



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 157

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 2011

No. 89

Senate

(Legislative day of Thursday, June 16, 2011)

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

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

You come to us, O Lord. Into our poverty comes Your wealth. Into our emptiness comes Your fullness. Into our fears comes Your peace. Into our ugliness comes Your beauty. Empower our Senators to prepare themselves for Your coming. Remove any barrier that will keep them from experiencing Your presence. Lord, give them more than human wisdom so that justice, truth, and peace will prevail.

Come to us, O Lord, and make us instruments of Your peace. We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET 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, June 21, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET, a

Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

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

Mr. REID. 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. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 be in morning business until 11 a.m., with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half. I would ask at this time that the morning business hour be a full hour, not stop at 11.

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

Mr. REID. The filing deadline for second-degree amendments to S. 782, the Economic Development Revitalization Act, is at 11 a.m. this morning.

Following morning business, the Senate will be in executive session to consider the nomination of Michael Simon to be United States District Judge in Oregon. Then, at noon, there will be a vote on confirmation of the Simon nomination.

Following the vote, the Senate will recess until 2:15 p.m. today for the weekly caucus meetings.

At 2:15, the Senate will consider the nomination of Leon Panetta to be Secretary of Defense, with 2 hours of debate. At about 4:15 this afternoon, Senators should expect up to three rollcall votes: the first on confirmation of the Panetta nomination; the second will be a cloture vote on the EDA bill; and, if cloture is not invoked, there will be a third vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to the Presidential Appointment and Streamlining Act.

I might note that this, or some version of this, we have talked about for a long time. When Senator MCCONNELL and I were both whips, we talked about this legislation and spent a lot of time on it.

EDA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this afternoon we will have a cloture vote on reauthorization of the Economic Development Administration, a law we have depended on for more than 50 years.

This is the fourth jobs bill Democrats have brought to the floor this year. I do hope Republicans will not allow it to be the fourth jobs bill to wither on the vine thanks to their obstructionist tactics. This is a good piece of legislation with decades of helping American businesses in economically distressed communities to innovate, grow, and to hire.

In the last 5 years alone, the Economic Development Administration has created 314,000 jobs and successfully turned every \$1 in Federal investment into \$7 in private sector investment. It is good legislation that will create good jobs for Americans who need these jobs. Unfortunately, that is not enough to win bipartisan support among Republicans here in the District of Columbia who are more interested in

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S3939

destroying Medicare than creating jobs.

The Small Business innovation research bill is a good piece of legislation too. That also died in the Senate last month under a pile of unrelated amendments. The bills the Senate passed this year reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration and reforming America's patent system were good legislation also. They would have created or saved about 480,000 jobs. It made it out of the Senate alive but now languishes in the Republican-controlled House. Will the Economic Development Authority suffer the same fate? I hope not.

Here, 24 hours ago, I presented to the American people in the Senate a myriad of amendments that have been filed in regard to this legislation. A lot have been offered but more filed. I read about 40 of them dealing with different types of endangered species, the lesser sand dune reptile. I don't remember what it was, but all kinds of nonrelated amendments. Global warming. Post office reform. As I said, almost 100 amendments, and I read 35 or 40 of them here yesterday, having nothing to do with this legislation. Nothing.

I hope we don't have another bill that is blocked, the fourth this year. If they do that, it would be clear they are more interested in this rightwing ideology than creating much-needed employment. Of the 90-plus amendments, I repeat, only one of which my staff was able to find had any germaneness to the bill, and that is one the chairman of the committee, Senator BOXER, would agree to anyway because it was offered by Senator INHOFE.

This is an important piece of legislation. This legislation will put hundreds of thousands of people to work. So today's vote is again about priorities. Americans have been very clear, job creation is their No. 1 priority, their No. 2 priority, and their No. 3 priority. Democrats share that priority. Republicans obviously don't.

We will never stop bringing jobs bills to the floor, and we will never stop fighting the other side's obstructionism to try to get them passed. Again, Republicans have a different priority, it appears, and that is ending Medicare. And that is too bad. They have worked hard to block three bills that could have created and saved hundreds of thousands of jobs during tough economic times, but they pushed even harder for their ideological plan to kill Medicare as we know it.

