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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 2, 2009, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2009

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable HARRY REID, a Senator from the State of Nevada.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O Lord our God, great and eternal, you keep Your promises to those who serve You. Consecrate this day with Your presence the way our feet should go. Kindle in the hearts of our Senators a true love of You and guide them with Your wisdom. May the faith they confess with their lips put such courage and hope in their hearts that they may live each day in the spirit of Your love. Cleanse them, Lord, from every thought displeasing to Your goodness, that with pure hearts, clear minds, and calm hope they may honor You. Help them to remember that nothing can separate them from Your love.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable HARRY REID 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, February 27, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF MERKLEY, a Senator from the State of Oregon, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MERKLEY 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 remarks, if any, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

We are going to move to the omnibus spending bill, which is a bill to fund the Government until October 1. The committees of jurisdiction in the House and the Senate, the Appropriations Committees, have worked very hard to come up with bipartisan legislation. No one can ever suggest there was not participation by Democrats and Republicans on this legislation. We hope to be able to move to that Monday. We are going to move to it Monday. We hope to do it without having to have a cloture vote. If we cannot get consent to move to the matter within the next few hours, we will file cloture

on the motion to proceed to that bill. That will occur early in the morning on Monday. We have to do that so that we can have the 30 hours run as quickly as we can. We have to finish the bill next week because the funding runs out on March 6. So we hope that can be accomplished. If we can move to the bill, then we would leave Monday for the opportunity for people to speak about the legislation.

The bill would be managed, of course, by Senators INOUE and COCHRAN, two of the most experienced legislators we have. Monday would give us an opportunity for people to offer amendments, and we would be able to have those votes prior to the regular caucus luncheon on Tuesday. So we will await as to what happens during the day to determine what is going to happen on Monday. We could have a Monday morning cloture vote if we cannot get permission to move to that. If we do get permission, then we will have no votes on Monday and have that for debate and offering amendments, no votes.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar Nos. 19, 20, and all nominations on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force and Navy; that the nominations

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



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S2577

be confirmed, en bloc, the motions to reconsider be laid on the table, en bloc, that no further motions be in order; that upon confirmation, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session; and that any statements relating to any of these nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

IN THE NAVY

The following named officer for appointment to the grade indicated in the United States Navy while serving as the Attending Physician to the Congress, under Article II, Section 2, Clause 2 of the Constitution:

To be rear admiral

Capt. Brian P. Monahan

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., section 624:

To be rear admiral

Rear Adm. (lh) Michael A. Brown

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE AIR FORCE

PN78 AIR FORCE nominations (86) beginning BRIAN D. AKINS, and ending JEFFREY J. WIEGAND, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 9, 2009.

IN THE NAVY

PN79 NAVY nominations (24) beginning CHRISTOPHER M. ANDREWS, and ending EZEKIEL J. WETZEL, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of February 9, 2009.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will return to legislative session.

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, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I understand the Senate is in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

IRAQ TROOP WITHDRAWAL

Mr. MCCAIN. I rise to address the President's plan to withdraw American troops from Iraq that he will announce today in Camp Lejeune, NC, as has been widely reported in the media.

Yesterday afternoon, I participated in a White House briefing with other Members of Congress, during which the President and his national security team described the contours of a plan to withdraw troops from Iraq. As he described it, this plan would aim to remove the bulk of combat troops by August of 2010, approximately 19 months, leaving up to 50,000 troops in place. That is a little over a third of the present troop level in Iraq. Most combat forces would remain in place for the duration of this year, ahead of national elections likely to take place in December. National elections in December are of the utmost importance. To have security and the ability of the Iraqi people to take part in that election is a vital part of the progress Iraq will make toward freedom and democracy. The President noted that he reserves the right to revisit the timeline currently envisioned based on conditions on the ground.

It is encouraging that the dramatic success of the surge strategy has enabled us to move from a discussion about whether the United States could bear the catastrophic consequences of failure in Iraq to planning the way in which to consolidate the success. Thanks to the leadership of GEN David Petraeus, Ambassador Ryan Crocker, GEN Ray Odierno, and the many brave men and women who have served under them, the failing situation in Iraq has been arrested and reversed.

It is important to point out that the President's plan is not without risk. We have not yet completed the mission in Iraq, and the gains we have made there remain fragile. We will need to be cautious as we withdraw troops so as not to jeopardize these achievements and listen closely to commanders on the ground as the administration determines the pace of withdrawals. The greatest risk will be present ahead of the December elections, and conditions could worsen before or even after they take place.

With these factors in mind, I believe the President's withdrawal is a reasonable one. The plan is reasonable. Given the gains in Iraq and the requirements to send additional troops to Afghanistan, together with the significant number of troops who will remain in Iraq and the President's willingness to reassess based on conditions on the ground, I am cautiously optimistic that the plan, as laid out by the President, can lead to success.

The American people should be clear. The President's plan, even after the end of its withdrawal timeline is reached, will leave in place up to 50,000

U.S. troops. All will be in harm's way. Some will continue to conduct combat operations. They will play a vital role in consolidating and extending the remarkable progress our military has made since early 2007. That is why I believe the administration should aim to keep the full complement of 50,000, as briefed by Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen, and not succumb to pressures, political or otherwise, to make deeper or faster cuts in our force levels. The President's plan, as briefed yesterday, is one that can keep us on the right path in Iraq.

I worry, however, about statements made by a number of our colleagues indicating that, for reasons wholly apart from the requirement to secure our aims in Iraq, we should aim at a troop presence much lower than 50,000. We have spent enormous amounts of American blood and treasure in Iraq. We all know that. After all the tragic losses of life, after the hundreds of billions of dollars spent, after all the other costs our country has absorbed as a result of the conduct of the war, we are finally on a path to success. Let us have no crisis of confidence now. Instead, let us welcome home our fighting men and women, not only thanking them for serving in Iraq, not just for ending the war in Iraq but thanking them for bringing us victory in Iraq.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for such time as I may consume.

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

FINANCIAL BAILOUTS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, this morning's newspapers, once again, chronicle the difficulty that exists in this country. There is obviously a financial crisis, a collapse of the banking system, particularly on Wall Street.

Just to name two, today's paper says there is a place in the budget that is a holding pattern for a potential \$750 billion of additional funding that might be necessary for the big bank bailouts in this country. We also know from the newspapers and from news this morning that Citigroup has reached some sort of a deal with the Federal Government in order to make Citigroup viable. So each day we see more and more discussion about these kinds of issues. It begs the question about who is doing what? What do we know about all of this? How open is this? How much