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Senate

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

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Rev. Father Gregoire J. Fluet, pastor of Saint Bridget of Kildare Church, Moodus, CT.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

For our prayer this day, I paraphrase a prayer written in 1791 by the first American Catholic bishop, Archbishop John Carroll, making his words my own.

Let us pray.

We pray that You, O God of might, wisdom and justice, through whom authority is rightly administered, laws are enacted, and judgment decreed would assist, with your Holy Spirit of counsel and fortitude, the President of these United States; that his administration may be conducted in righteousness, and eminently useful to Your people over whom he presides; by encouraging due respect for virtue and religion; by a faithful execution of the laws of justice and mercy; and by restraining vice and immorality.

Let the light of Your divine wisdom direct the deliberations of Congress, and shine forth in all the proceedings and laws framed for our rule and government, so that they may tend to the preservation of peace, the promotion of national happiness, the increase of industry, sobriety, and useful knowledge; and may perpetuate to us the blessings of equal liberty.

We recommend likewise, to Your unbounded mercy, all our brethren and fellow citizens throughout the United States, that they may be blessed in Your most holy law; that they may be preserved in union, and in that peace which the world cannot give. Great God, make of us a virtuous people, and allow us to walk always in Your love.

We beseech You to send Your special blessings and graces upon these elected leaders.

In Your Name, we pray. 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. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, November 30, 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.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, it was a great honor to have Father Gregoire Fluet, my parish priest in East Haddam, CT, provide the opening prayer this morning. I thank him immensely for his words. Reaching back to Archbishop Carroll was a wonderful way to begin the session.

Father Fluet is not only my parish priest, Mr. President. He is a dear

friend and practically a member of my extended family. Father Fluet and I first met nearly 30 years ago when he was pastor of St. Joseph's Church in North Grovenordale, CT. Since his appointment in 1998 as pastor of my home parish, Saint Bridget of Kildare in East Haddam, Father Fluet has been an important figure in my life, providing spiritual advice and counsel to me on a number of occasions. Father Fluet has also played an important role in the lives of my two daughters, Grace and Christina. He baptized both of them after they were born, and provided religious instruction and first communion to my older daughter, Grace.

In addition to being a great spiritual leader, Father Fluet has long dedicated himself to the study of our Nation's history and particularly to the history of New England. Ever the consummate scholar, Father Fluet was awarded a doctorate in American History by Clark University in 2002, taught Western Civilization and World History as an adjunct professor at Quinebaug Valley Community College in Danielson, CT, and even published a history of the Diocese of Norwich.

But beyond his love of history, Father Fluet has always, first and foremost, demonstrated an unshakeable commitment to his flock and the people of our community. He is a wonderful human being, and I am confident that Saint Bridget of Kildare will continue to be blessed for years to come by Father Fluet's dedicated spiritual leadership.

Once again, I would like to reiterate what a true honor it has been to listen to Father Fluet's words this morning. Thank you for taking the time to be here today, Father Fluet. But most of all, thank you for everything you have done over the years for the people of our community.

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



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RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SENATOR CHRIS DODD

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the good priest has a wonderful person as one of his parishioners, someone we all look up to, someone we will miss dearly. For me, it is a personal loss. He is very proud of his religion. Obviously, the guest Chaplain is one reason.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Will the majority leader allow me to make an observation?

Mr. REID. Of course.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I had the opportunity to meet the father in the hall. I expressed to him my admiration for Senator DODD. In fact, I said he was my favorite Democrat. We are indeed going to miss Senator DODD in the Senate in the coming years. I thank him for being with us this morning.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, after any leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of the food safety bill. There will be 2 minutes for debate prior a series of three rollcall votes. We will have the Coburn motion to suspend rule XXII for the purpose of proposing and considering Coburn amendment No. 4697, a Coburn motion to suspend rule XXII for purposes of proposing and considering Coburn amendment No. 4694, and then passage of this most important bill, the food safety bill.

Upon disposition of the food safety legislation, there will be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, and the Senate will recess from 12:30 to 4 p.m. to allow for party caucus meetings. They are a little longer today than normal because of organizational things we are working through.

