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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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.

O God, the hope of the world, let Your kingdom come. Let Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.

Fill the minds of our lawmakers with Your truth so that they will labor for freedom with integrity and compassion. Lord, use them to establish Your rule in the life of our Nation. May they be guides who lead us away from sin, sorrow, and destruction, toward truth, justice, and peace. Shelter them in their coming in and going out, in their labor and leisure, as they seek to advance Your kingdom.

We pray in Your sovereign 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, February 16, 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 of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each. That time will be equally divided and controlled between the leaders or their designees.

At 11 this morning, the Senate will resume consideration of the FAA authorization bill. As a result of cloture being filed yesterday, any germane first-degree amendments must be filed at the desk prior to 1 p.m. today in order for the amendments to be in order postcloture. We have the opportunity to complete this legislation tomorrow. There will be two cloture votes in the morning. We hope to be able to have some votes today. Senators will be notified when rollcall votes are scheduled.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

SPENDING FREEZE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, as the debate over government spending comes into focus this week, I think it is worth noting once again how this debate has shifted in recent weeks.

After 2 years of bailouts and stimulus bills, we are finally talking about how much government should cut instead of how much it should spend.

Obviously, the details matter. And we will be working those out in the weeks ahead. But the fact that this debate has shifted is a testament to the millions of Americans who insisted that their voices be heard on this issue. They have made a difference. It is important we acknowledge that.

Now the question shifts to whether those in power will actually follow through in any serious way. Will Democratic leaders in Washington really do something to rein in a government we can no longer afford or will they just pretend to and hope the American people focus on their words instead of their actions.

Unfortunately, the early signs are discouraging.

The President's response to the growing national alarm about spending and debt was a proposal to freeze government spending at the already-irresponsible levels that he himself has set over the past 2 years—levels that, if maintained, will only intensify the current crisis by putting us deeper and deeper in debt.

The consensus on the President's proposal is that it is both unserious and irresponsible, and that, despite what the President may say, he is not in fact treating this crisis with the seriousness it demands. The President even seemed to concede the point yesterday, saying his budget wasn't adequate to the task and suggesting that maybe Congress could do something more meaningful than he has.

And what do we find in Congress?

Well, we find one party in the House of Representatives making a genuine effort to cut spending and debt, and we find Democrats in the Senate announcing today that they intend to line up behind the President's timid proposal for a partial spending freeze.

In other words, Democratic leaders in Congress intend to join the President

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



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in resigning themselves to a future of growing debts and deficits at a time when Americans are demanding cuts instead.

So here is what we have learned this week: on the most pressing issue of the day, the President and Democratic leaders in Congress have decided to take a pass. They are either unwilling to admit that Washington needs to live within its means or they are completely unwilling to make the tough choices that will get us there.

It is hard to believe, really.

Americans are screaming at us to do something about a \$14 trillion debt, the President proposes a budget that nearly doubles it, and Democrats clap their hands in approval.

Maybe Democrats were so focused on passing their health care bill last year they didn't notice what has been going on in Europe.

Maybe they were so focused on defending their stimulus that they missed a national uprising right here at home about the spending and the debt they have racked up.

Maybe they missed the fact that while they were busy adding \$3 trillion to the debt, nearly 3 million Americans lost their jobs.

Maybe they have been so focused on passing their agenda that they didn't notice the fact that the American people just repudiated their entire agenda.

They need to get real.

The men and women who were sent to Washington this year were not sent here on a mission to keep spending at the levels this administration has set. They were sent here to change the culture, to convince the administration that it needs to change its ways.

Democrats in Washington seem to think they can wait it out; that if they just agree to freeze current spending levels in place people will think they are listening. Don't they realize that current levels of spending are the reason we just had the biggest wave election in a generation?

The senior Senator from New York seems to think that anything short of freezing current spending levels is extreme.

I will tell you what is extreme: extreme is to insist in the middle of a jobs and debt crisis that government has to spend a trillion dollars more than we take in every year.

That is extreme.

Extreme is a view of the world that says government will not live within its means, even when the American people demand it.

Extreme is a view of the world that says the survival of this or that program is more important than the survival of the American dream itself.

Extreme is telling our children they may have to do without because we refuse to do with less.

So I suggest to my Democratic colleagues that they stop thinking about what they can get away with and start thinking about what is actually needed to solve this crisis.

I suggest they start listening to the American people who are telling us in no uncertain terms that a freeze will not cut it.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. COLLINS. 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.

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to proceed for 15 minutes in morning business.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Thank you, Madam President.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 361 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. INHOFE. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. INHOFE pertaining to the introduction of S. 360 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ROBERTS. 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.

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, I understand the time for morning business has come and gone, but I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 20 minutes.

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

REGULATORY RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR ECONOMY ACT OF 2011

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, I recently introduced a bill called the

Regulatory Responsibility for Our Economy Act of 2011—it is S. 358—and I would urge my colleagues who would like to, after hearing my remarks, to cosponsor this. I realize the bill is a mouthful—the Regulatory Responsibility for Our Economy Act—but I think it is appropriate.

This bill would strengthen and codify President Obama's Executive order from January 18. In that Executive order, the President made a commitment to review, to modify, to streamline, to expand or repeal—that is a lot of things, to review, modify, streamline, expand, and repeal—those regulatory actions that are duplicative, unnecessary, overly burdensome, or would have significant economic impacts on Americans. So the Regulatory Responsibility for Our Economy Act of 2011 would ensure just that.

My legislation would require that all regulations put forth by the current and future administrations—regardless of the President—consider the economic burden on American businesses, ensure stakeholder input—i.e., the people who are affected—during the regulatory process, and promote innovation. Back on January 18, the President signed an Executive order to do precisely that, we thought. It was for "improving regulation and regulatory review." But the President also released a factsheet on the intent for his regulatory strategy. It was in detail. Per the factsheet, "In this Executive Order, the President requires Federal agencies to design cost-effective, evidence-based regulations that are compatible with economic growth, job creation, and competitiveness." My legislation would ensure that would actually happen.

In addition, the President published an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal detailing the administration's commitment to reviewing regulations. As part of this op-ed, the President stated:

We have preserved freedom of commerce while applying those rules and regulations necessary to protect the public against threats to our health and safety and to safeguard people in business from abuse.

But he also noted that—and this is the key:

Sometimes those rules have gotten out of balance, placing unreasonable burdens on business—burdens that have stifled innovation and had a chilling effect on growth and jobs.

I must say I absolutely agree with the President. I was extremely pleased when he came out with the Executive order on January 16. And as I travel across my home State, I have heard Kansan after Kansan, regardless of the business, regardless of where they are on Main Street, who find themselves weighed down by the burden of too many regulations. As a matter of fact, I think if any Member of this Senate would like to get a standing ovation from even a group of five at a coffee shop or at a meeting of any organization that is business-oriented or just folks, you can talk about the debt, you