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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, June 21, 2010, at 11 a.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 2010

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable AL FRANKEN, a Senator from the State of Minnesota.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, creator and sustainer of humanity, teach us the way of salvation, show us the path to meaningful life, and reveal to us the steps of faith.

Today, use our Senators to fulfill Your purposes. Quicken their hearts, purify their minds, and strengthen their commitments. Show them duties left undone and tasks unattended, as You lead them through challenging seasons to a deeper experience with You. Let faith, hope, and love abound in their lives, as they seek to heal the hurt in our Nation and world.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable AL FRANKEN 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, June 18, 2010.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable AL FRANKEN, a Senator from the State of Minnesota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

PLAYING AND WORKING FOR AMERICANS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, within the next few minutes, in Johannesburg, South Africa, before almost 80,000 people, the U.S. soccer team will begin its World Cup quest. They are going to be playing Slovenia, which has the fewest citizens of any of the participating countries. So I wish all the athletes representing our country success in today's match.

I also want to take a minute and talk about a Nevadan who is on our team. His name is Herculez Gomez. He is a graduate of Las Vegas public schools. He was, of course, an outstanding high school athlete. He played professionally here in America, but the team decided not to sign him—Kansas City—

to anything he was satisfied with, so he went to Mexico to play. He became the No. 1 player in Mexico. He holds the record for scoring more goals than any person, as I understand it, who has played for another team in that country.

He is a great young man, and we are very proud of him. He is a great goal scorer, a terrific representative of Nevada and the United States in this tournament watched by billions of people around the world. He didn't play in our first game. He was standing on the sidelines. The coach had told him to go in, but soccer is an unusual game. It is not like a lot of sports. It is very difficult to substitute in a soccer game, and the referee didn't blow the whistle or stop the game, so he couldn't go in. But he will be in this game, I am sure.

I am a great soccer fan. I often boast about my youngest son, who played on three national championship soccer teams for the University of Virginia. Anyway, I watch soccer closely.

I wish the next remarks of mine could be as pleasant as those I have just given regarding Herculez Gomez. I wish we could have a lot more pleasant talk here in the Senate. But with what happened last night and what has happened for the last year and a half, it is very hard to be pleasant when you have people who are hurting in America.

Unemployment is something that is difficult to understand unless you have been unemployed. I have never been unemployed. I am very fortunate. From the time I was a boy until now, I have always had a job, even in the summers. I worked as a very young boy, starting when I was very, very

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



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young. But I have seen my dad trying to get a job and not able to find work. My father was a strong young man during the depression, and I heard him tell the story many times that he would go to a mine where they were going to hire some people, and they would line up the people who were prospective workers, and one of the bosses would come out and he would go down the line and say: I will take you, I will take you, and I will take you. I guess how they looked is all they had to base it on. They had no applications. No one filed applications.

Well, even though it is not the Great Depression, we now have people going through the same thing my father went through. I heard on NPR this morning on the way to work that a woman has been out of work for a year and a half. She was hired once for 1 day. She has applied 150 different times. She keeps a notebook of the places she has applied and what happens to each of those. She is going to a job fair today, hoping something will happen and she can get a job.

The American people have had it with those who create messes and then refuse to take responsibility for cleaning them up. They are tired of the excuses. They are sick of the misplaced priorities that say one party's politics are more important than their jobs or families, their incomes and their savings.

If you want to know what we stand for on this side of the aisle—Democrats—look at our agenda this year. And our agenda has been so difficult because, without exception, everything we have tried to do has been stalled. The Republicans have made every attempt to divert our attention from what we want to do.

Here is what our agenda has been: making health insurance more affordable and health insurance companies more accountable. What kind of a country would we be if we had stood silently while 50 million of our fellow men and women had no health insurance? That is where we were. If you had a job, a good job, you might have had insurance, but that was no guarantee either. People were losing their insurance by the millions as time went on. So we did something that had to be done—health insurance.

We protected Americans' savings and seniors' pensions from Wall Street greed, making sure the American people were never again asked to bail out a big bank. Although we were stymied every step of the way, we worked to stop these people on Wall Street from doing again what they did to the American people.

During part of my career—in fact, for 4 years—I was chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission. Now, that isn't about hunting animals; it is a gambling commission. We call it gaming. We did everything we could to make sure people who came to Nevada and gambled on the tables in Las Vegas or Reno or Lake Tahoe had a fair game.

When they won money, they got to keep it; when they lost, it was their money they lost. But Wall Street had a much better deal than you can get anywhere in Nevada. On Wall Street, they gambled away our money. If they won, they kept it; if they lost, they came to us for help. So we took that on. That bill is in conference now, and we are going to come out with something the American people will like very much.

We have worked hard to create jobs. Today, JOE BIDEN is announcing the 10,000th highway project that has been funded from our stimulus or economic recovery bill. So we have created jobs, including full-time work for 3 million Americans who have the stimulus to thank for the job they are going to today.