The Republican plan would put insurance company bureaucrats between seniors and their doctors. Every senior would pay \$6,400 more for health care in the first year alone. It would force more than 7 million seniors to pay more for cancer screenings, wellness checks, and treatments beginning next year.

Americans have been clear about this too, very clear. They have resoundingly rejected this ideological plan to hurt seniors. Republicans think it is a

bad idea. Democrats think it is a bad idea. And, of course, the Independents think it is a bad idea. All polls show this.

Unfortunately, I haven't heard a shred of evidence that my Republican friends here in Congress are getting the message on Medicare that the American people have gotten. Today they will have a chance to show the American people once again whether they have heard the message on jobs. I hope they have, because so much is at stake. And America is watching.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

KENTUCKY COAL MINERS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday I came to the floor to report that there were several miners in my State trapped in a mine as a result of floods. I want to start today with an update on that situation.

I am happy to report that all three were rescued after spending 14 hours trapped in a Bell County coal mine. They were all reunited with their families last night, which is great news. Their families were waiting for them at the West Cumberland Baptist Church, and we are certainly glad this particular story had a happy ending.

DEBT REDUCTION

Mr. McCONNELL. This morning, I wish to say a word about the upcoming vote on the debt ceiling and the bipartisan negotiation surrounding it, to reiterate why we are having these talks and what they ought to achieve. But first, a little context.

Right now, ratings agencies are threatening to downgrade U.S. debt, putting us on red alert that the kind of economic crisis we are seeing in parts of Europe could very quickly happen right here.

We know that failing to do something significant about our fiscal problems would be a serious drag on jobs and our economy. That is why, over the past several weeks, I have come to the floor of the Senate and spoken at press conferences, with a now familiar refrain: The time to act on significant reforms is right now. And I have been crystal clear about what qualifies as significant.

Above all, it means doing something to strengthen and preserve our long-term entitlement programs, so we can actually keep our promises to those who have been paying into these programs for years, and so these programs don't end up consuming every single dollar we take in. Entitlements are the biggest drivers of our debt. By definition, they have to be a part of any plan to lower the debt.

This is hardly a controversial view. Everyone from the President on down has said that entitlements must be reformed if we have any chance at all of reining in our debt and strengthening our long-term fiscal health.

In fact, 3 months ago, 31 Senate Democrats signed a letter to the President urging him to put together a plan to reduce the deficit, a plan they said they hoped would include entitlement changes, 31 members of the Democratic conference right here on the other side of the aisle, including the occupant of the chair.

As the occupant of the chair put it recently, "I think it's absolutely clear that we have to redesign our entitlement programs."

Here is how Senator DURBIN put it a few weeks ago: "We have serious economic problems ahead of us if we don't have some reform in both Medicare and Social Security."

This was from former President Bill Clinton after the recent congressional election in New York: "I don't think that the Democrats or the Republicans should conclude from the New York race that no changes can be made in Medicare," he said, "[or] that no changes can be made in Social Security . . . that no changes can be made that will deal with this long-term debt problem."

Here is President Obama's lead negotiator on the debt talks, Vice President BIDEN, from last January: "Everybody talks about we have to do something about Social Security and Medicare, and we do."

Here are the two chairs of the President's debt commission, Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, in a recent op-ed in "Politico": "A credible plan must address the growth of entitlement spending . . ."

Here is the President himself, about a month after he took office: "To preserve our long-term fiscal health we must . . . address the growing costs in Medicare and Social Security."

And, as for me, I have been clear on this same point in public and in private from the moment I stepped out of a meeting with the President and other Members of Congress at the White House on May 12.

So it is not exactly a groundbreaking observation that if these discussions are to mean anything they have to involve entitlement reform since no one believes we actually get at our fiscal problems without it. This is what serious people expect and are hoping for out of these talks.

The moment requires, as I have said for weeks, three things: Real cuts in spending over the short term; that is, over the next 2 years—not more spending increases or "freezes"; real cuts over the medium-term; that is, over the next 10 years with enforceable caps on spending; and meaningful reforms to entitlements, which are the major drivers of our debt. That is the definition of a significant package.

Some Democrats are insisting that they will only agree to cuts if Republicans agree to raise revenue. That is