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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty and everlasting God, who governs all things in Heaven and Earth, mercifully hear our supplications and give us Your peace.

Lord, give our lawmakers this day the grace and wisdom to measure personal convictions in the light of truth and courage. Empower them to act consistent with enlightened conscience, however costly to personal ambition. Give them such a sense of duty that they may leave nothing they ought to do undone. Infuse them with a sense of gratitude that they may offer thanks to You by striving to do Your will.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL 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, November 7, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of Rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of

Connecticut, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 674. At approximately 5:30 p.m., the Senate will vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to that matter.

VOW TO HIRE HEROES ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, every man and woman who puts on the uniform of the U.S. Armed Forces takes a solemn oath to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies. With that oath comes an obligation: to defend the freedoms for which this noble Nation stands and upon which it was founded, without regard to personal price.

For this service, the United States makes a promise to our soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen in return. That promise isn't about flag waving or yellow ribbons. It lasts long after the parades and holidays are over, through every day and every year of their lives. It is a guarantee that the American dream, for which every servicemember fights—and for which many of their comrades have died—will be waiting for them when they return.

Since September 11, 2001, this country has allowed that promise to lapse. Today, there are 240,000 unemployed veterans. These are veterans in the fight against global terrorism. Among veterans who have served since September 11, unemployment is more than 12 percent—more than 3 percentage points higher than among the general population. Among the youngest veterans—those under age 25—the unemployment rate is 22 percent.

These young men and women volunteered to fight terrorism abroad, but their struggles didn't end when they came home. Despite their service and experience, one-quarter of a million post-9/11 veterans can't find employment in today's dismal economy and rapidly changing workforce.

It is time for this country to make good on its promise. As we pay tribute this week to the millions of American veterans who have faithfully served our flag, Democrats want to introduce legislation to put those men and women back to work. VOW to Hire Heroes is the name of the legislation. This will offer tax credits to companies that hire unemployed veterans or veterans who were discharged in the last 5 years. The legislation will give an additional tax credit to the firms that hire unemployed veterans with service-related disabilities. Disabled veterans will also be eligible for an additional year of vocational rehab and employment benefits under this legislation.

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



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The plan makes transition assistance—including resume-writing workshops and career counseling—mandatory for all servicemembers being discharged. Although our veterans are coming home with greater technical and leadership skills than ever before, those skills don't always translate to a civilian resume. This program will help bridge that gap.

Many Federal agencies, such as the VA and Homeland Security, badly need employees with the unique skills veterans possess. This legislation will also make it possible for servicemembers to apply for those jobs before they leave the military. This will allow soldiers to transition from serving their country in uniform to serving the civilian world without a gap in their employment.

To keep our promise to older veterans, the legislation will expand education and training opportunities at community colleges and technical schools for 100,000 unemployed veterans who served before September 11. Democrats believe we owe it to the men and women who have fought for us to fight for them here at home.

The VOW to Hire Heroes is our fourth attempt to pass commonsense legislation that puts Americans back to work and helps jump-start our economy. Senate Republicans unanimously opposed our last three jobs bills, although those bills had the support of the vast majority of Americans—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike. Meanwhile, Republicans have yet to propose a single idea of their own to create jobs. Their obstruction has cost hundreds of thousands of teacher and first responder jobs, it has cost hundreds of thousands of construction jobs, and put reconstruction of our Nation's crumbling roads, bridges, and runways on hold.

Now we will see whether the Senate Republicans are willing to put jobs for veterans at risk as well. I certainly hope they are not. I hope they will join us this week in supporting the legislation that uses ideas originally proposed by Republicans and Democrats to put this Nation's veterans back to work without adding a penny to the deficit.

I believe every man and woman serving in the Senate today is a patriot. I know each and every one of us supports the members of the U.S. armed services and is grateful to every veteran who has served. This week we have the opportunity to express our gratitude and our patriotism with action.

So far, Republicans have stood firm against even the most reasonable plan to create millions of jobs for the sake of politics. It is only a matter of time before they break and join Democrats in our efforts to create jobs and get the economy back on track.