In Nevada, the Recovery Act has created or saved more than 4,000 jobs in just the past 4 months alone. The economy in Nevada is not in good shape. It is getting better, but it is not good. We are one of the leading States in the Union in unemployment. But think how much worse it would be if we hadn't been able to create these jobs in Nevada with the recovery bill.

Our agenda has been making sure those still looking for jobs in Nevada—where 14 percent are out of work—and people across the country have the unemployment assistance they need to make ends meet in the meantime. Why the Republicans would not allow people who are out of work to collect unemployment compensation is hard for me to comprehend. JOHN MCCAIN's chief economic adviser when he ran for President is a man named Mark Zandi, and Mark Zandi said the No. 1 way to stimulate the economy is to give people who are out of work some money—unemployment assistance. The Republicans rejected the advice of JOHN MCCAIN's chief economic adviser; we followed it.

In our legislation, we cut taxes for families and businesses. Ninety-five percent of the people in America, as a result of our stimulus bill, the economic recovery bill, got a tax cut.

We have helped small businesses grow and hire more workers in the last bill we passed dealing with jobs. And we would have been happy to do more, but we got stalled every time we try to do something. Remember that bill? We had four things in it:

We extended the highway bill for a year. That saved a million jobs in America. Hundreds and hundreds of jobs were saved in Nevada. Thousands were saved in Minnesota, the Presiding Officer's State.

In that same legislation, we said that if a small business wants to buy something for their business—let's assume they need a new vehicle or equipment of any kind—they didn't have to even depreciate it anymore; that up to \$250,000 they can write off. That was to help small business.

We also said that if someone is out of work for 60 days and someone is willing to give them a job for 30 hours a

week—we didn't set how much they would have to be paid, but if they give them a job for 30 hours a week, then that employer doesn't have to pay the withholding tax, and at the end of that year, they get a \$1,000 tax credit.

In addition to that, we decided that one of the things that worked so well in the recovery bill was Build America Bonds. That was very successful and so popular that we ran out of money. In this little jobs bill, we funded that again. Right now, as we speak, there are jobs all over America taking place as a result of what we did with that bill.

So we have done a lot of things to help small businesses. We have in that bill and we tried yesterday to give our States the critical aid they need to keep firefighters in our communities, police officers on the streets, and teachers in the classrooms. But Republicans said: No. Let the States handle their own problems. We have problems back here; don't worry about the States.

I learned a long time ago in college that one of our responsibilities back here as a Congress is to do things for the States they can't do for themselves. That is what we are doing here. But the Republicans said no yesterday. And it wasn't the majority of them, it was every single one of them.

We have worked hard to protect doctors who treat senior citizens from a massive pay cut created by the Republicans when they were in charge. Now there are going to be seniors who won't be able to find their doctor of choice because the doctors simply can't afford to work under what the Republicans decided they should be paid. They will take a pay cut. They will only get 79 percent of the money they got yesterday for the same treatment.

As part of our agenda this year—and I am not going to go through it all because Norm Ornstein, a famous journalist, said we have been the most productive Congress in the history of the country, in spite of what was going on here, despite the secret holds, the filibusters, the stalling, the delay; according to Norm Ornstein and others, the most productive Congress in the history of the country.

As part of our agenda we believe we should hold BP accountable for the sickening environmental disaster caused by its own gross negligence and maybe criminal activity in the endless pursuit of profits. One of the richest companies in the world cut corners so they could make more money.

Those are a few of the things we stand for. We stand for those things because we know we work for families, taxpayers, and hard-working Americans. But as far as I can tell, the only thing Republicans stand for is standing together. As far as anyone can see, Republicans come to work each day to fight for their special-interest friends, for corporate America, for multimillionaires, for billionaires, and for greedy CEOs who ship jobs out of

America. Remember, part of the legislation they turned down yesterday was going to stop all of that.

The trends are unmistakable. The records are public. I am not making up a thing. They are public, and numbers do not lie. It is not hard to piece together the puzzle and see who is working for the American people and who is working against them.

But you do not have to comb through voting records; just look at what happened yesterday. In the morning Republicans apologized to BP. Listen to this. Republicans apologized to BP. One of the longstanding Republican leaders in the House of Representatives said he was sorry that President Obama had asked them to come up with \$20 billion. We wrote a letter to BP. The idea started with us, Democratic Senators. The President picked this up. He met with the head of BP and they said OK, we will do that. The Republicans in the House said it was a shakedown and they were embarrassed for our country that this had happened. Try that one on. Whose side are the Republicans on?

I heard an interview where a man said 9/11 did not ruin my business, Katrina didn't ruin my business, but the oilspill has ruined my business. I filed bankruptcy yesterday. And it is a shakedown?

