday too—I am delighted

- 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 join him in welcoming Reverend Harris today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. BIDEN. The Rev. Dr. Harris is capable of being a Senator. She has the capability and competence to do any number of jobs I can think of.

I compliment my colleague for inviting the Rev. Dr. Harris to open the Senate this morning. As you could tell by Senator CARPER's reference to Reverend Harris, Senator CARPER is a man of deep faith, as I know the Chair is and as I am. We share different faiths, but we share a common set of values, as almost all the confessional faiths do, not just the Christian faith which we share. I am a Roman Catholic, my friend is a Presbyterian, and Dr. Harris is a Methodist.

The thing about Dr. Harris—and I will not take a lot of the Senate's time—the thing about Dr. Harris that has impressed me from the many years—my Lord, I think it may be more than a couple decades. I have known her a long time. She was an incredibly well-respected figure in my State before she went to the ministry—before. Since then, she has carried on that same path of excellence that she did prior to the ministry. But if I can take a page from my colleague's book in referencing Dr. Harris's opening prayer, she talked about wisdom, which she knows we need in abundance. But she also talked about—she used the word that, if I had to describe her, would be the word I would use. She talked about tolerance. The thing that most impresses me about the Rev. Dr. Harris is her literal—not figurative, not rhetorical—commitment to the notion of tolerance.

She has such an expansive view of human nature. She has such a welcoming—not only faith but personality.

I think if I had a wish, if the Lord came down and sat at my desk and said: JOE, you get one wish. What is the one attribute you would like to pervade this Chamber? Maybe even more than wisdom, it would be tolerance.

Tolerance is not engaging in relativity. Tolerance does not mean we don't have strong beliefs and strong opinions and strong positions on faith. Tolerance is what not only our Christian religion teaches us but Judaism and Islam and Hinduism. It is about tolerance. It seems to me that is the single most lacking element in American society today.

I think if you get to know her—you are not going to get to know her, I realize that is a bit of an exaggeration—I hope you get a chance to engage Rev. Dr. Harris today. She exudes the notion of tolerance which equates with her notion of equality. It gets to what—I will conclude—my friend Tom said, the two great commandments: love thy God and love thy neighbor. This is all about loving thy neighbor. We are the single most heterogenous democracy in the history of mankind.

It is unable to function—I look at the pages wondering: What is this old guy saying? This country is unable to function without the lubricant of tolerance. And Dr. Harris embodies that.

I am honored to be here this morning with her. I, again, compliment my colleague on not only his comments but inviting Dr. Harris to be here and introducing her to all of you and to those who are watching C-SPAN this morning, watching her.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following the remarks of Senator MCCONNELL and myself, there will be an hour for debate prior to a cloture vote on the motion to disagree in the House amendments with respect to H.R. 3221, the housing reform legislation. Senators should expect a cloture vote to begin sometime around an hour from now.

Last night we reached an agreement to consider the nomination of General Petraeus and Lieutenant General Odierno at a time to be determined by me and the Republican leader. We will set a time to do those votes. There will be 20 minutes of debate, equally divided and controlled between the chairman and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, prior to votes on their confirmations.

Finally, last night we were unable to get consent to move to global AIDS legislation, and therefore it necessitated my filing cloture on the motion to proceed to the bill. I am hopeful we can reach some kind of agreement on a way to proceed.

I had a conversation on the floor with Senator KYL, a public conversation on the floor. He is hopeful and confident something can be worked out. I hope that, in fact, is the case. As I have indicated, this is one of President Bush's pieces of legislation that he is pushing. We, on this side, are ready to move forward on it. We would like to be on something that is agreed upon between Senators LUGAR and BIDEN and other people who have some interest in this matter. I hope that can be done; otherwise, we are going to have a cloture vote on that tomorrow.

I hope we can work something out. If not, I hope we would be allowed to proceed to this legislation. As I have indicated to the Republican leader, if cloture is not invoked on the motion to proceed, then that will be the end of that legislation for this work period. If necessary, we will have to come back to it in the next work period. But with time constraints we have this work period, this is our opportunity to complete that legislation.

I have been told that S. 3236 is at the desk and is due for a second reading.

It obviously is not ready yet.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The matter will be read on the next legislative day.

Mr. REID. I am sorry about that, Mr. President.

We are going to vote in a short time on cloture, a final cloture vote on this housing bill. It is so important we get this done as quickly as possible. I am disappointed in that Senator SHELBY and Senator DODD, who worked very hard, had a little tight managers' package that would have made it so much better to take to the House, but I have been told Senator DEMINT is objecting to that. As we know, in the Senate, one person can hold up things, and it is my understanding he is going to hold up things.

The reason it is important we do this and move forward on this legislation, Mr. President, is that in the news today, the Associated Press reports that the number of homeowners stung by the rout in the U.S. housing market jumped as foreclosure filings grew by more than 50 percent compared to June a year ago.

Nationwide, 252,363 homes received foreclosure notices in June. That is 1 month. Foreclosure filings increased a year ago in all but 11 States; in 39 States they went up.

The highest foreclosure rates: California, Arizona, Florida, Michigan, Nevada. This is a very desperate situation we find. It is more than the people whose homes are being foreclosed upon; it affects neighborhoods where the homes are being foreclosed upon; it affects communities where the homes are being foreclosed upon. It affects, of course, the lenders who do not want to foreclose upon the homes. It is a loss for them when they do that. It is a loss for the community where the home is located because they lose revenues, tax revenues for that home.

So foreclosure is a lose-lose situation. I hope everyone would understand the importance of it. I hope Senator DEMINT would reconsider holding up this managers' package which has been worked on for more than 2 months now by Senators DODD and SHELBY and other Senators.

But we are going to send it back to the House today, I hope today. I also hope that Senators would not require the 30 hours to be used. But we will see. They have that right, to use at least part of that 30 hours postcloture.

I am glad we are moving along. I hope we can complete our work today. If not, we will complete it tomorrow for this week.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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