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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, eternal and unchangeable, You have ordained that day follows night and that in trials we find our triumph. Keep our lawmakers aware of Your goodness and mercies, which never fail. Lift them above contention and disappointment to an optimism that trusts the unfolding of Your loving providence. May they also live with the awareness that our times are in Your hands. Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to rededicate themselves to the doing of Your will, so that this Nation may yet shine with the beauty of righteousness and justice, as a citadel of healing, wisdom, and strength.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, March 3, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

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. REID. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each. The Republicans will control the first half, and the majority will control the final half.

At 11 a.m., the Senate will resume consideration of S. 23, the America Invents Act. I would hope if people have amendments they want to offer to this legislation they would do so. I would hope they would be germane, but there are no restrictions. People can offer whatever amendments they want on this matter. But I would hope we can do that.

### PATENT REFORM

We had an important amendment offered by Senator FEINSTEIN yesterday. It is an extremely important measure.

I am supportive of that. It is an issue where I think we should not try to fix something in that area of patent reform that is not broken. But the patent reform bill is important. We have 750,000 patents that have been applied for, and there has been no response from the Patent Office.

One of the big issues we had was how we are going to pay for this, the work they have to do. We had a novel idea. Senator COBURN, it is my understanding, came up with the idea first: have the Patent Office pay for it with the applications people file. That money would go to the Patent Office to get rid of that backlog.

In the past, as I understand it, those moneys have gone to the general fund. So that issue was going to be a big debatable issue on this bill. But there was a bipartisan agreement that we should take care of that. That is in the managers' package. So that is good.

So the other issue is on the first-to-file. Senator FEINSTEIN offered that amendment. We will have a vote on that as soon as we can. I would hope if there are other amendments, we can get to them quickly.

There will be a period of morning business from 2 to 4 p.m. today. The majority will control the first hour, and the Republicans will control the next hour.

Senators should expect rollcall votes in relation to amendments on the America Invents Act to occur throughout the day.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

### GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for 2 years now Washington Democrats have taken fiscal recklessness to new

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



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heights. They have spent trillions of dollars we do not have on things we do not need and cannot afford. The amount of red ink Democrats plan to rack up this year alone would exceed all the debt run up by the Federal Government from its inception through 1984.

This recklessness is the reason we have seen a national uprising against their policies. Americans have demanded we reverse this recklessness and restore balance. Democrats have resisted at every turn.

To conceal the extent of their spending plans, they did not even pass a budget last year. After a nationwide repudiation of their policies in November, they proposed a massive spending bill loaded with new spending that amounted to a slap in the face to the voters.

Following the outrage that provoked, they tried to get a spending freeze past the public. They said: How about we just lock in place the out-of-control spending levels we set last year?

To them, this entire debate is not about how to respond to the American people. It is about seeing what they can get away with.

Well, Republicans have taken a different approach. Responding to our constituents, we have insisted the status quo simply will not cut it anymore. We have insisted on actually shrinking the size of government. And yesterday we delivered, by forcing the first actual cut in government spending in recent memory.

While it was just a small first step, yesterday we showed it is actually possible to change the status quo in Washington. Not bad.

What about the White House? The White House responded to all of this by announcing they want to have a meeting. We are happy to go to the meeting, but putting a meeting on the schedule does not change the fact that neither the White House nor a single Democrat in Congress has proposed a plan that would allow the government to remain open and that would respond to the voters by reining in spending.

All we get is talk. The President made an audacious assertion yesterday after the 2-week CR was passed. He said he wants his advisers to come up with a plan that "makes sure we are living within our means." Live within our means?

Let me remind you, Mr. President, that the President's budget has us amassing a national debt of more than \$20 trillion within the next 5 years—amassing a national debt of over \$20 trillion within the next 5 years. We are projected to spend this year \$1.6 trillion this year more than we are taking in. That is a \$1.6 trillion deficit this year.

Does this mean we can expect the President's Budget Director to present us with a piece of paper that outlines \$1.6 trillion in cuts for the current fiscal year? If so, that is great news.

If the President's measure of success, as he said, is a plan that makes sure we

actually live within our means, the way most people do, count on me showing up early for this meeting. Unfortunately, I suspect the President is once again just saying something he thinks people want to hear.

The fact is, if Democrats had a plan of their own that would cut one dollar in spending, I think we would have seen it by now. But we have not. Democrats have abdicated all responsibility for their own recklessness over the last 2 years. They have left us to do something about it.

We made a step in the right direction yesterday after months of resistance on their part. Now we look forward to their plan. It is time for Democrats to present a serious plan of their own that addresses this crisis. It is time for Democrats to take the concerns of the American people seriously.

#### 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, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half, and the majority controlling the final half.

The Republican leader is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. MCCONNELL and Mr. PAUL pertaining to the introduction of S. 468 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. PAUL. Mr. President, I note 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. WARNER. 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. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask to speak for up to 8 minutes on the Democratic time.

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

#### HONORING ROBERT BENZON

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to honor another great Federal employee and a constituent of mine from Fredericksburg, VA.

As we debate this week and over the coming weeks about making sure the Federal Government stays open, I think it is important to realize what we are talking about are the real lives

of many of our great Federal employees who provide the services day-in and day-out to make sure many important public purposes are served.

I know the Presiding Officer realizes this is an initiative that our former colleague, the Senator from Delaware, started. I was proud, when Senator Kaufman moved on, to pick up that mantle on a regular basis, coming to the floor of the Senate to recognize Federal employees who very often, in an unsung way, do great things for our country.

The Federal employee I am going to recognize is someone who the Presiding Officer, who I know, spends a lot of time in the air, coming from the great State of New Mexico, will be particularly interested in. My colleague, the Senator from Illinois, who is also present, spends a lot of time in the air as well. That is the subject of what we will talk about today.

Nearly 2 million people in the United States take to the skies every day. Once in flight, their safety relies on the diligent work of individuals responsible for ensuring that airplanes are well-designed and safe. When we reach our destination, as we often do, it is because of their tireless work.

In the rare moments when accidents happen, we rely on individuals like Robert Benzon who possess the skill and innovative thinking to find the cause of the accident and ensure we don't make the same mistake twice.

Robert Benzon is a senior air safety investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board. His job is to investigate aircraft accidents. He analyzes the equipment and data, identifies the cause of the accident and makes recommendations to the industry on how to improve safety.

He began his career flying combat missions in Vietnam as an Air Force pilot. In 1984, he went to work for the National Transportation Safety Board in Chicago.

Over his 25-year career, he has served as the lead investigator in several high-profile cases and is considered the best in his field. More than 80 percent of his team's recommendations have been adopted by the industry.

In 1996, Mr. Benzon led the investigation of the TWA flight 800 crash in the Atlantic Ocean. His investigation following this crash led to the recommendation that oxygen contained in aircraft fuel tanks be replaced with another nonburning gas, like Nitrogen, to prevent fuel tank explosions.

In 2001, Mr. Benzon led the investigation of the fatal crash of American Airlines flight 587 in Queens, NY. His investigation led to an industry-wide redesign of the rudder system, as well as changes to the pilot training program for similar aircrafts.

Mr. Benzon also led the investigation of U.S. Airways flight 1549, known nationwide as the "Miracle on the Hudson," which made Captain Sullenberger a household name. His investigation included an analysis of the engine damage and black box flight recorders,