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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, we lift our hearts to You, invoking Your blessings upon this day. Lord, You have made us one in our need of You, one in our yearning for strength beyond the self, and one in our quest for Your peace. Cleanse our hearts and open our minds that Your truth may enter our lives. Today, give our lawmakers the strength to do Your will. Help them to serve one another so that they may reflect Your spirit and goodness. Make them so aware of Your presence that they will learn Your wisdom.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN 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 24, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. SHAHEEN 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. Madam President, today following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 160, the DC Voting Rights legislation, with the time divided until 11 a.m. between the two leaders or their designees. The designation we have is, of course, Senator LIEBERMAN, the chairman of the committee. At 11 a.m. the Senate will proceed to a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the bill.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 to allow for the weekly caucus luncheons. We will likely not have a vote on the nomination of SOLIS, a cloture vote. It is my understanding that Republicans have almost cleared it. They have one more Senator to hear from to set this up. So there will be a vote at 4:30 from the time after the caucus. We are waiting for a phone call. Staff is waiting for a phone call. So what we would do if, in fact, that is granted, we would work until 4:30 p.m. today on the Solis nomination. People can come and talk on that however they feel. At 4:30 we would have a vote on her confirmation.

Now, that vote will be completed shortly before 5 o'clock. Chairman LIEBERMAN will be the person who will be managing this bill. If people want to amend this, they have that right to do that. I have spoken at some length to the Republican leader. We have to get off this legislation as soon as we can, because a week from this Friday, March 6, the funding for the Govern-

ment runs out. So we have to pass the bill that will be coming from the House today, or at the latest tomorrow. We have to get that passed.

We have scheduled a "no-vote day" next Friday. We would like to keep that. If, however, we see that this appropriations bill is running into trouble, we are going to have to cancel that because we have to continue working on the legislation until we complete it. But there should be no problem in that regard.

I understand people want to offer amendments. That is fine. Let them offer amendments. But this bill has been around for a long time. It is now on the Web—people can look at it—as of last night. It has been around for a long time. We have had Republican input, both in the House and in the Senate. It has been scrubbed very closely. So I hope everyone would look at the legislation, determine what amendments they want to offer and recognize the deadline we have next Friday.

THE ECONOMY

Members of Congress and all Americans look forward to hearing from President Obama tonight in his first address in the House Chamber. After we passed as a Congress, and he signed, the economic recovery plan into law, the President can confidently tell the American people that we have begun filling with dirt the deep economic ditch he inherited. That is especially so with the announcement he made in Mesa, AZ last Wednesday about the housing crisis.

Throughout his campaign, and now the first weeks of his Presidency, President Obama has told it to us very straight. He has not sugar-coated anything. He has not sugar-coated the challenges we face or tried to paint a rosy picture of a rapid recovery.

He will surely call upon us to lend a hand, to put politics aside and continue working together, not as two parties but as one Congress for one country. In

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



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the early days of the 111th Congress, we have done that.

With the good-will and earnest hard work of Democrats and Republicans alike, we passed a historic wilderness bill, a lands bill that has been called the most significant environmental legislation in a quarter of a century.

We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act to help employees fight cases of wage discrimination and ensure the principle of equal pay for equal work.

We passed the lands bill on a bipartisan basis. We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act on a bipartisan basis. We passed a new Children's Health Insurance Program to provide health coverage to millions of low-income families, children of those families. We did that on a bipartisan basis. We passed President Obama's economic recovery plan on a bipartisan basis, a plan to begin creating jobs, investing in our workforce, and providing tax relief to working families.

As I have traveled around the country these last 10 days or so, people said: Well, that was not bipartisan. It was. We had Governors from Florida to California, Republican Governors and Governors in between, being cheerleaders for this legislation. The day before the legislation passed in Florida, conservative Republican Governor Crist introduced President Obama, telling the people of Florida that this legislation was a must-pass for that State.

