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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, February 9, 2009, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2009

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by Rev. Henry Wilkins IV, from St. James United Methodist Church in Pine Bluff, AR.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Good Morning. Let us pray.

Almighty God of love and mercy, God of power and grace, today we pray for the understanding to always seek Your wisdom and justice. It is through Your authority, righteously administered, that our leaders are enabled to govern through the laws enacted for our betterment.

So we pray for Your spirit, that these Members might be properly guided by Your divine charity and by an undaunted faithfulness. In these difficult times, may a hope that springs from Your divine well of blessings sustain and direct us, give counsel and courage to the leaders of this great body and its Members. May they always seek Your purpose and the well-being of this great people. Bless the leaders of this group of Senators. Bless the President of our great Nation. Grant now Your unfathomable protection that they may lead our country with the honesty of providence and the integrity of high ideals.

We ask all this in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN 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, February 5, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN, a Senator from the State of Delaware, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. KAUFMAN 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 go back to work immediately

on H.R. 1, the Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Yesterday, we reached an agreement on a number of amendments, and that was certainly done. After we completed the voting last night, the managers of the bill moved a number of other pieces of legislation. Senator MCCAIN is going to offer the first amendment today. This will be the 14th amendment that is pending, and I think we need to dispose of all or part of these amendments before we start adding more amendments. We are happy that was the agreement made last night—for Senator MCCAIN to offer his amendment. It is an important amendment, one that needs to be debated, and we look forward to that.

However, I would tell Senators, I think we should dispose of some of these amendments before we start on any more after Senator MCCAIN. There will be plenty of time to do that. Everyone has agreed to time agreements on these amendments, is what I am told, and I am confident that is right.

STIMULUS PACKAGE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let me say a few words about the pending legislation. I hear comments all the time that this is the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression. I have asked myself: Well, is this worse than the Depression that started in 1928? The answer is no. That situation was worse than what we find ourselves in today. In that period of time, the stock market dropped 89 percent, with more than 25 percent of the population without work, and there were millions of

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



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others who were underemployed. It was an extremely difficult time in the history of our country. We do find ourselves in a very difficult position now, and we need to do what we can to work our way out of this situation so we don't have a depression but just a bad recession, and I am confident and hopeful we can do that.

Now, as I mentioned last night, we are going to work our very best to complete this legislation as soon as we can. But I was terribly disappointed to see in the newspaper this morning "GOP Reconsiders Use of Filibuster." It is a long article, but among other things it says:

A number of Republicans say they believe leadership may need to bring back the use of procedural filibusters.

Well, all filibusters are procedural, so I don't know what that means. Then, on the carryover page, the headline, "Filibusters May Be Back on Menu." And among other things, it says:

Using a procedural vote muddies the issue for the public and can allow Senators to stick with their party and block a bill while still being able to say they didn't technically vote against the legislation.

President Obama has given the Congress a charge: Help America work our way out of the economic downturn we find ourselves in. Now, there isn't a Senator, Democratic or Republican, who doesn't acknowledge we have a tremendous problem, but the question is, How are we going to work through this problem? Of course, every one of us might suggest we could write a better bill. We all have an ego, and so we think we could do a better job than President Obama and his people. But we are at a point now where we have, as I have indicated, 13 amendments pending—soon we will have 14—and I have no problem with that—but there comes a time when we need to work to complete the legislation.

Now, I am not in a hurry to finish this legislation. However, I would like to get it done because we have to get to a conference report. I am a little troubled, I have to acknowledge, by seeing that a number of Republicans now are talking about the use of the filibuster. I can understand, when we were an evenly divided Senate, that people complained because they didn't have an opportunity to offer amendments. But no one can complain about that now. So I say to everyone who is reconsidering the use of the filibuster: What more in the world could we do to be cooperative than to try to move legislation through this body? We have not tried to use the power of numbers. We simply want to get this legislation completed.

I say to everyone within the sound of my voice there are only 58 Democrats. If they decide to have a filibuster on this or block it procedurally, we still need two Republicans, and I am hopeful and confident Republicans of good will recognize the hole we are in and will help us get out of this.

