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## Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord, as we begin today's session, we ask that Your spirit would guide the deliberations of our lawmakers. Move in their hearts, directing their thoughts and intentions to noble ends. May our Senators hear Your voice and embrace Your wisdom as they seek to keep our Nation strong and lead the world into a new era of freedom.

Lord, help our Nation's leaders stand tall for righteousness. Embue them with stamina for the long days ahead. Bind them together as prayer partners as they deal with the diversity of ideas. And, Lord, bless all who labor for liberty on Capitol Hill, and their families.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND 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, March 30, 2011.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,  
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND 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. Madam President, following any leader remarks, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 493, the small business jobs bill. Rollcall votes in relation to amendments to the small business jobs bill are possible today. We hope our friends on the Republican side who are blocking will allow us to move forward on this bill. There are a number of nongermane and really nonappropriate amendments on this bill. We have agreed to go ahead and work on those. Two that are the most glaring are the 1099, which we need to resolve, and the EPA controversy we have. We are being blocked on the other side from even getting votes on these amendments.

We were told earlier in the session that what the Republicans wanted was an open amendment process. That is great, except we have an open amendment process and they will not let us vote on the bills. I hope that changes. They will not let us vote on the amendments or the bills. Anyway, if the logjam is broken, we will schedule them as soon as we can.

There will be a Senators-only briefing today regarding Libya with Secretary Clinton, Secretary Gates, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen. That will be at 5 p.m. in the new Visitor Center.

### BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. REID. Madam President, as the country watches, we continue to work toward a bipartisan, bicameral agreement to keep the country running. Let me update the Senate on where we stand.

I want everyone to know how things looked from the beginning, but also let's talk about how they look right now from the negotiating table. Much of the criticism in this process has come from people who are not even sitting at the negotiating table. I am, and so is Speaker BOEHNER. I am glad he has returned to the conversation. It is obvious he has a difficult situation on his hands, and I do not envy him in that regard. He is getting a lot of pressure from the tea party folks to dig in his heels even if it hurts and destroys the recovery we have going now.

What is worse, the country does not care much about the tea party. There is a new CNN poll out today that says this very directly. Let's put it this way: The people who care about the tea party are a very small number—who care about them positively. Those who think about them negatively is very high, more than 50 percent. And that does not mean 50 percent favor the tea party. It does not. Fifty percent of the American people do not want anything to do with the tea party. Only a small percentage identify with the tea party. The interesting thing and I think the important thing to the country is that the tea party's unpopularity continues to grow because the American people see how unreasonable they are.

Let me reiterate my hope that the Republican leadership recognizes they cannot continue to be pulled to the

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



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right by the radical, unrealistic, unreasonable—I repeat, radical—and unpopular faction, the tea party. I have always said that once the economy gets better, they are going to fade out fairly quickly. It is getting better, and they are fading out. If people want to move the country forward, they cannot let the tea party call the shots.

Our proposal still stands. It is a number the Republicans were for before they were against it. We got that number by relying on reality, not ideology. I repeat, we know the answer lies in the middle. Neither party can pass a budget without the other party. We have already proven that. Neither Chamber can send it to the President without the other Chamber.

I look forward to getting this done so we can avoid the many terrible consequences that come with a shutdown. We do not want that to happen, and if it is up to us on this side of the aisle, it will not happen.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### APPROACH TO ENERGY

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, later this morning, the President is expected to outline his vision for improving our Nation's energy security. But, as we frequently have seen with this administration, what it says and what it does are often two very different things. So this morning I would like to discuss some of the things the administration has actually done when it comes to energy, and then I would like to propose some things Republicans would do differently.

It should go without saying that Americans are ready for action on this issue. With average gas prices approaching \$4 a gallon in most parts of the country, growing uncertainty and unrest in the Middle East, and a jobs crisis here at home, Americans want the President to outline a serious plan today which will make us less dependent, not more, on foreign sources of oil and which stimulates job creation here. Unfortunately, what they have gotten instead are more of the same half-hearted proposals Democrats have trotted out every other time Americans get squeezed at the pump. Instead of facing the problem of higher energy prices head-on, Democrats are once again paying lip service to those concerns with fake solutions that only aim to distract people from what they are really up to.

