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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by Chaplain Gerald Theroit, American Legion National Chaplain.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us join in the spirit of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we humbly gather in united prayer, giving thanks for Your blessings to this body. In Your holy Name, I ask that the wise use of the gift of reasoning that You have granted to all be strengthened within this Chamber so that the opportunities and paths to cooperation with just solutions will be realized.

Our Nation has been blessed with the establishment and the appreciation for a system of government that is unlike any other. As we have been blessed with the privilege of selecting a few to represent many, it is in them we place our trust that they will seek Your counsel and do what is best for us all.

Dear God, bless them during their research and in their deliberations, and have them to know that all things are possible through Your grace. As we enjoy the freedoms that we have and the privilege of supporting the way in which our government operates, we ask Your blessings on the shapers and protectors of these freedoms—our Congress, our President, our military, our first responders, and our Nation.

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, February 28, 2012.

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.

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30. The majority will control the first 30 minutes and the Republicans will control the second 30 minutes.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 today for our weekly caucus meetings.

MEASURE PLACED ON CALENDAR—H.R. 1173

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am told H.R. 1173 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 (H.R. 1173) to repeal the CLASS program.

Mr. REID. I would object to any further proceedings at this time to this piece of legislation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

MAKING THE SENATE WORK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last evening in an hour set aside at the request of Senators PRYOR and ALEXANDER, a very good conversation took place on the Senate floor.

Senators PRYOR and ALEXANDER are exemplary in trying to work things out; they are good legislators because they understand no side gets their way. I have been here a long time, and I have been fortunate to get pieces of legislation passed that I sponsored and worked toward, but I have never ever had a piece of legislation that I introduced that wound up with that piece of legislation; always there are changes. That is the legislative process.

That is what Senator PRYOR and ALEXANDER talked about yesterday evening. It was important. They talked about the need to bring bills to the floor. They focused on appropriations bills—and rightfully so. I am a long-time member of the Appropriations Committee, as is the Republican leader, and we understand the importance of working on these bills.

In the last number of years, we haven't been able to do individual appropriations bills, except on rare occasions. We have done these omnibus and minibuses, and we are trying to get away from that. I think the framework

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



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laid last night was extremely important.

The Republican leader and I have talked individually, personally, away from everyone, about the need to get this done for the integrity of the Senate, and the colloquy last night helped what I think the Republican leader and I wish to get done. We need the agreement of Senate Republicans and Democrats that we will work together to complete this important work, and they talked about appropriations bills.

Senator WARNER and Senator HAGAN joined Senator PRYOR; Senators ISAKSON, COLLINS, BOOZMAN, and GRAHAM joined Senator ALEXANDER. So it was a significant number of Senators who talked about wanting to do the same thing and I commend and applaud their work.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Will my friend yield for me to make a couple observations on what he just said?

Mr. REID. I will yield.

Mr. MCCONNELL. We have negotiated the top line for the discretionary spending for this coming fiscal year. That process is normally done by the passage of a budget by the House and a budget by the Senate, with some reconciliation between the two bodies on the top line. But we already have that number. I wish to second what my friend the majority leader said. There is no good reason for this institution not to move forward with an appropriations process that avoids what we have done so frequently under both parties for years and years: either continuing resolutions or omnibus appropriations.

We have an opportunity to avoid that this year. It is the basic work of Congress. I wish to second what the majority leader said and congratulate Senator ALEXANDER and Senator PRYOR for their leadership on this issue. I hope we can join together and do the basic work of government this year and do it in a timely fashion.

I commend the majority leader and associate myself with his comments.

Mr. REID. I have spoken to Senator INOUE, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He is beginning, with Senator COCHRAN, the hearing process where administration officials come in and report to the individual appropriations subcommittees.

Senator INOUE thinks that, come late April, we can start moving some of these bills to the floor. We have to wait until the House does something because otherwise we get into procedural hurdles. But the House, I am told, wants to move these quickly also. I hope we can get these bills done.

The first real good experience I had in the Senate was working as a conferee on individual appropriations bills. That is fun. That is what legislation is all about and we have gotten away from that and I hope we can get back to doing some good things in that regard.

