



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 157

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 2011

No. 32

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.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.

God, You created us in Your image and gave us a conscience to enable us to realize our accountability to You. Help the Members of this body to be responsible stewards of their influence and opportunities. May they not miss opportunities to join You in Your liberation thrust in our world, persevering in the right as You give them the light to see it. Empower them to be true to You and true to themselves, even though they must travel on the road of pain and sacrifice. Strengthen them to work today with the confidence that You are with them.

We pray in Your merciful 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. INOUE).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 4, 2011.

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.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
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 any leader remarks, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

As a reminder, cloture was filed on S. 23, the America Invents Act. The filing deadline for first-degree amendments is 1 p.m. today, Friday, March 4.

There will be no rollcall votes today. We should expect at least three rollcall votes at 5:30 p.m., on Monday, March 7. The first two votes will be on the confirmation of judges and the third vote will be on the motion to invoke cloture on S. 23, the patent bill.

Would the Chair announce morning business.

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, 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. MCCONNELL. 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 MINORITY LEADER

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

CHANGING THE STATUS QUO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier this week, Republicans showed we can change the status quo in Washington.

The American people have made their position quite clear: Reverse the reckless spending and out-of-control expansion of government that Democrats have presided over during the past 2 years; stop growing government so Americans can grow the economy and the jobs that come along with that. Republicans made a small first step in that direction.

Democrats have taken a different approach to these concerns. They have sat on the sidelines hoping the public's concerns would pass or hoping that if they made enough of a stink over small cuts, they would seem bigger than they are. In other words, the Democrats' whole approach is to see what they can get away with rather than to actually do something about the debt and jobs crises Americans want us to address.

The White House proposal yesterday is equally unserious.

House Republicans have proposed a plan that would reduce spending by \$61 billion in this year's budget. Earlier this week, we voted on a 2-week piece of that bill that reduces spending by \$4 billion.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S1245

The White House proposal, as outlined by the President's economic adviser yesterday, is to cut another \$6 billion and call it a day. Even more outrageous, they say the proposal meets us halfway. I won't get into their tortured justification. Suffice it to say that Politico says it requires Americans to "suspend disbelief." The Washington Post was equally unmoved by the White House logic. They said Democrats are disingenuous in suggesting they have worked hard to reduce spending, and they agree that calling the latest proposal an effort to meet us halfway is nonsense. That is the Washington Post. They agree that calling this latest proposal an effort to meet us halfway nonsense.

So amid all the fanfare yesterday, what the White House is proposing is little more than one more proposal to maintain the status quo—to give the appearance of action where there is none. The latest proposal is unacceptable and it is indefensible.

The American people are tired of hearing the same old talking points from our Democratic friends. They want action. In fact, they demand action. They want us to cut spending to help create a better environment for job creation. It is time for Washington Democrats to get serious.

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. DURBIN. 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.

BUDGET PRIORITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the American economy is struggling. We are coming out of recession—unfortunately, too slowly for most of us—but we are emerging.

I can recall the ominous days when we first learned of the terrible economic crisis facing our country. Some of us who serve in the Senate Chamber were called into a meeting with the Chairman of the Federal Reserve, Mr. Bernanke, and then Secretary of the Treasury Mr. Paulson, and they told us the grim news that if we didn't act and act quickly, we could see the American economy sinking lower, and perhaps even experience a global depression. It was a frightening time. It was a time before this current President came to office, and we had to act together on a bipartisan basis.

Decisions were made by many of us, trusting those in the Bush administration who told us if we didn't act and act quickly, jobs would be lost and businesses would fail and people would lose their savings, and it would be catastrophic. So we went forward with a plan that initially I thought to be

flawed but the only show in town, trying to help financial institutions survive the terrible economy and to turn this situation around. We can say now that most of the money—virtually all of the money—that was invested in these financial institutions has been repaid with interest to the Federal Government, which is the right thing. And we continue to pursue those such as AIG where the government has a substantial ownership in an effort to make certain that taxpayers recoup the investment that saved a major insurance company. That is a good thing.

