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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, whose inward presence means cleansing, forgiveness, peace, and power, dissolve the barriers that keep our souls from You. Remove from our lawmakers the self-sufficiency that ignores their need of You and make their hearts receptive to Your plans. Lord, bestow upon them special gifts of wisdom and understanding that they may uphold what is right and follow what is true. Increase their faith, strengthen their judgment, and quicken their zeal for integrity and honor. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on them. Radiate Your hope through their labors, as they expect to see Your best for our Nation and world.

We pray in Your sacred Name. 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, April 2, 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 Democratic leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the budget resolution. Of the statutory time allotted to the budget resolution, 1½ hours remains. Upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate will proceed to a series of votes in relation to the pending amendments and any other amendments offered to the budget resolution. We expect those votes will occur around 11:30 a.m., give or take a few minutes.

Under an agreement reached last night, there will be 2 minutes for debate equally divided prior to each vote. Each vote after the first vote will be 10 minutes in duration. Senators should expect rollcall votes throughout the day and maybe even into the evening. Once we start, we have to finish this budget resolution. I encourage Senators to stay here. The first vote will be 15 minutes. After that, there will be 10-minute votes, and we are going to enforce that time. If Members are not here, they will not be counted. The clerks are going to be instructed to turn the votes in very quickly.

JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let me take a minute to say something because of my friend, JOHN MCCAIN. Every day I

come and open the Senate, we give the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. We do that because of the country and what that flag stands for. But I was struck today having JOHN MCCAIN in the Chamber. Really, he is representative of what that flag is all about—someone who not only comes from a lineage of people who have served our country, but this good man has served our country in so many different ways.

We came to Washington together in 1982. We came to the Senate together in 1986. I can remember while I was still in the House of Representatives I attended a prayer breakfast, and Senator MCCAIN was the presenter. I cannot do justice and I will not even try to describe the presentation he made about a Christmas celebration they had when he was a prisoner of war. He spent so much time in solitary confinement. He could have left the prison much earlier. He would not do that because his comrades were still there.

We take a lot of things for granted. Even though JOHN MCCAIN and I have disagreed on occasion on things political, one thing that will always be in my mind and my heart is people such as JOHN MCCAIN who represent what our country is all about.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the majority leader said it well. No one has done more for his country than JOHN MCCAIN. We are all privileged to be able to serve with him in the Senate.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I thank both leaders. I thank my friend from Nevada. He and I came to the House of Representatives together many years ago. I thank him for his leadership. As

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



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he mentioned, we have strong disagreements from time to time, but we have always made a strong effort—and I think successfully—to remain respectful of each other's views. I appreciate his kind words today and that of the Republican leader. I thank them.

THE BUDGET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, anyone who turned on C-SPAN2 over the past 2 weeks could be excused for wondering what has been going on here in the Capitol. Most people outside Washington do not know much about reconciliation instructions or points of order. But behind the legislative lingo, an extremely important debate has been taking place on the Senate floor. It is a debate about the future of our country. And in the course of that debate, two very different philosophies have emerged. On one side are those who think American lives will improve in direct proportion to the size of the Federal Government; that the answer to all the challenges we face as a nation is to just simply follow Europe, where people look to the government for almost everything from the cradle to the grave. On the other side are those who think Government has an important role to play in keeping people safe and creating the conditions in which Americans can succeed and that Government can also play a role in helping people weather temporary or permanent troubles and even to provide temporary help to private institutions if the failure of those institutions imperils the well-being of the whole.

But in all these areas, the role of Government is limited. Liberty and freedom are primary. The first group defends the administration's budget proposal which we first saw a couple of months ago and which outlines the administration's vision for America over the next several years. The second group has warned about the consequences of the budget, which calls for a dramatic and potentially irreversible shift of our Nation to the left in the areas of health care, education, and private enterprise, and which in order to get there imposes the biggest tax hike in history, massive spending, and a titanic amount of debt our children and grandchildren will have to pay back.

This is a debate that has been worth tuning in to because its outcome affects absolutely everyone. So I would like to highlight just a couple of things we have seen over the course of this debate that everyone should know.

The first thing people should know is the one thing that many already do know: The administration's budget simply taxes too much, spends too much, and borrows too much at a moment, interestingly enough, when we can least afford it. There is good reason to believe the American people agree. Several of the amendments Republicans have proposed adding to the budget as a way of protecting Amer-

ican businesses and families have been approved by wide, bipartisan margins.

