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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 2, 2010, at 12.30 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, MARCH 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, whose approval we seek above humanity's hollow applause, we pause today to experience the warmth of Your presence as You lift the light of Your countenance upon us.

Give to the Members of this body pure hearts and a passion to faithfully serve You and country. Across their toiling hours, keep their hearts fixed on You, the author and finisher of their faith. In a world of suspense, suspicion, and turmoil, breathe now in this quiet moment Your peace on every heart. Lord, prepare solutions for our Senators' complexities and resolve their conflicts in a way that will glorify You.

We pray in Your sacred 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 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, there will be a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. At 3 p.m., we will turn to consideration of H.R. 4213, the tax extenders legislation. Senator BAUCUS will be recognized to call up a substitute amendment. As previously announced, there will be no rollcall votes today. The first vote of the week will occur at 12:15 p.m. tomorrow. That vote will be on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Barbara Keenan to be U.S. circuit judge for the Fourth Circuit.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 4626 AND H.R. 4691

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4626) to restore the application of the Federal antitrust laws to the business of health insurance to protect competition and consumers.

A bill (H.R. 4691) to provide a temporary extension of certain programs, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings with respect to these two bills.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bills will be placed on the calendar.

COSTLY INACTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, every night too many out-of-work Nevadans and Americans, people who want to work, who need to support their families but can't find a job, go to bed with at least the comfort of having unemployment insurance and health benefits. Last night, more than a million people throughout America who went to sleep relying on those benefits woke up without the confidence they will be there now. Early this morning, when they would rather be spending their mornings working, mothers and fathers in every State woke up to line up at the unemployment office in a long line. News reports today are that these lines

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



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are very long today, all over the country, from Virginia to Nevada to Kentucky. They are long because these people are worried about how they are going to put food on the table and pay the bills. For far too many Americans, those benefits were set to expire last night. So six times last week, Democrats asked to extend their unemployment benefits for a short time while we work on a longer extension. Six times, Republicans said no. They didn't say no to us; that is, Members of the Senate, they said no to the families in their own States and all States who count on us to act when we need action, who count on us to respond in the event of an emergency. This is an emergency.

Republicans in the Senate are standing between these families and the help they need while these benefits expire. It might work because under the Senate rules they can do that, but it certainly doesn't work for working families whose need to buy groceries does not expire. The need to heat your homes, put gas in the car, make payments for furniture you buy, the car you bought, your house payment, the need to take medicine or support an aging parent or to take care of your kids, they don't expire.

Those opposed to helping our fellow citizens at their time of greatest need want to talk about process. My Republican colleagues came to the floor and talked about process. They had a right to do that. Under the rules, I guess that is true. But if you can't afford to feed your kids, process doesn't mean anything to you.

We often talk about the cost of inaction. It is the reason we insist on creating jobs and making health care more affordable and on strengthening national security. When we talk about the cost of inaction, it is more than just rhetoric; it comes with dire consequences. Americans who woke up this morning without the benefits they need now know that better than anyone else.

The Associated Press runs all over the country—a newswire. Among other things, this article says this morning:

Two thousand federal transportation workers will be furloughed without pay [today].

The reason we are talking about 2,000, this doesn't count the thousands and thousands, up to 1 million people who are not going to have jobs as a result of not extending the highway bill. That is what we want to do—let these people work—because what has happened is that even the inspectors can't go out and do their jobs, so people are just walking away from these jobs. Secretary LaHood, the Secretary of Transportation—a Republican Congressman until he was appointed—said construction workers will be sent home from jobsites because Federal inspectors must be furloughed. They named a long list of construction sites that will be halted: George Washington Parkway in Virginia, the Humpback Bridge—I don't know where that is in Virginia—

bridge construction in Coeur d'Alene, ID. All over the country, this is happening. The safety inspectors have no pay, so they have to leave. Nothing is happening. This is going to lead to untold numbers of people—I said up to 1 million people—who will not be able to work.

It is really wrong what has taken place here. It is not too late to right that wrong. I hope Republicans will reconsider, think about their constituents standing in the unemployment lines as we speak. I hope they reconsider.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 4691

Mr. REID. Based on that, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to H.R. 4691, which is a 30-day extension of provisions which expired yesterday—unemployment insurance; COBRA, which is the health insurance for people out of work; flood insurance; Satellite Home Viewer Act—1½ million people today are unable to watch TV who could last night at midnight—highway funding—I talked about that—SBA business loans; small business provisions of the American Recovery Act; the doctors fix, the SGR, and poverty guidelines, received from the House and at the desk; that the bill be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. BUNNING. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. I thank the Chair.

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.

The Senator from Kentucky.

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, just a brief explanation of why we are where we are with this extension bill, a brief extension of 30 days.

There was an agreement between the majority leader of the Finance Committee and the minority leader on the Finance Committee, Senators BAUCUS and GRASSLEY, on a 3-month extension of these very same provisions. There were more provisions in the bill also. It cost a little more than the \$10 billion that is asked for because it was a 3-month extension. Senator REID pulled that bill from the floor of the Senate.

He did it. The leader of the Democrats pulled that bill from the floor.

I support extending unemployment benefits, COBRA benefits, flood insurance, the highway bill fix, the doc fix, small business loans, distant network television for satellite viewers. If we can't find \$10 billion to pay for something we all support, we will never pay for anything in the Senate. I have offered several ways to do this, including trying to negotiate with the majority leader's staff. None have been successful.

We cannot keep adding to the debt. It is over \$14 trillion and going up fast. If the budget before us passes, it will add another \$1.5 trillion to the debt.

Recently, we passed pay-go. For those who don't know what pay-go is, it means you have to pay for everything you bring before the Senate. You can't charge it on the debt. You can't charge it. That is what pay-go says. Understanding that, I hope the American people understand my serious objection.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 4691

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 4691; that the amendment at the desk, which offers a full offset, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed; and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, history is something I think you have to be involved in to understand what really transpired.

First of all, there was no bill on the floor for me to take off the floor. There was discussion between Democrats and Republicans. On the Thursday before we left for the last weeklong break we took, I was in the back hall with Senators GRASSLEY, BAUCUS, and McCONNELL. Senator McCONNELL, my friend, said they weren't ready to agree to anything yet.

Well, it is very clear if we are going to extend benefits for a lot of tax provisions that are very important to business, then we should at least consider extending benefits for people who are down and out in the same period of time.

So understand, the bill that came before the Senate included a jobs package that extends the highway benefits for 1 year, saving a million jobs, creating jobs by allowing small businesses—or any businesses—to hire somebody who has been out of work for 60 days. They do not have to pay their withholding tax and they get a \$1,000 tax credit at the end of the year.

In addition to that, to help small businesses, we had a provision to allow small businesses to write off and not depreciate up to \$250,000 of purchases in a year—very important to create and