THE AUTO INDUSTRY

Mr. President, when President Obama took office 3 years ago, the auto

industry was on a life support system. It was in very bad shape. I am sorry to say the life support system the Detroit auto industry was surviving on, Republicans wanted to pull the plug.

One man who is now seeking the Republican nomination for President of the United States said, "We should kiss the American automobile industry good-bye." We can't make up stuff like that. That is what he actually said. He called the death of American auto manufacturers "virtually guaranteed." "Virtually guaranteed" is another direct quote. So he argued we should let Detroit go bankrupt. But he wasn't alone. If he were alone, that would be a lone wolf crying in the wilderness, but that is not the way it was. Republicans in this Chamber agreed. Many of them agreed.

Democrats, though, weren't willing to give up on American manufacturing because saving the automobile industry wasn't about saving corporations; it was about saving millions of Americans who work for these corporations. It wasn't about saving the people who own race cars; it was about saving the people who work on assembly lines making the parts to keep those race cars running.

There is no way Democrats would walk away from millions of Americans whose jobs were on the line. Americans working in dealerships and distribution centers and manufacturing plants across the country were depending on us to do something, and we did. We didn't give up the fight to save the auto industry. We didn't give up even when one Senate Republican called the efforts "a road to nowhere."

Here, the verdict is in. We were right. The American auto industry has added 160,000 jobs in the last 24 months alone. Last year, General Motors reported record profits and sold more vehicles than any other car company in the world. Chrysler is profitable again. People are boasting about the quality of American cars, and Chrysler is growing faster in the United States than any other major automobile manufacturer.

So when a Republican Presidential frontrunner said we should kiss the American automobile industry good-bye, he couldn't have been more wrong. We all make mistakes. We all get one wrong occasionally. The test of character is admitting when we make that mistake, and it is time for Republicans to recognize that saving the American automobile manufacturing industry and millions of middle-class jobs was the right thing to do.

There is good news from the auto industry: Twenty-four months of private sector job growth is evidence our country is headed in the right direction. But too many Americans are still hurting financially and struggling to find work, and it is crucial Congress continue efforts to create jobs and rebuild our economy. So Democrats are moving forward with a bipartisan package of bills that will spur small business growth.

These measures will improve innovators' access to capital—that is so important—and will streamline how companies sell stocks through initial public offerings or, as they are called, IPOs. These pieces of legislation will also protect the rights of investors.

Next week, Chairman JOHNSON, the senior Senator from South Dakota, will hold a Banking Committee hearing on this issue. It will be the third hearing on these measures since December. Senate Democrats have been working on these measures for a long time, and I am so happy to have read that House Republicans are joining Democrats to move this legislation. Commonsense issues such as these should not have to turn into knock-down, drag-out fights. This is something on which we should agree.

These companies need the ability to get cash to innovate, to grow, to build. This legislation that is being promulgated in the Banking Committee and the hearing that takes place there is very important to our country. I look forward to moving these measures and our economy forward with the help of my Republican colleagues.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past few weeks, the American people have begun to feel the painful effects of President Obama's energy policy.

Make no mistake, the rising price of gasoline isn't simply the result of forces we can't control. It is, to a large extent, the result of a vision this President laid out even before he was elected to office. That vision was on clear display just last week.

As millions of Americans groaned at the rising cost of a gallon of gasoline, the President took to the microphones to talk about a far-off day when Americans might be able to use algae as a substitute for gas. Then, dusting off the same talking points Democrats have been using for decades, he claimed there is no short-term solution to the problem.

In other words, he kicked the can down the road for another day, another time, abdicating leadership on yet another issue of national significance.

This morning, I think it is worthwhile to take a step back from the rhetoric and look at what this President has actually done about this problem and what his energy policies would mean for the future because, according to numerous private and public energy experts, gas prices are only going to keep rising in the weeks and months ahead, going up and up. Some say the average price for a gallon of gasoline could hit \$4 by late spring, early summer, and could reach \$5 or even \$6 in some areas of our country. When that moment comes, Americans should know what the administration had to do with it.