I feel pretty good about the work we are trying to do. There were some im-

portant amendments dealt with, as I indicated, last night, and I have been told more are going to be offered, one by the senior Senator from Arizona and another by the junior Senator from Nevada that are in keeping with the many statements the Republican leader has made dealing with fixing the housing problems in America today. So I don't know of more that we could do to try to make the Republicans feel a part of what is going on around here.

I do think most Republicans feel we are doing fine. But remember, it only takes a few to get started again and then we have to file cloture and have a cloture vote Saturday or Sunday. I think it would be a shame to do that and wait 30 hours, as we did about 100 times in the last Congress. I hope we don't need to go through all that. We have too much to do for this country that is so vitally important to get hung up on some procedural quagmire.

I only say this because I can read. I can read and I understand what appears to be coming at us on this legislation. I hope not because it would be a real shame, seeing what our problems are, but a few Republicans are bound and determined to throw a monkey wrench into President Obama's recovery plan. That would be too bad.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

STIMULUS—DAY 3

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, briefly, I didn't see the article the majority leader is referring to, but I will say again publicly today what I said publicly yesterday and privately to him as well. We are pleased with the way the amendment process is being handled. We have many additional amendments to be offered today.

The majority leader said earlier in the week, and I certainly agree, that we know that the final vote will meet the 60-vote threshold. But regardless of what the article may have said, my view is we proceed as we did yesterday, get as many votes as we can in, and later in the day we can discuss what the endgame might be.

Now, the effects of the economic crisis are inescapable. Every day we hear about some of America's most venerable companies slashing jobs. The longer we wait, the worse this crisis could become. But action simply for the sake of action is always unwise. What is needed is the right action. The stimulus plan that Democrats in the House and Senate have proposed is not the right action.

First, it is too costly. Including interest, the proposal before us comes to a staggering \$1.3 trillion, a figure that makes most people's head spin. It includes billions in wasteful spending and it increases permanent Federal spend-

ing. Let me say that again: This bill, which is supposed to be temporary, timely, and targeted, increases permanent Federal spending by nearly \$300 billion, locking in bigger and bigger deficits every year.

Apparently, the authors of this bill couldn't resist inserting scores of long-cherished pet projects. That is how you end up with \$70 million for climate research, tens of millions to spruce up Government office buildings here in Washington, and \$20 million for the removal of fish passage barriers in a stimulus package, as I indicated earlier, that was supposed to be timely, temporary, and targeted.

The President said Sunday night we need to "trim out things that are not relevant to putting people back to work right now." It seems some in Congress haven't been listening. The bill's remaining defenders say it contains a number of projects essential to our long-term economic health. But with millions of struggling Americans learning to live with less, Congress needs to resist the temptation to load this bill with unnecessary spending that doesn't create jobs or which only touch on the problems that demand long-term planning and serious thought.

Yes, now is the time to act. But it is not the time to act foolishly. This week, Republicans have tried to improve this bill in a number of ways. One goal was to cut out the waste and bring down the total cost. So far, Democrats have rejected these efforts. Yesterday, they said no to cutting \$25 billion from the bill. That used to sound like a lot of money, but in the context of this bill, it was a relatively paltry amount. They said no to turning off spending on newly created programs, and they said no to turning off spending once the economy recovers.

In fact, throughout this entire debate, the two parties seem to have been guided by two different philosophies. The Democrats, it seems, decided on a random dollar amount of about \$900 billion and have spent most of their time either defending it or adding to it. Republicans, on the other hand, have thought all along that what we needed to do was to identify the core problem first and then see how much money it would cost to fix it.

In our view, and in the view of most economists, the root problem of the current crisis is housing—housing. It just so happens that fixing that problem would cost a lot less than \$1 trillion. In his op-ed in this morning's Washington Post, the President wrote that in this debate we can "place good ideas ahead of old ideological battles, and a sense of purpose above the same narrow partisanship." I couldn't agree more. But this bill doesn't do either one of those things.

Republicans remain committed to working with the President and with our friends on the other side to address this crisis. We agree something must be done, but it will require a lot more