People said: Well, what happened in the Senate? We got one more Republican vote than we needed. We had Republican input. It was a bipartisan bill. We may not have had a lot of Republican Senators voting for this legislation, but there was Republican input. Senator VOINOVICH from Ohio was involved in this legislation to the last hour that we worked on this. He asked for certain things in this legislation and, frankly, he got them. It was a bipartisan group of Senators, led by, on our side, Senators NELSON and LIEBERMAN, on the Republican side by Senators SNOWE, COLLINS, and SPECTER. So it was bipartisan.

I appreciate the work we have been able to accomplish in this Senate up to this time. We are moving America forward. We are in the early rounds of this fight we have. Without further steps, our economic crisis will grow worse, not better. But there are going to be further steps.

I heard on the radio this morning a tremendous interview about a person who was selling cars. He said, there is no question about it, that the stimulus is going to help him sell cars. I believe that is the case, that all through our economy, we are going to see improvement.

That is why all of us—I repeat, Democrats and Republicans, Members of Congress—all Americans need to pick up that shovel and keep filling our economic ditch with dirt, so we can climb out of it. We and the Obama administration, we as Congress, and our White House, will help millions of

American families keep their homes, stem the tide of falling home values for the tens of millions of families who have done nothing wrong yet continue to see their home equity disappear.

We will implement banking reform to begin to unfreeze wheels of credit once again so that families can buy cars, send their children to college, and businesses can manage inventory and hire new workers, all while implementing new oversight, protecting the American people from any future banking crisis.

We will pass a budget, and we will do it soon, that reflects the priorities of America's working families and safeguards every dollar of taxpayer funds. Throughout this recession, American people have been bombarded with bad news, but they remain patient for the tough choices and hard days still to come, and feel good about the progress that has been made.

The people of my State, Nevada, a State hit harder than most any other, understand this turnaround will not happen tomorrow or the next day, but they expect that Congress will put progress over politics in every decision we make.

Yesterday, President Obama said it all when he said: It is the obligation of the majority party to be inclusive. And he is right about that. But he also said: It is the obligation of the minority party to be constructive. Inclusive and constructive, if we keep those words in mind, these critical next weeks of legislating will provide us with an opportunity to again fill this economic ditch that has been dug these last many years and begin building the mountains once again to get us out of there.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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

WELCOME BACK

Mr. McCONNELL. I wanted to briefly welcome everyone back from the Lincoln recess. People had a constructive period of time to interact with their constituents or to do other important business.

Listening carefully to what the majority leader had to say in terms of the way forward, I will be happy to continue to work with him to move us in the direction he wishes to take us in terms of the scheduling of the Senate over the next week or 10 days.

Madam President, we are now cleared to do the consent agreement.

Mr. REID. I appreciate that very much.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion with respect to the Solis nomination be withdrawn.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I now ask unanimous consent that upon the conclusion of the cloture vote with respect to the motion to proceed to S. 160, the Senate proceed to executive session as previously provided under a previous order and the Senate then debate the nomination of HILDA SOLIS to be the Secretary of Labor until 4:30 today, with the time equally divided and controlled between the leaders or their designees, and that Senator MURRAY be in control of the majority time; further, that at 4:30 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to vote on the confirmation of the nomination; that upon confirmation, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, no further motions be in order, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HOUSE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 2009— MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 160, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A motion to proceed to the bill (S. 160) to provide the District of Columbia a voting seat and the State of Utah an additional seat in the House of Representatives.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Madam President, I would first ask unanimous consent, since the leaders have consumed—quite eloquently, I might add—15 minutes, that the hour run from this minute until 11:15 so that both sides have the full hour and that the cloture vote on S. 160 occur at 11:15 a.m.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I overlooked a very important part of today. It is my understanding it is the birthday of the manager of this legislation. So all of us in the Senate wish the great Senator from the State of Connecticut happy birthday.

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

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Well, the Senator from the State of Connecticut has