As Veterans Day fast approaches, I urge my Republican colleagues to abandon partisanship and help us honor our commitment to this country's heroes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

WORKING TOGETHER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for the past 3 years, President Obama and Democratic leaders in Congress have spent most of their time pushing policies that actually undermine the private sector. They may have the best of intentions, but the fact is they made a bad economy worse. Unemployment has now stood at 9 percent for more consecutive months than for any other period since World War II, and there are now more than 1 million fewer jobs in this country than when the President's first stimulus bill was signed into law.

So the American people gave the President a chance to do something about jobs and the economy and he failed. That is why last year the American people put Republicans in charge of the House of Representatives—so they could try a different approach, and that is what they have done. For nearly a year now, House Republicans have been following through on their pledge to put Americans back to work by passing bill after bill aimed at helping businesses create jobs.

The problem is, every time Republicans pass one of these bills over in the House, Democrats in the Senate refuse to take it up. The Democrats who run the Senate are letting all these bills die.

Some people want to know why this is happening. They want to know why the Senate will not take up these bills. The answer is actually pretty simple. President Obama and his political advisers have put out the word they do not want Congress to get anything done around here until after next year's election, so the President can go around on the bus and blame Congress for the country's problems, and Democrats in the Senate are lining up right behind him. They are doing the President's bidding.

But that is not stopping Republicans in the House from doing the work they were elected to do, and it is not going to keep the Republican minority in the Senate from calling on Democrats to act.

To date, House Republicans have passed more than 20 pieces of legislation designed to do two things: make it easier for small businesses to create jobs and bills that would pass on a broad bipartisan basis.

Last week, I highlighted 15 such bills the House had already passed and that Senate Democrats should take up. This week, Senate Republicans will highlight several additional such bills the House passed just last week. We are going to keep on talking about these bills until Senate Democrats realize there is no reason we shouldn't take

them up, pass them on a bipartisan basis, and actually do something on jobs around here.

For nearly 3 years, President Obama has demanded we pass massive legislation he knows Republicans have problems with. What we are saying is, let's start with things that have bipartisan support and that we know can pass instead of that other approach.

Since Republicans control the House and Democrats control the Senate, we are not likely to agree on big partisan stuff. But there are a lot of other job-creating measures we actually could agree on. Why don't we focus on them? Let's work together on the things we can all agree on, as we did last month on the trade agreements.

Here is just one example out of many. Last week, the House passed a bill called the Small Company Capital Formation Act, H.R. 1070. It got 421 votes, including 183 Democrats. Only one person in the House voted against the bill.

Here is a jobs bill that is about as popular as Mother's Day. There is no reason not to pass it in the Senate right now. Right now, promising businesses aren't going public because they simply can't afford the high cost of managing the mountain of government paperwork they are required to under current law. So instead of going out there and raising money to grow and hire, they are holding back. They are not expanding and they are not hiring.

We recently heard from the CEO of a pharmaceutical company from Fort Washington, PA, who said companies such as his are at a major disadvantage if they come up with promising new drugs. He has at least one such promising new drug in the pipeline for chronic kidney disease but can't take it to the next level. If firms such as this want to expand and hire, they need to be able to raise capital from investors so they do not go into debt. But current law keeps them from doing so because of all the regulatory burdens that come along with it. I think we should be removing these barriers to growth for companies such as this one, and 183 Democrats in the House actually agree with me.

President Obama actually supports the idea too. He said so in his speech to a joint session of Congress back in September. So this bill is as bipartisan as it gets. One will not find a bill any more bipartisan than this—passed overwhelmingly in the House and supported by the President of the United States. The only thing standing in the way right now is Senate Democrats. They just will not take yes for an answer.

It is only a matter of time before the American people catch on to the Democrats' refusal to act. Once they do, Republicans will be ready with a long and growing list of bipartisan bills that have already passed the House and that we believe the President of the United States would sign. So let's not delay any longer. Let's stop the games, and let's do the work we were sent to do.