It is my hope that the President changes that tune today, but I am not holding my breath because we have seen how this plays out many times before. Tell a Democrat in Washington that gas prices are too high, and as if on cue they will throw together a speech or a press conference to suggest

that we open an underground oil reserve that was created to deal with calamities, not market pressures; they will take you on a tour of some alternative car plant that promises to have one of its \$100,000 prototypes to market 25 years down the road or they will quietly release some report to the media about how energy companies really are not working hard enough to extract oil, while schizophrenically claiming American reserves are minuscule and that more production is not the solution.

This last item is a perennial favorite of our friends on the other side. The idea here is to somehow blame energy companies for not producing enough energy on their own. What Democrats don't mention, however, is that a drilling lease is nothing more than an agreement with the government that a company has a right to explore for oil and gas in a certain area, not a guarantee that they will find it. They never see fit to mention that most of the area that could be leased is off limits thanks to the redtape factory Democrats operate here in Washington. Honestly, are we supposed to believe that the same administration that declared a blanket moratorium on all offshore drilling off the gulf coast, which chased away rigs and jobs to other countries, and which established new regulations that make getting a new drilling permit virtually impossible, now believes that energy companies aren't drilling enough?

This doesn't even pass the laugh test, but it does suggest that Democrats don't even believe their own arguments about decreased production not affecting price. It is my hope that the President acknowledges as much today—that when you shut down drilling, higher prices and fewer jobs are sure to follow.

The truth is we could use a lot more honesty on this whole issue from Democrats. Despite what some on the other side might say, Republicans are as eager as Democrats to develop alternative sources of energy. But everybody knows it will take years, if not decades, to get to the point where they will be economically viable and widely used. The President's target is decades from now. But Americans should be able to expect action now, and all they get from Democrats is a pretty picture of some far-off future we have been hearing about for decades, and not a word about the things Democrats are doing to make it harder to find and use energy we already have right here.

Initial news reports about the President's speech today mention that the administration is determined to derive 80 percent of U.S. energy from clean energy sources in the year 2035. I am sure we could generate a great deal of bipartisan support for much of what the President will call for, assuming it doesn't involve Federal mandates. But what does any of this have to do with the crisis at hand—the crisis right now? The guy who is trying to make

ends meet wants to know what you are going to do for him today, not 24 years from now. But, of course, the administration doesn't have anything to say to that guy because the administration's energy policy isn't aimed at him. If it were, then the administration would be locking down domestic energy sources. It wouldn't be looking to pass new regulations through the EPA that will impose a national energy tax on every business, large and small. It wouldn't be telling our allies in Brazil that while it is great that they found oil off their coast, those who want to search for oil off our coast and on our mainland can't. In other words, it is great the Brazilians are drilling offshore but not so good that we are. It wouldn't be telling job creators in the energy industry to look elsewhere.

In his remarks today, the President is also expected to call for decreasing imports of foreign oil. Yet last week he told Brazilians that he hopes America becomes a major customer of Brazilian oil. Well, which is it? Which is it, Mr. President? Clearly, on this issue, the President is telling people what he thinks they want to hear.

Over the past 2 years, the administration has undertaken what can only be described as a war on American energy. It has canceled dozens of drilling leases, it has declared a moratorium on drilling off the gulf coast, it has increased permit fees, and it has prolonged public comment periods. In short, it has done about everything it can to keep our energy sector from growing. As a result, thousands of U.S. workers have lost their jobs as companies have been forced to look elsewhere for a better business climate.

Consider this: Three of the areas we could tap in Alaska are thought to hold enough oil to replace our crude imports from the Persian Gulf for nearly 65 years. So the problem isn't that we need to look elsewhere for our energy. The problem is that Democrats don't want us to use the energy we have. It is enough to make you wonder whether anybody in the White House has driven by a gas station lately.

No, the crisis we face is immediate and it requires immediate action, and that is why Republicans have come up with two concrete proposals that will have a positive practical effect—two things we can do to give Americans relief, job creators a reason to hire, and make all of us less dependent on foreign sources of oil.

First, let's increase American energy production by cutting the redtape and opening areas that the administration has either temporarily blocked, stalled, or closed off to production.

Let's block any new regulations that will drive up production costs for energy, including the administration's proposed new EPA regulations on carbon emissions.

The first proposal is guaranteed—to create jobs by unlocking our energy resources. The second has been described as one of the