Meanwhile, our economy moves forward at a slow pace, but at least it continues to move forward. New unemployment numbers for Illinois were released yesterday and new Federal numbers were released this morning. Those reports show that in Illinois, in the month of January, the unemployment rate was 9 percent, down from 9.3 percent. Also, 599,400 Illinoisans are looking for work, down from 620,600 last month. Nationally, in the month of February, the unemployment rate was 8.9 percent, down from 9.0 last month, and significantly down from where it was a few months ago. Also, 13.7 million Americans are looking for work, down from 13.9 million last month. The report also shows that the economy added 192,000 new jobs.

Unfortunately, the response of Congress has not taken into consideration how fragile this economy is and how important the recovery is. We hear from the other side—from Senator MCCONNELL this morning and others—that the biggest problem facing America today is our deficit. I would say to the Presiding Officer, who joins me in a bipartisan effort to try to deal with this deficit, we concede that point. The deficit is a major issue. But we want to take care that the way we solve the deficit issue is sensitive to the state of the economy and our need to work together to end this recession.

So that is why H.R. 1, the House Republican budget, is a bill which I can't support. It is not a good budget bill because it takes money out of key investments in our economy at a time when we need them the most. When we need to have better trained workers with skills for new jobs, the House budget on the Republican side devastates worker training programs.

Why would you do that in the midst of a recession with so many people out of work, at a time when we need more students graduating from college with diplomas and new skills and opportunities? The House Republican budget cuts the Pell grants—the amount of money given to those students from low-income families—by over \$800 a year. Many young people will have to give up on education and delay it because of that. How does that help us in our recovery? It doesn't.

Equally troubling is the House Republican budget, which makes devastating cuts in areas of research and innovation. I am not saying the best

jobs in America are going to be government jobs; they are not and they should not be. They are going to be private sector jobs. But time and again our private sector turns to our National Laboratories for the research on the products they need to compete in the world.

The rollout of the Chevy Volt was announced all across the Nation. General Motors was so proud. Here is an all-electric vehicle they are going to sell to America. I am glad they are doing it. It is not only environmentally responsible, but it reduces our dependence upon foreign energy.

How did General Motors—this great corporation—develop the Chevy Volt? The first stop was the Argonne National Laboratory outside of Chicago, where they worked with government scientists to build the battery to put in the Chevy Volt. That is important.

What is going to happen to the Argonne National Laboratory because of the House Republican budget? They will be forced to lay off one-third of their scientists, engineers, and support staff for the remainder of the year, and they will cancel up to 50 percent of their research activities, not just in new battery technology but in developing the next generation of computers. Where is the fastest computer in the world today? It is not in the U.S.A.; it is in China. We are trying to step ahead and make sure the next fastest computer that can be used to drive technology, invention, innovation, new companies, and new jobs is right here in America. Yet the House Republicans come up with devastating cuts on the national research labs such as Argonne. How can we justify it?

At the same time, they are cutting money to the National Institutes of Health. If there is one thing we all have in common, all of us—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—it is our own vulnerability to illness and disease. That is a fact. When it happens, you want to make sure you or your loved ones are in the hands of the best doctor, the best hospital, with the best medicine and the best technology. We get that by investing in medical research.

What does the House Republican budget do? It cuts medical research. How could we possibly cut back on research for cancer, Alzheimer's, AIDS, and diabetes? How can we do that when so many Americans are afflicted and so many costs are associated with those diseases? It is so shortsighted, and it is an indication that when they came to write the budget, the House Republican leadership didn't focus thoughtfully on what we need to cut to reduce the deficit and what we need to invest in to build the economy. They put them all together and said it makes no difference. If you have government spending, it is not going to matter what it is.

Well, there are infrastructure projects—new roads, bridges, airports, and ports—that are essential for the growth of our economy.