At 4 p.m. today, Senator DODD will be recognized to give his farewell speech to us and the country.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, S. 3985 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3985) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend certain expiring provisions, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this legislation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

WHITE HOUSE SUMMIT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, congressional leaders of both parties will meet with the President at the White House today to talk about the work we have to do before the end of the year and, hopefully, about the things we can do together to foster the right conditions for businesses to start investing again and creating jobs.

Americans are watching the economic drama that is playing out in Europe. They expect us to read the signs of the times and work together to make sure that we avoid a similar crisis here, that we don't walk right into the same problems through a lack of will or political courage.

The American people expect us to put the national interest ahead of party interest. And, frankly, that is why it has been so distressing for many of us to watch our Democrat friends grope for a clear and unified position on whether or not to raise taxes in the middle of a recession.

One would think that this issue would be simple and straightforward.

Economists say that preventing a tax increase is one of the most important things Congress can do to help the economy. And the voters ratified that view earlier this month by sending candidates from both parties to Washington who vowed not to raise taxes once they got here.

But our Democrat friends are apparently still reluctant to draw any clear lessons from the election. With millions of American households staring at the imminent prospect of smaller paychecks in just a few short weeks unless Congress does something, Democrats are still searching for a solution that enables them to benefit politically—regardless of what it does to the economy or to families.

Just take the latest proposal.

Some Democrats now say they only want to raise taxes on businesses that make more than \$1 million a year. Where did that number come from? Well, it turns out this figure has no economic justification whatsoever. Nowhere will we find a study or survey which indicates that raising taxes on small businesses with over \$1 million in income will create jobs or help spur the economy.

In fact, the author of this proposal freely admits it isn't an economic policy proposal at all, but rather one that was designed to provide better political messaging—an astonishing admission.

Let us get something straight. Millions of out-of-work Americans don't want a message. They want a job. Millions of struggling families trying to make ends meet don't need the Democrat messaging to improve; they need the economy to improve.

Selling bad economic policy to the American people is not an acceptable alternative to creating an environment that will put people back to work and help spur the economy.

We have heard a lot of chatter here in Washington lately about the negotiations that are expected to take place on this looming tax hike in the weeks ahead—on how to prevent it. How about we start with this: the beginning and end of any negotiation shouldn't be what is good for any political party. It should be what is good for the economy and for the American people. An if we leave the politics aside, if we look at the facts, the answer here is simple: no tax hikes on anybody—period.

So the question isn't what is best for the economy and jobs—the answer to that is obvious. The question is when will our friends on the other side get serious about either one.

It has been reported that the author of the \$1 million proposal ran it through a focus group to see how it polled. This is precisely the kind of thing Americans are telling us to put aside. The election was a month ago. It is time to move on. It is time to work together on the priorities Americans want us to address.

Republicans have heard the voters loud and clear. They want us to focus on preventing a tax hike on every taxpayer, on reining in Washington spending and on making it easier for employers to start hiring again. That is why Republican leaders are reiterating our offer to work with anyone, from either party, who is ready to focus on priorities like these.

The day after the election, the President acknowledged that “the overwhelming message” of the voters “[was] that . . . we want you to focus completely on jobs and the economy.”

That is the same message Republicans will bring to the White House today.

And that is why there is no reason we shouldn't be able to reach an agreement on taxes soon.

It is unclear how long our friends across the aisle will continue to resist the message of the election and cling to the liberal wish list that got us a job-killing healthcare law, a “cap-and-trade” national energy tax, an out-of-control spending spree, million more jobs lost, trillions more in debt, but not a single appropriations bill to fund the government or a bill to prevent the coming tax hikes.

With just a few weeks left before the end of the year, they are still clinging to the wrong priorities—instead of preventing a tax hike, they want to focus on immigration and don't ask, don't tell—and, maybe, if there is time left, see what they can do about jobs and the economy.

Indeed, their entire legislative plan for the rest of the lame duck session appears to be to focus on anything except jobs, which is astonishing when we consider the election we have just had.