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## Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who fulfills the desires of those who have reverence for Your Name, let Your will be done today on Capitol Hill. Give our Senators a clear understanding of Your providential purposes, so that they will not deviate from Your desired plan. Inspire them to seek Your guidance and depend on You to bring them through the myriad challenges of our time. Lord, infuse them with a spirit of reconciliation that will break down divisive walls, bringing harmony and cooperation. Strengthen them for this day's journey, as Your spirit empowers them to faithfully honor You in their thoughts, words, and deeds.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, September 13, 2011.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,  
President pro tempore.

Mrs. SHAHEEN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, I would note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour. The majority will control the first half and the Republicans will control the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 66. This legislation is the vehicle we need to do the FEMA funding. The Senate will recess, as we always do on Tuesdays, from 12:30 to 2:15 for our weekly caucus meetings.

### FEMA FUNDING

Mr. REID. Madam President, this week the Republicans sent a message to victims of the devastating hurricanes, wildfires, and tornados. That message was "tough luck."

Last night, we tried to move forward on a measure that would grant the

Federal Emergency Management Agency additional funding to help communities devastated by natural disasters. This ought to be the least political issue we have, whether to reach out a helping hand to our friends and neighbors in a time of need.

These unfortunate people have lost friends and loved ones. They have lost their homes, businesses, and livelihoods. They have been destroyed by acts of God. I went over this with my wife last night, and she said: Why would you use a term like that? Well, in the law, that is what these floods, these terrible windstorms, and these fires are—they are acts of God. We can't plan for them; they just happen. In the law, that is the term of art we use.

These people have lost loved ones and friends, and their property is underwater or literally reduced to rubble. It is in our power to help them. It is an obligation we have to help them. Last night, Republicans overwhelmingly voted to prevent us from coming to their aid. They prevented us from getting disaster aid to American families and businesses that need it now. These unfortunate people, I repeat, don't need the help next week or next month or 6 months from now, they need it now, today. It is unthinkable that Republicans would waste time catering to the radical tea party while innocent victims of devastating disasters hide their time. One of the leaders of the tea party, a Member of the House of Representatives, has said very publicly that we should get rid of FEMA. But this is not a nation that stands idly by while our fellow Americans suffer. We are a nation of action. That is what we have always been. When it is in our power to aid a fellow citizen, we have always done what it takes. We have done it without politics, without pandering, without a moment's delay—until today.

This year the United States has dealt with more than its usual share of terrible natural disasters. Hurricane Irene

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



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is estimated to be one of the most costly disasters ever to hit this country. It caused flooding and wind damage from Florida to Maine. That is a long ways. It is a huge coastline. But its damage was not only to the coastline. Interior States such as Vermont suffered terrible damage, hundreds of bridges in Vermont, and scores of bridges in the State of the Presiding Officer, the State of New Hampshire. Crops were drowned all over the Northeast. It is rarely that this has ever happened.

Just a few short weeks ago an earthquake such as we have not had in this part of the country for 65 years occurred. The epicenter was in Virginia. It was felt by tens of millions of people in every corner of the Eastern United States. It damaged buildings in Richmond and closed the Washington Monument. The National Cathedral had some of its spires damaged. It is closed now. The 9/11 celebration was to take place there. They had to move it to the Kennedy Center. Some of the spires were knocked off the Mormon Temple that we see as we drive down the beltway. There was record flooding on the Mississippi and Missouri that cost lives and devastated farmland.

To get a picture of the devastation, 3 million acres of farmland is underwater now. This is not rice that grows there, these are crops that need to be away from that much water. It is devastating to farmland in that part of the country.

In February a massive blizzard buried the Midwest and Northeast with as much as 3 feet of snow, paralyzing the city of Chicago, and 36 people died. Even now, firefighters are battling terrible wildfires that have ravaged for weeks and weeks across central Texas. Those fires have killed people and driven residents from their homes, homes they will never see again. In Texas, 2,000 homes have been burned to the ground. Since January, Texas has reported—this is not a misstatement—20,000 fires. Some of the small fires developed into big fires, burning almost 4 million acres of land. The State Forest Service in Texas responded to 19 new fires on Sunday alone, in 24 hours—almost a new fire an hour in Texas.

This year President Obama has issued disaster declarations in 48 States, and it is only September. Some States have had multiple disasters. The United States has had \$10 billion worth of disasters already this year. It is no wonder there are limited moneys left in FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund. FEMA has spent about \$400 million in the last 2 weeks alone making whole American families, victims of Irene and Lee, a tropical storm and a hurricane.