I repeat, yesterday morning Republicans apologized to BP for holding them accountable for their own recklessness and their own greed. I repeat that because it is incredible: Republicans apologized to BP because we are making sure it pays for its mess and the taxpayers do not have to pay for their mess.

In the evening Republicans voted to help the wealthiest of the wealthy avoiding paying their fair share of taxes, while at the same time voting against giving out-of-work Americans the assistance they need.

I have friends who are billionaires. They run these big companies. With rare exception, they have come to me and said yes, we have a pretty good deal. Do you know why it is a pretty good deal? Because they pay less taxes than somebody who works for the minimum wage. The Republicans are going to continue to allow my friends, and billionaires around the country, to continue to pay less taxes than someone who works for minimum wage. What kind of a picture is that?

Their priorities are baffling to me. They are indefensible. But it is even harder to believe when you look at who got us into this mess and who is now refusing to let us get out of this mess. The same people. Why are the doctors getting a 21-percent pay cut? It is because of what they did over here. Why are so many people out of work? It is because of the policies of the prior administration—it is what went on on Wall Street, cutting the legs off of the American economy. So the people who got us into the mess are the ones who are doing everything they can to make sure that we do not get out of the mess.

If not for the years of failed Republican policies, high unemployment would not be an issue in the first place. If not for the Republican failed policies, there would not be a doctors payment problem in the first place. If not for the Republicans' disdain for sensible oversight, the disasters from Wall Street to the Gulf of Mexico, to communities across America, might not have been so devastating. And if not for the weeks and weeks of Republican delay, the emergencies in our households and businesses and big cities and small towns wouldn't be nearly as bad as they are.

Republicans might be willing to turn their backs on out-of-work Americans but Democrats are not. We are not. We are going to keep fighting for them. We are not going to give up.

As I said earlier, the American people have had it with those who create messes and then refuse to take responsibility for cleaning them up. That goes for BP and the GOP.

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. INHOFE. 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.

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 be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask to be recognized to speak in morning business and to be notified at 7 minutes.

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

EXTENDERS PACKAGE

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, the legislation we have before us today and have been working on is problematic. It is just not healthy because it is going to increase the debt to a significant degree.

According to the Joint Committee on Taxation, the Democrats' first draft of the extenders bill—that is what we are calling this legislation—presented this week would have added \$78.6 billion to the debt—another \$78 billion.

Total spending in that bill was \$126 billion. They claim that \$47 billion of this amount had been offset, meaning

paid for. However, what we were not told is they were double counting many of the items. It was a manipulation. The numbers were worse than that. They were double counting some of the money and hiding the extent of the debt. There were just too many budget gimmicks, and the total impact of the bill, in truth, would have vastly exceeded the \$78.6 billion that had been in the score.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates the annual deficit for this fiscal year will be \$1.5 trillion—\$1,500 billion. This represents the largest annual deficit in the history of the American Republic.

The CBO estimates that deficits will average—average—\$1 trillion per year over the next 10 years under the budget as presented to us by President Obama. The lowest projected deficit in the 10-year period—the lowest year—would be \$724 billion. That is in 2014. The way the economy is moving, I have my doubts that would occur. In fact, a fair analysis of the entire amount would indicate those numbers are less than likely to occur, unless we make significant changes, which we should do.

Last week, the gross public debt exceeded \$13 trillion. This represents 89 percent of our GDP. So the debt of \$13 trillion represents 89 percent of GDP. This is a serious matter. According to Carmen Reinhart's testimony before the Budget Committee—who studied this and has written a book about it—when gross debt exceeds 90 percent of GDP, growth in your country is reduced. What otherwise would be an economic growth of 3 percent would be reduced to 2 percent. You would have, in their estimation—Ms. Reinhart's and her partner, Mr. Rogoff's, book—it would knock off 1 percent of growth, which is huge. One percent of growth dragged down as a result of debt and interest is a huge matter.

Interest payments rise—interest payments on the debt we have to pay. We borrow the money, we have to pay interest on it in the form of T-bills held by people. China and other places and individuals buy these T-bills. We pay them interest. Interest in 2010 will be \$209 billion. As of September 30 of this year, when fiscal year 2010 ends, it will be \$209 billion.

The Federal highway bill is about \$40 billion, the baseline highway bill. Just to give an indication, Alabama's general fund budget is less than \$10 billion a year. We are an average-sized State, so \$210 billion in interest is significant.

Well, what happens at the rate we are going, with budget deficits averaging a trillion dollars a year for the next 10 years? According to the Congressional Budget Office, that calculates this out carefully, they estimate that interest in 2020—for that 1 year—just 10 years from now, would be \$916 billion—the largest single expenditure in the Federal budget, and our debt will have tripled in 10 years under the President's budget.

So this is clearly unsustainable; every witness, every economist, every