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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 2, 2010, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2010

The Senate met at 2 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.

O God, our Father, our light and guide, lead our Senators with Your wisdom. Keep them from being embittered by ingratitude or pettiness as they refuse to be satisfied with any effort less than their best. May the voice of history warn them of the paths that lead to national disaster. Lord, give them the wisdom to follow Your precepts, trusting You to direct their steps. Help them to be as eager to forgive others as they are to seek forgiveness. By Your grace empower them to be better than they are, wiser than they know, and stronger than they dream. We pray in Your powerful 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, February 1, 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3 p.m. today, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. At 3 p.m., the Senate will proceed to executive session to debate the nomination of Patricia Smith to be Solicitor for the Department of Labor.

The vote on the motion to invoke cloture on that nomination will occur at 5:30 p.m. today.

THE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, nursing our economy back to health is not just about giving it the right short-term

treatments; it is about setting a new, responsible foundation for our future security and stability; it is about recognizing that what got us into this mess will not get us out of this mess; it is about making sure this kind of crisis can never again threaten American families.

There are three things above all else I wanted to see in President Obama's budget: No. 1, a plan to put Americans back to work; No. 2, a plan to ease our deep deficit, bring fiscal discipline back to our government, and leave our children a stronger economy; and finally, No. 3, a plan that will strengthen Nevada's economy and make Nevadans safer.

As far as I am concerned, the President has gone three for three. Regarding jobs: Ensuring every American who wants to work can find a job is the top priority of the American people and it is the top priority of President Obama's budget. His proposed tax cuts will encourage small businesses to keep workers on the job, hire new ones, and give those employees bigger paychecks, and it will encourage entrepreneurs to start new companies and encourage existing owners to grow their businesses, which will in turn grow our economy.

This budget is also about smart investing. It looks forward to building industries of the future by creating clean energy jobs that can never be outsourced and jobs in infrastructure, science, technology, and research. It extends middle-class tax cuts so hard-working families can invest more of their income in the economy rather

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



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than sending it back to the government.

As far as fiscal responsibility goes, his budget does some good things. It continues Democrats' efforts to reduce the deficit and restore fiscal responsibility to the government.

This budget comes with a lot of zeros. Its numbers are in the millions, billions, and trillions. It is easy to mischaracterize those numbers and what they mean, but let's keep some perspective. When you look at this budget as a share of our entire economy, it will cut the deficit by more than half in 2 years. It is not the last thing we will do to slash the deficit, but it is a good, promising start.

The President also has endorsed the pay-as-you-go rules the Senate approved last week, as well as a commission dedicated to reducing the deficit, which I support. Unfortunately, many of our Republican colleagues do not. They voted in unison against pay-as-you-go—the simple concept that we should only spend what we as a government have. Some Republican Senators who sponsored the legislation creating the deficit-reduction commission turned right around and voted against their own bill when it came before the Senate. Had they voted with us—if they had voted the way the bill was sponsored—it would have passed. We had 53 votes. One Senator was gone because of a funeral. There are 54 Democrats, and with 7 Republicans, that would have brought us to 61.

It is a real shame. People worked on this so hard, and one of those who did so is the Presiding Officer. The Presiding Officer is an expert at balancing budgets, having been Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the Presiding Officer used that knowledge to work with Senator CONRAD and others to bring about the pay-go rules and to bring about this deficit-reduction commission. Then to have people who sponsored the legislation vote against it is hard to comprehend. This budget knows our economy and our future cannot afford partisan games such as that.

As far as Nevada is concerned, the recession has hit Nevada harder than most every other State. Nevadans will benefit more than nearly any other State's citizens when we see the implementation of the job-creating and money-saving ideas in this budget.

Nevada will also benefit in another very specific way. The President has declared dead the dreadful plan called Yucca Mountain—to turn a piece of the magnificent Nevada desert just outside of Las Vegas into a national dumping ground for dangerous nuclear waste. This budget ends funding for that reckless project and pulls its license application.

That means families in Nevada and throughout America no longer have to worry about trucks and trains loaded with tons of the most toxic nuclear waste known to man passing by their children's schools, their neighborhoods,

parks, and their own backyards. It means we will all be safer.

The President's plan will walk us further down the path toward economic recovery, but we still have a long way to go. Let's keep in mind this budget is merely a blueprint, not a silver bullet. It will guide Congress, not restrict us.

No matter what the items and numbers are in this document, neither Democrats nor Republicans should ever forget that every single dollar in this budget belongs to the American people. We know we cannot make our economy work again for the middle class unless we invest taxpayers' money as responsibly and efficiently and as transparently as possible. Senate Democrats are committed to doing just that.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., 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 legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I cannot help but note that the occupant of the chair presides not only over the Senate but other organizations to which I am privileged to belong.

I ask to proceed as in morning business.

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

NOMINATION OF MARTHA N. JOHNSON

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, later this afternoon, the Senate will vote on a cloture motion on the nomination of Patricia Smith to be Solicitor of the Department of Labor. Last Friday, I believe, Senator REID also filed a cloture motion on another nomination, and it is that nomination I would like to talk about because it comes out of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which I am privileged to chair. That is the nomination of Martha Johnson to be Administrator of the General Services Administration.

It has become unfortunate practice, I believe, that Members have been holding up Executive nominations, in some

cases, and I am confident it is the case with regard to Martha Johnson, for reasons unrelated to her qualifications. She is extremely well qualified and very much needed at the General Services Administration, as I will note in a moment.

As I understand the process we will follow this week—presuming, as I hope will be the case, that cloture is granted later this afternoon, when we vote on the nominee for Solicitor of the Department of Labor, whenever the vote on that nomination occurs—hopefully, sooner than later this week—immediately thereafter, we will go to a vote on cloture on this nomination of Martha Johnson. In anticipation of that, I wished to speak to my colleagues about what is coming.

She is an extraordinary nominee, in my opinion, for a job that is critically important to the efficient operation of the Federal Government, about which a lot of us have been speaking with intensity in recent times. She is a former Chief of Staff at the General Services Administration, so she comes with some background that will give her the opportunity to hit the ground running, and that is important in an agency that has not had a permanent leader since April of 2008. Here we are in February of 2010. GSA has not had a permanent leader since April 2008, when the former Director was asked to resign by the previous administration. Since then, the agency has had five Acting Administrators. It is obviously time for stable leadership.

The Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee unanimously endorsed her nomination last June, more than a half year ago. Since that time, GSA has undergone several changes in top management, including the departure of the Chief of Staff and the retirement of the Deputy Administrator. So it has been very frustrating for the members of our committee to see such a qualified nominee being held up in the Senate for more than a half year because of a hold that had nothing to do with the nominee's qualifications.

I wish to speak for a moment to my colleagues about the full scope of GSA's responsibilities. It is a critically important agency of our Government that mostly works out of the spotlight. GSA is often called the Federal Government's landlord because it provides workspace and office services for almost every Federal office and agency across our country, from court houses to ports of entry. With 8,600 buildings and \$500 billion in assets under its control, GSA must be either the largest property management organization in the world or certainly one of the top and largest property management organizations in the world. But GSA actually is far more than just the Federal Government's landlord. It has 12,000 employees spread across the country in 11 districts. They help guide Federal spending on everything from basic office equipment to the Federal fleet of