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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, by whose Providence our forebears brought forth a nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to equal justice for all, give the Members of this body that same spirit as they seek to make a better world. May this quest for justice motivate them to eliminate those things that obstruct the coming of Your kingdom. Lord, each day may they give primacy to prayer, seeking Your guidance as they strive to make decisions that honor You. Guide them by Your higher wisdom so that they will not give in to disappointment, doubt or despair.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM WEBB 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, January 26, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator

from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WEBB thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period for the transaction of morning business until 4 p.m. today. Senators will be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

At 4 p.m., the Senate will turn to executive session to consider the nomination of Timothy Geithner to be Secretary of the Treasury, with the time until 6 p.m. equally divided and controlled between the chair and ranking member of the Finance Committee, Senators BAUCUS and GRASSLEY, or their designees. At 6 p.m., the Senate will proceed to vote on the confirmation of the Geithner nomination.

Following executive session, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009.

At approximately 12:30 p.m. tomorrow, KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND will take the oath of office and become a Senator from the State of New York.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in the last Congress, the Senate passed an extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program with an overwhelming majority of 69 votes. In a Congress too often marred by partisan divide, this strong vote last session in favor of healthy children briefly stood as a bright example of the good that comes from Gov-

ernment—putting people ahead of politics.

Regrettably, President Bush chose to veto our bipartisan children's health legislation and because of a few too many loyal House Republicans in a narrowly divided House, that veto was upheld.

In Nevada, low-income families have been forced to put their children on waiting lists for future health coverage. In the year and a half since the veto, millions of children have been shut out of regular checkups, medicine, and hospital trips.

From coast to coast, more than 4 million children who would have been covered if our legislation had passed are not getting regular checkups or the care they need when they get sick.

Jeopardizing the health of American children is not a political victory for anyone. It is a loss for everyone, and it is long past time we corrected it.

This week, we have the chance, beginning tonight, to keep our promise to America's children by passing a new Children's Health Insurance Program. With the support of Democrats and Republicans in Congress and a new President in the White House poised to sign this bill into law, we can ensure that more low-income families can provide their children with the medical care they need to grow up strong and healthy.

Our legislation give States the resources and ability to insure an additional 4 million children. Our legislation covers the lowest income children first by giving States new tools to enroll uninsured children who qualify for Medicaid and rewarding States for successful enrollments in the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Our legislation doesn't just provide more children with health care but also improves the quality of care they receive.

In Nevada and across America, the number of uninsured children is rising. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that for every 1-point rise in our

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



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national unemployment rate, 700,000 more children join the ranks of the uninsured. In Nevada and across America, the number of uninsured is rising every day. The number of uninsured children is rising every day, which makes it seem so unbearable for America to have so many uninsured children. The number of children who are not getting checkups, medicine, and emergency care is rising every day.

This week, the Senate will engage in an open, fair, and lively debate on this critical legislation. There will surely be points where Republicans and Democrats disagree on specifics. Democrats would have written this legislation to cover more children, but we compromised to create a bill Republicans would support.

Republicans may raise points of concern during the debate, and Democrats will consider their differing views. But during this debate, we should remember that the overwhelming majority of Democrats and Republicans agree on the fundamentals of this legislation.

I look forward to a productive debate, and I look forward to President Obama signing into law an extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program that will allow children of Nevada and all 50 States to get the care they need and deserve.

RESERVATION OF LEADER OF 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 now proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business until 4 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Tennessee.

BIPARTISAN COOPERATION

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, on Friday, at the National Press Club, Senate Republican leader MITCH McCONNELL delivered an important address that everyone concerned about the future of our country ought to read.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks Senator McCONNELL's speech.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, Senator McCONNELL congratulated the President for reminding many in Washington, including many Republicans, that the American people want their leaders to work together to solve problems, not to set traps. He suggested that among the issues on which we

could cooperate are reducing the national debt, energy independence, and lowering taxes. Specifically, Senator McCONNELL urged the President to follow up on his pledge to put the power of the Democratic majorities to work on entitlement spending, the automatic spending that threatens within just 9 years to consume nearly 70 percent of the Federal budget and to create a national debt that equals our Nation's annual gross domestic product. Already, each American's share of the national debt is \$35,000.

