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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 7, 2011, at 10 a.m.

Senate

MONDAY, JUNE 6, 2011

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord of Life, You have given us the great hope that Your kingdom shall come on Earth. Infuse our lawmakers with such power that Your kingdom indeed will come, even as Your will is done on Earth. May the fact that You rule in our hearts so transform our lives that we will be Your instruments for good in our Nation and the world.

Lord, we dedicate this day to You to be used in serving Your kingdom. Thank You for putting at our disposal all that we need to succeed. Assure us of Your presence above us, beneath us, around us, and within us, providing us with clear direction to advance Your kingdom on Earth. We pray in Your great Name.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS 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, June 6, 2011.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COONS 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. Mr. President, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 4:30 today. Following morning business, the Senate will be in executive session to consider the nomination of Donald Verrilli to be Solicitor General of the United States.

Unless an agreement is reached, at approximately 5:30 p.m. the Senate will vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Verrilli nomination.

MEASURE PLACED ON CALENDAR—S. 1125

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I understand that S. 1125 is at the desk and is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1125) to improve national security letters, the authorities under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar subject to the provisions of rule XIV.

THE NEED TO GET SERIOUS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I welcome back my colleagues for what I hope will be a productive month. This month is not unlike last month though or the month before or the month before that. Once again, our constituents are concerned with one thing above all; that is, jobs, work. They are concerned because of what the economy means for their families and their lives. They are worried about paying the bills next month and sending the kids to school next year. Too many want to go to the bank and once again know the dignity of depositing a paycheck instead of an unemployment check.

Our constituents are also concerned because of what our economic future

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



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will mean for our Nation. They are afraid that ill-informed politicians might lead the country into a default crisis, and they fear all the terrible consequences that would have—consequences that would hurt us as a country, our families, and the world.

I heard these concerns last week in Nevada. We all heard them in our States when we went home last week. We hear them loudly and clearly. So we are going to focus our attention this week and month on jobs just as we have all year.

I am disappointed that our Republican colleagues seem determined to distract that focus. They want to spend the Senate's time debating an extreme social agenda that would hurt families, seniors, and our economy. They want to end Medicare in order to pay for more millionaires' tax breaks and oil company subsidies. That is not good policy or even good politics. The American people strongly oppose that policy, and so do the Democrats in Congress.

Every day Republicans prove they are not just tone deaf to Americans' opinions; they are also tone deaf to cold, hard economic facts.

Last week we got a discouraging jobs report. The economy added jobs, but not as many as we had hoped. Moody's sent a clear letter warning that a default crisis would send our economy into a tailspin. There is no time to waste. The longer Republicans insist on dismantling Medicare as a price for moving forward, the longer the unemployed will wait for good news, and the closer the Nation will come to a default crisis.

Republicans' ideology of obstruction isn't limited to economics or seniors' health. We also see it in their approach to performing the Senate's constitutional duty of confirming the President's nominees for important positions.

A few weeks ago, Republicans blocked a well-qualified, fair-minded, and widely respected legal scholar for a seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals. Now they are continuing these partisan antics by threatening to block two more noncontroversial nominees. The first is Peter Diamond. He is one of the Nation's top economists. He has won the Nobel Prize in economics. Not long ago, he had bipartisan support for his nomination to the Fed's Board of Governors. All of a sudden, for no good reason, Republicans have decided to stand in the way of his nomination.

The second, Don Verrilli, is the President's nominee for Solicitor General of the United States. The Judiciary Committee approved him by a 17-to-1 margin. So in addition to being supremely qualified, he is clearly not controversial. But now Republicans are threatening to block this nominee over requests for documents totally unrelated to him or his position. I hope they don't hold him up for reasons that have nothing to do with his nomination.

Blocking every nominee no matter the merits is no way to govern or lead. It is no way to move forward.

Mr. President, if we are going to keep our economy upright—for families and for our Nation as a whole—we have to recognize real problems and propose realistic solutions. We cannot hold one policy hostage to another or be bound by some strange ideology.

Every month we play these games guarantees that the following month will bring more of the same avoidable fights. For families worried about affording the basics, and for our Nation's fundamental economic strength, we need to get serious before it is too late.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, 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.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak for 30 minutes.

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

GOVERNMENT WATCHDOGS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, when it comes to doing oversight, I think I have a reputation of doing just as vigorous oversight when we have Republican Presidents as when we have Democratic Presidents, and what I am speaking to the Senate about today has no partisanship in it because I could have said the same thing—and did say it—when there was a President Bush or a President Clinton or a President Reagan.

I speak today about watchdogging the watchdogs, as I have done many times in the past. I first started watchdogging the Pentagon back in the early 1980s when President Reagan was ramping up defense spending. Then a group of Defense reformers were examining the pricing of spare parts of the Defense Department, and we uncovered some real horror stories, such as \$750 toilet seats and \$695 ashtrays, all going into military aircraft. That is ridiculous, of course.

As news reports of these horror stories were hitting the streets, Offices of Inspectors General—OIGs—were sprouting up in every Federal agency as a result of a recently passed act of Congress in 1978. The Defense Department OIG officially opened for business March 20, 1983. Today, thanks to the Inspector General Act of 1978, and the taxpayers, we now have a real army of

watchdogs. The question is, To what extent are they doing their business?

This mushrooming IG bureaucracy is very expensive. It costs over \$2 billion a year. But it now occupies a pivotal oversight position within our government, with a very important role to play.

As a Senator dedicated to watchdogging the taxpayers' precious money, I look to the IGs for help. That is because I just don't have the resources in my own office to investigate every allegation that might come my way. Like other Members of Congress, I regularly tap into this vast reservoir of talent called the inspector general. We count on them. We put our faith and trust in their independence and honesty. We rely on them to root out and deter fraud and waste in government wherever that waste and fraud rears its ugly head.

If—and that is a big “if”—the IGs are on the ball, then the taxpayers aren't supposed to worry about things such as \$750 toilet seats. But I underscore the word “if” because fraud and waste are still alive and well in government.

One could legitimately ask: How can this be? We created a huge army of watchdogs. Yet fraud and waste still exist unchecked.

So I keep asking myself the same question that one might ask: Who is watchdogging the watchdogs?

True, there is an IG watchdog agency called the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. But that is just another toothless wonder. So the Senator from Iowa has the duty today. I am here to present another oversight report on the Pentagon watchdog. I call it a report card on the fiscal year 2010 audits, issued by the Department of Defense inspector general.

It assesses progress toward improving audit quality in response to recommendations that I made on an oversight report that I gave to my fellow Senators last year. After receiving a series of anonymous letters from whistleblowers alleging gross mismanagement at the Office of Inspector General and the audit office within that office, my staff initiated an in-depth oversight review. My staff focused on audit reporting by that office, and our work began 2 years ago.

On September 7, 2010, I issued my first oversight review. It evaluated the 113 audit reports issued for fiscal year 2009. It determined that the Office of Inspector General audit capabilities, which cost the taxpayers about \$100 million a year, were gravely impaired.

As a watchdog, degraded audit capabilities give me serious heartburn for one simple reason. It puts the taxpayers' money in harm's way, and it leaves huge sums of money vulnerable to threat and waste. Audits are the inspector general's primary tool for rooting out fraud and waste. Audits are the tip of an inspector general's spear. A good spear always needs a finely honed cutting edge. Right now, the point of