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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 Lord God, we believe that You will never fail or forsake us, but help us to never take Your love and faithfulness for granted. Empower our Senators to be good stewards of the many blessings and of the responsibilities and opportunities You have given them. Lord, open their minds and give them a vision of the unlimited possibilities available to those who trust You as their guide. Incline their ears to hear Your voice and fill them with Your power, O Lord of Hosts. You are the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, who alone is wise. You deserve the honor and glory forever and ever. 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 20, 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.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in morning business for an hour. The Republicans will control the first half and the majority will control the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will begin consideration of H.R. 2832, which is the Generalized System of Preferences Act that is a vehicle for trade adjustment assistance that we are going to be working on.

We are going to recess today from 12:30 until 2:15 p.m. for our weekly caucus meetings.

At 2:30 p.m. today, Senator HELLER will be recognized to deliver his maiden speech in the Senate.

We will work through amendments to trade adjustment assistance. I will notify Senators when votes are scheduled.

SENATOR LAMAR ALEXANDER

Mr. REID. Madam President, I see on the floor today my friend LAMAR ALEXANDER from the great State of Tennessee. I just received a news flash that he was going to relinquish his leadership position and stay in the Senate and run for reelection. I do not know all the reasons for his doing this, but I want the record to be spread with the fact that I have found LAMAR ALEXANDER to be one of the most thoughtful people I have ever served with in the

Senate. There are many issues he gets no credit for that were resolved because of his ability to see the big picture.

We had this big issue dealing with the so-called nuclear option, as to what would happen in the Senate with some of our rules changes. He stepped in, completely out of the limelight, and because of his idea we resolved that issue.

There are many other examples such as that. He is a unique person in this body. He accomplishes a great deal and gets credit for not a lot, and that is unfortunate. But that is who he is and who he has always been. I know he will continue being a stalwart in the Senate. I look forward to working with him, but I look forward mostly to his sense of fairness, which he has been so very exemplary during my time with him in the Senate.

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

Mr. REID. Madam President, 60 years ago this Nation's Armed Forces were segregated by race. Thirty-five years ago women were not allowed to attend our Nation's military academies. Until today—in fact, last night at midnight—thousands and thousands of qualified, dedicated men and women were barred from military service or expelled from the Armed Forces because they were honest about their sexual orientation. Today I am glad to say the time has passed when Americans, willing to give their lives to defend this great Nation, could be turned away from service because of who they loved. Today, don't ask, don't tell is no longer the law of the land. For 17 years we have asked our soldiers to defend a flag that stands for liberty and justice for all, and then required some of those soldiers to keep who they were a secret. In too many cases we have robbed them of their right to fight for their country altogether.

Listen to this staggering number:
More than 13,000 American

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



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servicemembers have been discharged because of this law. The law has been in effect just a short period of time but more than 13,000 have been discharged because of this law which institutionalized discrimination against openly gay soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen. I say "openly gay." This wasn't the case. Some were suspect. There was a long interview on Public Broadcasting this morning about a woman who was discharged at age 22 because of someone reporting they had seen her in a bar with another woman. We will never know how many people; that is, capable men and women, were never offered patriotic service. They could not because the law exposed them to career-ruining discrimination. We have the 13,000-plus, plus thousands of others who said there is no need to do this because I would have to live a lie.

The military's highest commanders and a vast majority of servicemembers agree our fighting force is better off knowing we will have the best and brightest volunteers, regardless of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. There is no place for intolerance in our great Nation and certainly not in our Armed Forces tasked with protecting them.

I am happy to say that today our military policies and our national values are in line. From today forward, no qualified man or woman willing to fight for a nation founded on the principles of tolerance and equality will ever again be denied the right to do so.

FEMA

Mr. REID. Madam President, on Wednesday the House, we are told, will send us a continuing resolution to fund the government through November 18. I was disappointed to see the House shortchanged the Federal Emergency Management Agency. We have been told specifically what they intend to do and it is a real shortchange, by failing to provide the funding to adequately help Americans whose lives have been devastated by floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes. It is staggering to understand the depth of the concern people have.

Yesterday morning I received a call from KENT CONRAD, Senator from North Dakota, who proceeded to explain to me about a city in North Dakota by the name of Minot, a town of about 40,000 people. Twenty-five percent of the homes in Minot, ND, are underwater. Most of those underwater are ruined forever. These are not big mansions. They are homes people have lived in, sometimes for a very long period of time.