In short, FEMA is running out of money. They are almost broke. Funds are so low FEMA stopped rebuilding Joplin, MO, where more than 150 people died in that terrible tornado. FEMA has programs where they were rebuilding the schools and some of the public services that were so necessary. But they wanted to have enough money to

supply the food, water, and emergency housing for victims of Hurricane Irene, so they pulled out of Joplin, MO.

We have seen the pictures. It is hard to comprehend what winds blowing almost 300 miles an hour do. They just eliminate everything on the ground. Any structure was eliminated.

This is not some Democratic idea that has come about, that we need to fund FEMA. Republican Governors are desperate for money. They have seen the destruction firsthand. I will pick just two: the Governor in New Jersey, Governor Christie, said this:

Our people are suffering now and they need support now.

Governor McDonald of Virginia said this:

My concern is that we help people in need.

He responded in that way because the Republican majority leader of the House said what we need to do is make sure these emergencies are paid for by taking money from programs that are now in existence.

We cannot be held hostage on that issue to appease the tea party. Hundreds of millions of dollars in disaster recovery projects are on hold. I mentioned Joplin, MO, as just one example. No matter how often we wish for a crystal ball, the process of guessing how much money we will need for natural disasters is not perfect. We have tried, but this has been a very devastating year. Each year Congress estimates how much it will cost this country to recover from inevitable storms and fires and floods, and then it reacts to what Mother Nature sends our way.

Now is the time to react. It is time to show Americans, as we did in the wake of September 11, that when disaster strikes the Federal Government will be there to help rebuild.

These are very hard personal issues. Here in a Virginia suburb, a 12-year-old boy was out watching it rain. He was swept off his back step, and he is dead. Scores of people have been killed just in Lee and Irene. It is time for Republicans to prove that this Congress, for the first time, is willing to put politics aside for the good of the American people.

FEMA is an issue that is bipartisan in nature. Those storms don't just hit Republicans; they don't just hit Democrats; they don't just hit Independents; they hit us all. That is why we have to react to help people in America because they have been hurt.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### THE JOBS PLAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, last week President Obama came up to Capitol Hill to unveil a stimulus bill he is calling a jobs plan, and yesterday

the White House explained how they would like to pay for it. The first thing to say about this plan is that it is now obvious why the President left out the specifics last week. Not only does it reveal the political nature of this bill, it also reinforces the growing perception that this administration is not all that interested in economic policies that will actually work.

But none of this is news. Over the past few days, press reports have made it perfectly clear that this legislation is more of a reelection plan than a jobs plan. It is an open secret which Democrats all over Washington have been acknowledging to reporters since the moment the President revealed it. They have said that despite the President's calls to pass this bill immediately, the real plan is to let it hang out there for a while so Democrats can use it as an issue on the campaign trail. What is more, the President knew as well as I did when he unveiled this plan that Democrats in the Senate had already scheduled a full slate of legislative business for the next few weeks. So unless the White House wants to admit that it has no regard for its own party's legislative business in Congress, the President's call for immediate action was clearly little more than a rhetorical flourish.

But the specifics we got yesterday only reinforced the impression that this was largely a political exercise. For one, they undermined the President's claim that it is a bipartisan proposal because much of what he is proposing has already been rejected on a bipartisan basis. The  $\frac{1}{2}$  trillion tax hike the White House proposed yesterday will not only face a tough road in Congress among Republicans but from Democrats too.

The central tax hike included in this bill, capping deductions for individuals and small businesses, was already dismissed by a filibuster-proof, Democratic-controlled Senate in 2009. Another idea floated by the White House yesterday, a tax on investment income, has been vehemently opposed by the No. 3 Democrat in the Senate, among others. A proposal to raise taxes on the oil and gas industry was rejected as a job-destroying tax hike by both Democrats and Republicans just a few months ago, and for good reason, since the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service tells us it would not only raise gas prices but, in addition to raising gas prices, would move jobs overseas. So claiming this bill is bipartisan may sound good if you are out there on the campaign trail, but surely the President could come up with some proposals that both sides had not already rejected.

Here is how one prominent left-leaning analyst put it yesterday: "These aren't new policy ideas," he wrote. "The Obama administration has been looking to cap itemized deductions since the 2009 budget. Nor are they bipartisan policy ideas. . . ."

The specifics we got yesterday were disappointing for another reason as