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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. 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:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the architect and sustainer of our destinies, You are the source and center of our highest joy. Bring into this Chamber a unity that will destroy cynicism, criticism, and complacency.

Lord, we need this unity to maintain a government worthy of those who have sacrificed so much for freedom. As the American people view today's deliberations, may they sense a fresh civility and respect that are truly exemplary. Let Your kingdom come. Let Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. 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, April 4, 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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, there will be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of Jimmie Reyna to be U.S. circuit judge. We will vote on that at 5:30 this afternoon.

Additionally, we were able to reach an agreement to vote in relation to H.R. 4, the 1099 repeal. This is not going to be part of the small business jobs bill we have before us. We have spun that out so it can go right to the House. We have spent enough time on the 1099. Senators should expect two rollcall votes on 1099, on Tuesday, prior to the caucus meetings.

I have spoken to the Republican leader, and we think we may have a pathway cleared to finish the small business jobs bill, but we will see how that turns out. We will work on that today and in the morning and certainly at our caucuses tomorrow afternoon.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 706 AND H.R. 471

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am told there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the titles of the bills for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 706) to stimulate the economy, produce domestic energy, and create jobs at no cost to the taxpayers, and without borrowing money from foreign governments for which our children and grandchildren will be responsible, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 471) to reauthorize the DC opportunity scholarship program, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to these bills en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bills will be placed on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV.

BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the time we have left to work on a budget agreement is extremely short. The window in which we can avoid the terrible consequences of a shutdown is closing quickly. It is no longer measured in months or weeks. We are now down to just a few days in this deadline. The time we have to get the long legislative process started in both Houses is measured in hours.

It is clear those sitting at the negotiating table have different priorities. That is true of any negotiation. We all should share the same goal: to keep the country running and to keep the momentum of our economic recovery moving forward. We all want to cut the deficit.

Last week, we agreed upon a number on which to base our budget—\$73 billion below the President's proposal. But disagreements remain on where we should make those cuts. We worked

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



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through the weekend to bridge that gap. We have made some progress, but we are not where we should be yet.

There is another way in which the sides remain separated. Democrats have demonstrated throughout this process that we are willing to meet in the middle, but Republicans and the tea party continue to reject reality and insist, instead, on ideology. Let me give a couple of examples.

First, they refuse to recognize H.R. 1—that is the budget the House passed—isn't going to happen. The tea party pushed it through the House over the objections of some Republicans and all Democrats. Then, the Senate soundly defeated it. Even all Republicans didn't vote for this H.R. 1 in the Senate. We all know the President would never sign it into law anyway.

So the Republican Party and the tea party need to admit the Democrats have proven what the country already knows—that neither party can pass a budget without the other party and neither Chamber can send it to the President without the other Chamber. Democrats stand ready to meet the Republicans halfway and the Senate stands ready to meet the House halfway. We hope our partners on the other side are willing to be as reasonable.

Second, tea party Republicans refuse to recognize that their budget is simply an appalling proposal. They stomp their feet and call “compromise” a dirty word and insist on a budget that will hurt America rather than help it. It slashes programs for the sake of slashing programs. It chops zeros off the budget for nothing more than bragging rights. The authors and advocates of the Republican budget either completely ignore the practical impact of their dangerous cuts or they know the damage they will do and simply don't care. Either way, it is not right.

Their budget would not do a thing to lower unemployment. In fact, it will cost the country 700,000 jobs. That is not my estimate but the estimate of the head of Moody's, an independent economist who has worked for both Democrats and Republicans.

It will also hurt seniors. It slashes funding from the Social Security Administration, which means seniors and disabled Americans who count on the benefits they have earned over a lifetime of hard work will have to wait for these benefits. In many cases, those Social Security checks are seniors' only source of income. In some cases, they are the only thing keeping them out of poverty, and those checks have nothing at all to do with the deficit—nothing.

The Republican budget will hurt women and their families. It cuts nutritional programs for women, infants, and children. This program has nothing to do with the deficit. This program—the WIC Program, Women, Infants and Children—is a program for the very poor. Their budget makes cuts to Planned Parenthood based on ideology, not economics. Planned Parenthood

doesn't contribute to the deficit, but it does contribute, in great measure, to the health and safety of women of every age in every State.

Their budget will also hurt our veterans. There is a veterans program in this country that helps homeless veterans afford housing. Democrats think our Nation's veterans who are down and out deserve a roof over their heads, and we think it is a worthy program. The Republican budget nearly eliminates it.

Their budget will also hurt students. The tea party plan kicks hundreds of thousands of impoverished boys and girls out of Head Start, a program to allow them to learn to read—little preschool kids. It cuts college students' Pell grants and slashes job training programs. That is no way to recover.

Independent economists have analyzed the tea party's plan and found it will actually put the brakes on economic growth. The point of this whole exercise—of a budget—is to help the economy. Democrats will not stand for a budget that weakens our economy.

None of the people I have just mentioned led us into the recession. Punishing innocent bystanders, such as seniors, women, veterans, and students will not lead us to a recovery. This is what we mean when we say their budget is based on ideology and not reality. This is what we mean when we say the Republican and tea party budget slashes irresponsibly. When they refuse to relent on those dangerous cuts—many of which have nothing to do with the deficit—that is what we mean when we say the other side simply isn't being reasonable.

Our national budget reflects our values and the tough choices we make. Democrats have made many tough choices because we know sacrifices are the cost of consensus, and we believe they are worth it. But we have never forgotten that what we cut is more important than how much we cut.

In addition to the many choices about what to slash and what to keep, the Republican leadership has another very big choice to make: It has to decide whether it will do what the tea party wants it to do or what the country needs it to do.

I am hopeful it will make the right choice and we can come to a timely agreement. But the bottom line is this: At the end of the day, we are all on the same side. Time now is not on our side. I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

GUANTANAMO BAY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, amidst all the other business we will be facing this week, I wish to note a welcome development in the war on terror.

For the last 2 years, the Obama administration has actively sought to bring the 9/11 plotters into our communities for civilian trials, a completely horrible idea that rightly drew overwhelming bipartisan opposition from the American people and from their elected Representatives here in Congress. Today, the administration is announcing it has changed course. The administration, incredibly enough, today is announcing it has changed course and that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and the others who plotted these horrible attacks will be tried in military commissions at Guantanamo Bay rather than in a civilian trial in New York or some other U.S. city.

I remember all of our discussions on this issue over the last 2 years. The President issued an Executive order on day 1 to close Guantanamo. He indicated they were going to mainstream these terrorists into the U.S. court system, so this change today is truly a welcome development, the administration announcing that KSM and the others who plotted these crimes will be tried in a proper jurisdiction, these military commissions, at the proper place for these commission trials, Guantanamo Bay. This is the right outcome to the long and spirited debate that preceded this decision. Military commissions at Guantanamo, far from the U.S. mainland, were always the right idea for a variety of compelling reasons which I and others have enumerated repeatedly over the last years. For the sake of the safety and the security of the American people, I am glad the President reconsidered his position on how and where to try these detainees. Going forward, this model should be the rule rather than the exception. I am sure this decision will draw widespread approval and it is very welcome news.

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 4:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 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. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

THE COTE D'IVOIRE

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President I am going to come back at 4 o'clock today