House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 9, 2010, at 12.30 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MARCH 8, 2010

The Senate met at 2:01 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, hope for all who seek You, strength for all who find You, lead our lawmakers through the turbulence of another week. Deliver them from anxiety, fear, and perplexity, as they become ever more aware of Your presence. Surprise them today with some unexpected gift of Your grace, providing them with some needed insight and guidance, some vision of new possibilities, some fresh resource of courage and strength. Guide them to seek first Your kingdom and righteousness, so that everything they need You will provide.

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK R. WARNER 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, March 8, 2010.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

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, there will now be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for more than a year now, Democrats in Washington have been focused—some would say fixated—on making dramatic changes to the American health care system as we know it.
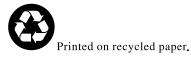
It is an open debate as to whether spending so much time and energy on this issue was in the best interest of the public at a time of record unemployment and a need to address jobs and the economy. But what is not open to debate is, the plan they came up with was fundamentally flawed—that it focused too much on expanding the size and cost of government and not enough on the core problem with our health care system, which is cost.

This is why Americans have been telling Democrats in Washington to scrap their plan and start over. This is why so many Americans are so frustrated with government right now. The administration says we need to pass its health spending bill to show Americans government still works. Americans are saying the opposite. They are saying the first thing Washington can do to show it is working is to listen to what the public is saying, to scrap this bill and to start over.

Unfortunately, Democratic leaders in Congress are not interested. They are still clinging to the same old bill and the same old process Americans rejected last year. They are more determined than ever to jam their bill through Congress by any means necessary.

So over the next few weeks, we are going to see a replay of the same kind of arm-twisting and deal-making we saw in the runup to Christmas. I say we are going to see it, but in reality we will not see any of it. We will have to read about it—the deals and the arm-

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twisting—only after the final bill hits the floor because all the arm-twisting and deal-making is going on behind closed doors, and it has already started.

Somehow the administration seems to think all this arm-twisting and deal-making will prove to the American people government works. I should think Americans will draw the opposite conclusion. Americans do not like the bill any more today than they did 3 months ago. They do not like the frantic, backroom deal-making any more now than they did then.

In the midst of all this, it is understandable that a lot of Democrats are on the fence about whether to vote for this bill, about whether to vote for this process as well. But the reasons they are giving for being on the fence do not square with reality, and they are not going to fly with the public.

Some say they like the current bill because they say it reduces costs. It does not. The administration's own experts say the bill increases health spending by $222 billion more than if we took no action at all. In other words, this bill would bend the cost curve up, not down.

Others say they like the current bill because it reduces the deficit. But even if you grant that highly speculative premise, the one bill the Senate will be voting on tomorrow would wipe away every dime of those projected savings with one stroke of the President's pen. If you believe the health bill will save $100 billion, then you have to also acknowledge the bill the Senate will pass this week increases it by $100 billion.

So far from moving in a more fiscally responsible direction, the health spending bill the White House now wants Congress to pass before Easter would move us in a less fiscally responsible direction. This undercuts the entire point of reform.

The administration recognizes the weakness of its argument. That is why it is trying to create a sense of inevitability about this bill. Once again, it is imposing an artificial deadline to put pressure on Members. It is talking about how we are in the middle of the final chapter of this debate.

The administration wants Members to believe they are characters in a screenplay and that the ending of the play is already written. This is an illusion. House Members are not buying these arguments anymore. In fact, many of them are already walking off the set. My guess is, a lot more are about to.

They know we may be nearing the final act for this bill and the legislative process but that it is just the beginning for those who support it. Americans do not want this bill. They are telling us to start over. The only people who do not seem to be getting the message are Democratic leaders in Washington. But they can be sure of this—absolutely sure of this: If they cut their deal, if they somehow convince enough Members to come on

board, then they will get the message. The public will let them know how they feel about this bill.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. KAUFMAN. 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. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 20 minutes.

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4213, the tax extenders legislation. Last week, the majority leader filed cloture on the tax extenders legislation. As a result, there is an agreement for a 3 o'clock filing deadline of first-degree amendments. As previously announced, there will be no rollcall votes today. Senators should expect a series of votes to begin tomorrow morning.

INCREASING ENGINEERING SCHOOLS GRADUATES

Mr. KAUFMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak today about the importance of engineering education. As my colleagues know, this is an issue near and dear to my heart.

I believe we are at a crucial moment for STEM—for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—that often reminds me of sailing. Whether you have done much sailing or not, we all know that you can construct the perfect sailboat, outfit it with the best sails, man it with the greatest crew, and if the wind is not blowing, you will not move. The wind is blowing for STEM and I believe we must work effectively to capitalize on it now.

Today, America's engineers have a central role to play in developing the innovative technologies that will help our economy recover and promote real job growth. In particular, as the global economy turns increasingly competitive, many nations are investing heavily in training their future scientists and engineers.

We don't know where the next generation of innovation will come from. That is the nature of innovation. But we want to do what we can to make sure it comes from the United States. This means we must have an innovation policy, one that helps to generate greater interest in STEM and actually leads to the production of greater numbers of engineers.

A few weeks after I took office, I began meeting with groups of engineering deans and other leaders in the engi-

neering community to discuss these issues. I have learned many important things from these conversations. For example, while all the surveys today say that young people want to "make a difference" with their lives, they do not see engineering as the way to do that.

To someone of my generation, this is an astounding revelation. Engineers have always been the world's problem solvers. We need to make sure students are aware of that—so they will aspire to take on the challenges we face today.

I also learned about a challenge occurring on many of our Nation's college campuses. In talking to engineering deans it is clear that the present economic downturn has exacerbated a problem that has been with us for quite a while—that is the additional cost of educating an engineering student, which requires an investment in labs and other costly facilities. Simply put, most universities make more money on liberal arts students than STEM students.

We must start educating college and university administrators about the long-term benefits to the university and to the United States of spending the additional money required to graduate more engineering students.

Many administrators do get it. One is Pat Harker, president of the University of Delaware and an engineering graduate from Penn. Working with his engineering dean Mike Chajes they have increased last year's entering engineering class by 25 percent, but they do not have the lab space to accommodate these students. They now have to hold lab classes for engineering students on Saturday.

To figure out how to address these issues and grow the engineers and scientists we need, I again met with a small group of deans in the fall and worked with the American Society of Engineering Education to give them a homework assignment.

Yes, I turned the tables on them. This time the professors had homework. We sent out an informal survey to solicit ideas on how to increase the number of graduates from our engineering schools. We received some very thoughtful feedback from nearly 25 deans across the country. These comments provide a very clear picture of what needs to be done. Several common themes emerged from the surveys.

To begin, many of these deans said that we need a better way to communicate to parents, teachers, students, and school counselors about what it means to be an engineer. There was a great idea from Maryland about creating a web site on the rock stars of engineering such as Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Alan Mullaly, and others.

They also agreed that green jobs are an excellent way to show young people how engineers make a difference. I think this comment from New York sums it up best: "Service to the community and the belief in great causes