Yesterday I was speaking to Senator HOEVEN, who certainly knows North Dakota as well as anyone. He served as Governor there and is now in the Senate. We were talking about the flood. Of course, one of the things people are saying is: Why didn't Congress and the President plan for all this? As Senator HOEVEN described in some detail, how

do you estimate something that has never, ever happened before? Not a 50-year flood took place in North Dakota, not a 100-year flood, not a 500-year flood—it is something that has never happened, ever. This in spite of the fact that they built some dams, even some in Canada, to stop the flooding. It didn't matter, this was so immense. It had never happened before in North Dakota. A sparsely populated State has been devastated by these floods—natural, you say, but certainly unusual floods that have ravaged that State.

That is not the only State. Many States have been hammered hard. Who would ever have thought, a year ago, that a relatively small community, Joplin, MO, would be hit by almost 300-mile-an-hour winds. The winds didn't just whip through, they roiled around there for such a time that they basically destroyed that town.

There are many other examples of what has happened, being unable to determine what would happen in the future. Suffice it to say we provided funds last week here in the Senate to help Americans whose lives had been devastated by floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other natural calamities. In a bipartisan bill for FEMA and other agencies, we passed that help disaster victims need—an additional \$6.9 billion. That is probably not enough, frankly. After the Appropriations Committee did their work, reported the bill out, a bill of some \$6 billion, I asked the different subcommittees to find out what additionally was needed. They came back with another \$3 billion. We pared that down because we wanted to keep within the agreement we had from the Deficit Reduction Act which set that at \$7 billion, and we are slightly under that. That is why we came in with that figure.

That funding, \$6.9 billion, while it does not give everyone everything, will help rebuild after several costly natural disasters, not the least of which is Hurricane Irene.

Tomorrow when the Senate receives the House bill to fund the government for 6 more weeks, we will amend it with the language the Senate passed, the Senate FEMA legislation. This year President Obama has declared disasters in all but two States, and FEMA is quickly running out of money to help American families and communities recover.

I talked to Mr. Fugate, the head of FEMA, last Thursday. He said they have enough money to last probably until September 25th. That is even on a very narrow plane that they are working on. They have stopped the work in Joplin, MO. They have stopped the work because of the devastation that happened in the gulf previously. The only money they are spending now deals with Tropical Storm Lee and Hurricane Irene. They have no more money. They are out of money. So it is desperate.

I know this amendment will enjoy the support of my Republican col-

leagues as it did last week. We had 10 who stepped forward and it was very important that they did that. Last week, a bipartisan group of Senators agreed that helping communities destroyed by natural disasters was too important to let politics get in the way.

PROTECTING THE MIDDLE CLASS

Mr. REID. Madam President, Americans have sent a message to Congress that no issue is more important to them than jobs. But for Republicans, job creation is less important than slashing spending on initiatives that create jobs and the Social Security and Medicare benefits seniors have earned. Democrats believe we can reduce the deficit without abandoning job creation. We can make smart, strategic cuts that will not further slow down our struggling economy, while protecting and advancing initiatives that create jobs. That is why President Obama has released detailed proposals to create 2 million jobs now while reducing the deficit by more than \$4 trillion over the next decade.

But many Republicans have criticized both proposals even before looking at their substance. It seems they are more concerned with protecting millionaires, billionaires, hedge fund managers, and private jet owners than fighting for the middle class. They claim it is class warfare to ask the wealthiest 400 Americans who made an average, these 400, of \$271 million each to pay the same tax rate as librarians, police officers, air traffic controllers, and others—secretaries, as Mr. Buffett talked about.

The truth is, Republicans are just defending the economic policies that besieged the middle class for years. It is class warfare to ask middle-class Americans to get by on less while those same 400 Americans are paying less than 18 percent in their taxes, lower than the secretaries and janitors who work for them.

Let me explain this as well as I can. We will do whatever it takes to protect the middle class and seniors, even if it means the richest of the rich in America have to contribute a little bit more than they do now. We will fight for the policies that create American jobs even if it means CEOs and hedge fund managers making hundreds of millions of dollars every year have to contribute the same amount as teachers or firefighters, whose salaries are a fraction the size of theirs. It is simple fairness.

With 14 million Americans out of work, we have 14 million reasons to put job creation ahead of tax breaks for millionaires and billionaires. As the economist and former Labor Secretary Robert Reich said:

True patriotism isn't cheap. It's about taking on a fair share of the burden of keeping America going.