The American people cannot afford new taxes, and that is why Senators approved the Johanns amendment yesterday, an amendment which forces an open debate on the budget's proposal for a massive new national energy tax that would hit every American family by up to \$3,100 a year. As the senior Senator from Missouri put it on Tuesday, "Families are struggling to make ends meet, unable to pay their mortgage, bills or debts . . . We should oppose an energy tax."

The junior Senator from Nevada also knows Americans cannot afford having their taxes raised, especially in a recession. That is why he offered an amendment yesterday that would make it harder to raise taxes on middle-class couples. As he put it, "Americans are struggling to pay for life's essentials . . . What we should be discussing is extending tax relief," not raising taxes. This is common sense. His amendment passed.

The junior Senator from Texas knows that business owners cannot afford a tax hike. That is why he offered an amendment that would make it harder for Democrats to raise taxes on small businesses. This is also common sense. His amendment also was adopted overwhelmingly.

Americans know the trouble they get into when they spend money they do not have, and they do not want Government to spend money it does not have. That is why the junior Senator from Alabama came to the floor Monday and lamented the lack of fiscal responsibility in this budget.

The American people are worried about the size of the national debt, and they are worried about a budget that doubles that debt in 5 years and triples it in 10—a budget that adds more debt in 5 years than the entire debt accumulated under every President from George Washington through George W. Bush. The senior Senator from Tennessee is worried about the size of the debt too, and that is why he offered an amendment to keep the growth of that debt relative to the GDP in check. As he put it on the Senate floor on Tuesday:

This is not a matter of not letting the horse get out of the barn. This recognizes that the horse is already out of the barn and we're trying to put a fence around him before he gets into the next country.

Democrats rejected that amendment too.

Throughout this debate, Americans have started to focus a lot on the national debt, and they have heard some troubling things.

If they were listening Tuesday, they would have heard a very illuminating discussion on the topic between the senior Senator from Tennessee and the senior Senator from New Hampshire. The senior Senator from New Hampshire said that at the end of this budget, every American household will have an obligation relative to the Federal

debt of \$133,000—\$133,000 per household. The senior Senator from Tennessee asked who holds that debt. The answer, of course, is that China is the primary holder of that debt, along with Russia and oil-producing nations in the Middle East.

Americans are worried about more Government spending, higher taxes, and higher debt that we may never be able to repay, and a lot of groups that represent these Americans are amassing against these things. Groups opposed to this budget include the National Association of Manufacturers, the Tax Relief Coalition, the American Conservative Union, Americans for Prosperity, Citizens Against Government Waste, the Club for Growth, the Council on National Policy, Associated Builders and Contractors, Independent Electric Contractors, International Foodservice Distributors Administration, and the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors. These groups represent millions of small business owners, independent contractors, and millions of ordinary Americans who do not want to see their dreams fade away because of someone else's vision of what Government should do for them.

Americans want the freedom to do for themselves, and they worry freedom may slip away if this budget passes in its current form. They cannot afford a new national energy tax that could cost every American household up to \$3,100 a year. They do not want to have to pay for 250,000 bureaucrats who will be needed just to spend the money this budget wants to spend. And they do not want their children literally buried in debt. What Americans want is for Republicans and Democrats to work together to craft a budget that let's them keep their hard-earned wages, spends their tax dollars wisely, and does not saddle their children and grandchildren with debt. That is what they have not seen this week.

What they also will not see are the backdoor negotiations where the chairman of the Budget Committee, the senior Senator from North Dakota, has said he will strip out many of these good amendments we have adopted this week and where some budget writers intend to fast track a massive new energy tax even though we passed an amendment to keep that from happening. Americans oppose this energy tax. And if the senior Senator from North Dakota has as much influence over the outcome of the budget as I hope he does, then he will make sure that the will of the Senate and the American people is reflected in the final product. I hope he will make sure that a new national energy tax costing American households up to \$3,100 a year is not rushed through Congress on a party-line vote.

So the drama that has unfolded in the Senate put two very different philosophies on display. It showed Republicans fighting to keep our Nation from an irreversible drift to the left, and it showed some Democrats agreeing to