In order to do that, Senator McCONNELL said the President will have to reject the hyperpartisanship that exists in some quarters of Congress and engage Republicans on the merits of our ideas.

Senator McCONNELL said that as Republican leader of the Senate, he would make this a firm principle of his dealings with the new administration, and he said that if the new President follows up on his promise to address entitlement spending, Democrats can expect more consideration from the Republicans than the last President received from them.

This is a major statement by an experienced Senate leader who has proven he knows how to stop bad legislation but is offering to go to work with the new President to shape and improve good and needed legislation, if the new majorities will meet Republicans on the merits of our ideas.

Some time ago, Senator McCONNELL invited President Obama to come to the Senate and meet with Senate Republicans. And we all hope that soon he may do that.

The kind of cooperation Senator McCONNELL talked about in his speech on Friday did not happen often in the last few years. It did on energy, it did on American competitiveness, to some degree on foreign intelligence issues. Earlier, it happened on education and some other issues. But when President Bush, for example, made reforming Social Security the major thrust of his second term, Democrats said no. Neither side moved off their position, and so deficit spending and our national debt kept going up.

If any subject over the last few years deserved cooperation, it was the war in Iraq. Senator Salazar and I assembled 17 Senators, 9 Democrats, and 8 Republicans, and there were 63 Members of the House almost evenly divided between the parties who sponsored a resolution to set as a goal for the country to end the war on the principles recommended by the Iraq Study Group.

President Bush would not support our legislation. The Democratic leaders refused to bring it to a vote. I remember telling both President Bush and Senator REID I believed we were the only ones who actually united them on Iraq. They were both against what we were trying to do. But if either President Bush had supported our resolution or if Senator REID had allowed it to come to a vote, I believe the

resolution would have been enacted, sending a message to our troops, to our country, and to our enemy that we were united in bringing an honorable and successful end to that conflict.

Ironically, we are now headed in Iraq toward a conclusion that now seems to have the general support of both President Bush and President Obama, presided over by the same Secretary of Defense, who has served them both. That is approximately the same result that was recommended by the Iraq Study Group.

That is not just my opinion. Toward the end of last year I asked both Secretary Gates and Secretary Rice whether the path toward conclusion of the Iraq war that was agreed upon by the Iraqis and the United States and is now basically being recommended by President Obama, whether that was the path recommended by the Iraq Study Group, and each of them said yes.

There is a lesson here for the new administration. Technically, President Bush did not need Congress's approval to wage the war in Iraq. He is the Commander in Chief. But if he had won that congressional approval for the last 2 years of the war, that would have made the war easier, perhaps more successful, and certainly the Bush Presidency more successful.

Technically, President Obama, with large Democratic majorities in Congress, does not need Republicans to pass most legislation. "We won the election; we will write the bill," said Speaker PELOSI. That is the way to pass many bills, but as President Bush found out, it is not the way to have a successful Presidency.

The President and the Democratic majorities on their own can pass many bills, and we Republicans, with 41 or 42 votes in the Senate, can block some things and slow down almost anything. But most of us Republicans agree with Senator McCONNELL: That is not what we are here to do. And what President Obama said in his inaugural address is that is not the kind of Presidency he wishes to have.

The new President is off to a good start in his relationships with Republican Members of the Senate. Even the Senate Democratic majority is showing some encouraging signs of letting the Senate function as it is supposed to function, as a guardian against the tyranny of the majority, warned of by de Tocqueville, by allowing debates, by allowing amendments and rollcalls on major pieces of legislation. That is what we are here for; we are here to represent the men and women who live in our States on those issues.

Tomorrow morning, there is a bipartisan breakfast, the first one of this year. We had them during the last 2 years. At that breakfast, we will be discussing the resolution of Senator CONRAD and Senator GREGG to create a Bipartisan Task Force for Responsible Fiscal Action. In other words, to get serious about dealing with runaway entitlement spending. Already we have, I