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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.

Lord, God, omnipotent, You are above all nations. Take our lives and use them for Your purposes. Cleanse our hearts, forgive our sins, and amend our ways as Your transforming grace changes our lives.

Today, make our Senators true servants of Your will. In these challenging times, give them the wisdom to labor for justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You. Keep their minds and spirits steady as they strive to do Your will.

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, March 7, 2012.

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. GILLI-

BRAND, 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 leader remarks, the Senate will be in morning business for 1 hour. Republicans will be in control of the first half, Democrats the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the surface transportation act.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

I ask unanimous consent that there be a recess at 5 p.m. and that be extended until 6:30 p.m. to accommodate Senators on the briefing.

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

Mr. REID. Madam President, we are having a briefing this evening at the request of Senator MIKULSKI, who is a long-term member of the Intelligence Committee, to have an actual demonstration of why we need to pass the cybersecurity bill. All Senators should be there, and that is why we asked for the recess.

BLOODY SUNDAY

Mr. REID. Madam President, 47 years ago today a group of 600 freedom-loving men and women set out on a march from Selma, AL, to Montgomery, AL. The purpose of the march was to call for an end to discrimination and violence against African Americans.

Among those peaceful protesters was a young man by the name of JOHN LEWIS, now Congressman JOHN LEWIS. His life has been one of truly a great civil rights leader, outstanding legislator, and a patriot beyond excellence.

Only 6 blocks from the church where the march began, they were met at Edmund Pettus Bridge by police dogs, firehoses, and clubs. The terrible violence that day, known as Bloody Sunday, was broadcast across the country.

March 1965 marked a turning point in the civil rights movement, as Americans cried out against the injustice and bloodshed they saw on television. Later that month about 25,000 courageous souls finally completed that 12-mile march from Selma to Montgomery that started on Bloody Sunday, and 6 months later President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

A year ago I was privileged to lock arms with Congressman JOHN LEWIS and Congressman Jim Claiborne, two men whom I admire deeply, as we reenacted the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. It was really a humbling experience as JOHN LEWIS, with throngs of people—but we were together—explained to me what he remembered from that day:

As we were starting up the bridge there was a drug store that doesn't exist anymore, but a lot of whites were gathered there. They were, of course, up to mischief.

JOHN LEWIS had on his back a backpack—they were not very common in those days—he had a backpack on his back. He thought perhaps he would be arrested, as he had been many times, and he would have something to read while he was in jail. He had a book and an apple in that backpack, but, of course, he was beaten very badly, and no one will ever know what happened to the backpack and the apple and the book.

It was really a humbling experience—I repeat, one I will never forget. On this day, I think we should all pause to

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



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think that, while we have come a long way, we have a long way to go to make sure we have civil rights for everyone in America.

THE HIGHWAY BILL

Madam President, we were disappointed, as I indicated yesterday, at not being able to invoke cloture on this highway bill. I was satisfied yesterday that the Speaker of the House indicated that he thought the best thing to do, at least as I read the reports, would be to take the Senate version of a bill, if we can figure out a way to pass one, and then they would use that—he would bring it to the floor for a vote. I hope that is the case. The press doesn't always get things right, but I hope in this case they did.

Senator McCONNELL's staff and my staff are exchanging paper as we speak. I hope we can work our way through this bill. I think it is unfortunate that we are going to have to have votes on a number of amendments that have nothing to do with this underlying piece of legislation.

This is one thing the American people really do not like. At our townhall meetings, our visitations with people throughout our States, I have come to the realization that they hate what they call riders—things that have nothing to do with bills. The Senate rules allow them in most instances, so if it takes this to get this bill done, then we will have to move forward in that way. I hope we can do that. As I said, we are going to exchange paper, and I hope both sides will react positively. I am confident we will over here, and I hope we can work something out.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

GAS PRICES

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, last week I came to the Senate floor to speak out on an issue that is on the minds of a lot of Americans these days: the rising cost of gas at the pump and how the administration's policies are actually making matters worse.

The President may try to take credit for production gains that are entirely the work of others, but more to the point is the fact that production is up on private lands and down on Federal lands. The property the President and the Interior Secretary actually manage is the property upon which production is down.

