



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 111<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 155

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2009

No. 39

## Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. 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. Father John McCormick, St. James Cathedral, Orlando, FL.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, our Father, as men and women called to honor the Nation that You have called us to live in by our generous and public life of service, strengthen our sense of gratitude for the many blessings with which we have been endowed. We stand in this Chamber, surrounded by the many monuments and burial sites that honor all the men and women who, throughout the passing of time, have made the ultimate sacrifice that has enabled our country to be a beacon of light and goodness for all peoples.

As we begin this day of work in Your kingdom, extend Your hand of blessing and protection over the Members of this body. Hold close those who serve with honor and sacrifice in the military services and their family members whose sacrifice mirrors that of their loved ones. Bless and protect us all. Make us ever grateful for what You have done in and through each one of us. 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, March 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 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.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following our remarks, there will be a period of 1 hour for Senators to speak in morning business. I have had numerous requests this week by Republicans and Democrats to speak on issues they want to address. I hope they now will come.

Following morning business, the Senate will be back on the appropriations bill we have worked on this week. I filed cloture on the bill last night and announced to the Senate that we will continue work on this until we finish it one way or the other. I hope we work out something to vote tonight. If we can't, we will do it in the morning. The filing deadline for first-degree amendments is 1 p.m. today. Rollcall votes in relation to pending amendments, of which we now have six, are expected to occur throughout the day. As those who were here last night will remember, I indicated that we had covered a wide universe of amendments. I had spoken to Senator KYL, the assistant Republican leader, and a number of

other Senators—Mr. CRAPO and Mr. INHOFE—who wanted to offer amendments. We agreed to do those. We have six amendments pending. We will see how we do disposing of amendments today. I hope we can move through them fairly quickly. I look forward to doing what I can to finish as quickly as we can.

### MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 146

Mr. REID. Mr. President, H.R. 146 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 146) to establish a battlefield acquisition grant program for the acquisition and protection of nationally significant battlefields and associated sites of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I see the Senator from Florida here. A constituent of his was here this morning to give the opening prayer.

I have a couple of consent agreements, I say to my friend the majority leader, that I believe are objected to on his side.

Mr. REID. I might surprise you.

Mr. McCONNELL. I will withhold on propounding these requests because I

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



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know the Senator from Florida would like to offer observations about his guest.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

#### WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I was so proud to have my pastor and very good friend deliver the opening prayer. Father McCormick and I have known each other since 1983, when he first came to our parish church of St. James in Orlando. He is a product of Dublin, Ireland, but he became a proud citizen in 1973, much as I did in 1971. He has not only been a tremendous source of faith and inspiration to me and my family and, more importantly, perhaps, my children, but he has also been a tremendous advocate for the poor and needy in our community. He does tremendous work overseas as well in a program called Food for the Poor where the Caribbean nations and Latin America have benefited greatly from his generosity and hard work.

There are a couple of things I must point out. He has also developed a love for American football since coming here. But not being perfect, he has chosen the Cowboys over the Redskins. And then in a further imperfection that may be less forgivable, he has chosen the Gators over the Seminoles in Florida. I frequently have been a patient listener as he, on Sunday mornings, regales about the Gators and beats up on the Seminoles. Today is my day for revenge. I am awfully proud to have him here. He is a wonderful friend. I know he has looked forward to this day.

I thank the Chair for the courtesy of allowing me to say a couple words about my dear friend and pastor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we join the Senator from Florida in welcoming his pastor this morning. I am pleased to see that he will be forgiven for his sin of advocating the success of the Cowboys and the Gators.

#### UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUESTS— H.R. 1105

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator GRASSLEY, the ranking Republican on the Finance Committee, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate resumes consideration of H.R. 1105, the omnibus bill, the pending amendments be set aside and, on behalf of Senator GRASSLEY, it be in order to call up amendment No. 628, which strikes section 102 related to IRS private debt collection.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this is a topical issue. From news accounts this morning, I heard it mentioned a couple of times. I will be happy to work with Senator GRASSLEY, see how we work

through these amendments. I think it is something we could do. I know he would agree to a reasonable time period. We will see what we can do to work that out. For this time, I object, but I hope we can work something out.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator SESSIONS, I ask unanimous consent to take up amendment No. 604, which relates to a 5-year reauthorization of the E-Verify Program.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am not as familiar with that as Senator SESSIONS. I know he has talked about that on a number of occasions. I will be happy to have my staff look at this, and hopefully we can work our way through the amendments we have. I know Senator SESSIONS feels strongly about this. I hope we can work out something and have him come and present this amendment. But for this morning, I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum and ask unanimous consent that the time be charged equally.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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.

#### 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 Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from North Dakota.

#### HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, last evening President Obama had invited the chairs and ranking members of committees in both the House and Senate to the White House for dinner. I wanted to mention that the opportunity for Republicans and Democrats, both chairs and ranking members of committees, to spend some time with the President was very important, a very important signal by the President to the Congress that he wants to work with everybody. He didn't give a speech. He and his wife, the First Lady, welcomed the Members of Congress. I was pleased to be there. My point is,

this President is trying to reach out and change the culture, which is so important.

This afternoon, I have been invited by the President to join a number of my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, to go to the White House for a health care summit. Once again, the President is reaching out to see if there are ways for Republicans and Democrats, who work for the same masters—that is, American interests and the American people—to come together and find ways to reach significant policy goals. Do we have a need to address our health care problems? Absolutely. We spend much more than any other group of people on the face of the Earth on health care. Our costs are much greater than anyone else's, yet the outcomes are not. We rank 41st in life expectancy despite the fact that we spend far more than anyone else in the world on health care. Health care costs are accelerating. They are injuring businesses paying for health care insurance for employees. Health care costs are strangling family budgets. Health care costs are hurting Government, which has to pay for Medicare and Medicaid.

We have to get a handle on it.

The President is saying: Let's try to find a sensible, thoughtful way to reform health care. A good start is to invite a group of Republicans and Democrats from the Congress, a group of people from the private sector, from the health care industry, from the consumer side, supporters and opponents of various kinds of reforms and changes, to a summit at the White House to say: Let's talk. Let's try to figure out how we address these issues.

I commend the President because we have to change the culture. This cannot possibly continue to be an "us versus them" Congress or a Congress and Presidency that is deeply divided.

This country faces very serious challenges. The fact is, we have to work together to solve them. The very serious financial challenge, the crisis we face, is going to require the best energies all of us have and the best ideas of all of us. Included in the financial crisis is what health care costs are doing to the economy. That is why the President has indicated that one of the first issues we have to tackle, even as we try to stabilize the economy, is to address the issue of the burgeoning cost of health care. So I commend the President, and I look forward to the meeting today at the White House. I think it will be a good start to at least begin discussing health care costs.

I want to talk about one piece of health care costs because yesterday Senator SNOWE from Maine, myself, Senator MCCAIN from Arizona, my colleague Senator STABENOW from Michigan—we announced, on behalf of 25 Senators, a piece of legislation we introduced yesterday dealing with prescription drug costs. One of the fastest rising items of health care costs is the cost of prescription drugs.

Now, we have introduced this legislation before, and it has successfully