In fact, when it comes to the rising cost of gas at the pump, it is my view that the administration's policies are actually designed to a purpose: to bring about higher gas prices. That is a view which should not be the least bit controversial given the fact that the President's own Energy Secretary has sug-

gested on a couple of occasions now that his goal certainly is not to drive gas prices down.

For the President's part, he often says that Americans should judge him not only by his words but on his deeds. So when it comes to gas prices, I have pointed out that the President continues to limit offshore areas to energy production and is granting fewer leases on public land for oil drilling, has encouraged countries such as Brazil to move forward with their own offshore drilling projects, continues to impose burdensome regulations on the domestic energy sector that will further drive up the cost of gasoline for the consumer, has repeatedly proposed raising taxes on the energy sector, which we all know would only drive gas prices even higher, and, finally, has flatly rejected the Keystone XL Pipeline.

All of these help drive up the cost of gas and increase our dependence on foreign oil. So the President simply cannot claim to have a comprehensive approach to energy because he doesn't—he simply doesn't—and anytime he says he does, the American people should remember one word: Keystone.

Another thing they might want to do is play a clip of the press conference the President held just yesterday. Asked about whether he actually wants gas prices to go up, the President's facetious attempt to deflect the question only served to confirm the premise. But it was the President's admission that rising gas prices hurt the economy that really betrayed the administration's attempt to have it both ways on this issue, because if higher gas prices hurt the economy, then why in the world is the administration calling for higher taxes on energy manufacturers? We know these taxes would drive up the price at the pump and send jobs overseas. The Congressional Research Service said that. If the President wants to drive prices down, he should stop calling for these increases in taxes.

Look, if the President wants Americans to think he is serious about lower gas prices, he has to do more than simply say—and this is what he said yesterday—“No President would want higher gas prices in an election year.” “No President would want higher gas prices in an election year.” What about other years? Would they want them in other years? It is only in election years that it is a problem? He has to get serious about changing his policies, and he might want to consider an Energy Secretary who is more committed to helping the American people than in helping the administration's buddies in the solar panel business—and that brings me to a larger point.

The President likes to talk a lot about fairness. We have heard a lot about fairness, but when it comes to rising gas prices, the American people don't think it is particularly fair that at a time when they are struggling to

fill the tank, their own tax dollars are being used to subsidize failing solar companies of the President's choosing, not to mention the bonuses executives at these companies keep getting. I think most Americans are tired of reading about all the goodies this administration's allies are getting on their dime even as the President goes around lecturing everybody about fairness.

I will tell you what is not fair. What is not fair is that it costs about \$40 more to fill a 20-gallon tank with gasoline than it did when this President took office. That is not fair. Yet this administration continues to pursue policies that would make it even worse.

Earlier this year the White House launched a campaign in support of the payroll tax holiday, asking Americans what \$40 a month would mean to them. Yet, now, when it comes to gas prices, they are doubling down on policies that are taking away that \$40 a month given by the payroll tax holiday to fill the gas tank. Once again, they are trying to have it both ways, and, frankly, the American people have had it.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN RABUN

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I would like to pay tribute today to a friend of many decades, a Kentuckian who is a hero to many and a personal hero of mine for his work on behalf of children that has had a national impact. In his 28 years of service with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, John Rabun has saved literally thousands of lives and averted tragedy for thousands of families.

As the very first employee of the national center since its creation back in 1984, he has been the heart and the soul of that organization. His dedication and passion for the issue will continue to shape the national center long after he leaves it. Frankly, for John, saving children was not just a job, it was his mission. That is why it is such a blow that after 28 years of service, John Rabun will retire from his work at the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children this Friday, March 9. I cannot say enough how much this man will be missed.

John and I have a history that stretches back almost four decades, dating to his time as a social worker in Jefferson County, KY. Of course, Jefferson County contains the city of Louisville, my hometown, and in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I served as the judge-executive for Jefferson County. What that is, I say to the Presiding Officer from New York, is like the county executive for the county. It was in this capacity that I got to know John Rabun.

John earned his bachelor's degree from Mercer University in Macon, GA, and his master of science in social work from the University of Louisville. As a social worker, John managed the company's group home for kids and was one of the first in town to identify