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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, March 16, 2012, at 10 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2012

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Dr. Winford L. Hindrex, senior pastor of the Ardmore Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Awesome Creator, sovereign Lord of our great Nation, You must have been excited when You first dreamed of creating—out of nothing—this beautiful, complex world with all its natural beauty: birds of the air, fish of the sea, animals of the Earth, and humans to care for all of this and to love You infinitely.

Loving, visionary God, infuse in these women and men, known as the United States Senate, Your dream of our Nation here and now in the 21st century. Give to them not only a vision of how things can be, but also give to them the nitty-gritty know-how to make Your dream a reality for every person in this great land. And dare we say it, may they and all of us make You excited yet again as we partner with You to actualize Your dream for this Nation.

We pray in Your awesome, loving, creative Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Repub-

lic 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 15, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule 1, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

THANKING SENATOR BURR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we appreciate Senator BURR arranging for this good man to come and offer the prayer this morning. We appreciate that very much.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following leader remarks the Senate will be in morning business until 11 a.m., with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the second 30 minutes. Following morning business we will begin consideration of the IPO bill, H.R. 3606, the initial public offering for which those letters stand. At 2 p.m. there will be a rollcall vote on Groh, followed by Fitzgerald. These are trial judges in our Federal court system. Additional votes are possible today.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2191

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am told that S. 2191 is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2191) to amend the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to prohibit the attorney general from administering or enforcing certain accessibility regulations relating to pools at public accommodations or provided by public entities.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would object to further proceedings on this matter at this time.

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

RECOGNIZING BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on Saturday Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI becomes the longest serving woman in

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



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the history of the U.S. Congress. We will mark that occasion on Wednesday when her family and friends will be present here in the Capitol. I have prepared detailed remarks for that occasion, but I thought it was important that we note very briefly here today this milestone in the history of our country.

Last January BARBARA MIKULSKI surpassed Margaret Chase Smith from Maine as the longest serving woman in the Senate. On Saturday, March 17, she will surpass Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers from Massachusetts as the longest serving woman in Congress.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this week the Senate has demonstrated that when Democrats and Republicans cooperate, we are capable of achieving significant results for this country. We passed a transportation bill that will create or save almost 3 million jobs—and these are American jobs—and rebuild our Nation's crumbling infrastructure. Yesterday we chartered a course to confirm 14 new judges in the short term and a path for getting more done following that, and this is important because our Federal courts are overworked and understaffed.

We agreed that Congress should continue its work to improve the economy. To that end, the Senate will move today to a piece of legislation that will improve innovators' access to capital and give startups the flexibility they need to hire and to grow. This bill passed the House by an overwhelming margin. President Obama supports this measure, and both Democrats and Republicans are eager to get to work to pass it next week.

In addition to the small business capital legislation, Democrats will also advance a proposal to help American businesses sell more of their products overseas. Reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank—or Ex-Im Bank, as it is called—will help small businesses export globally. Not only will it help small businesses, it will help large businesses such as Caterpillar and Boeing. These companies really need this to continue the job creation they have been involved in now for the last several years. As an example, last year Ex-Im Bank financed almost 300,000 private sector jobs at more than 3,600 different American companies in more than 2,000 communities throughout America. Foreign governments often provide the financing for companies that compete with American businesses. We need to do this to be more competitive. Ex-Im Bank levels the playing field by being available to help American exporters when private lending is not available. Unless we reauthorize the bank, it will hit its lending limit this month, eliminating support for American exporters.

The Export-Import Bank has always had strong bipartisan support, and the Democrats' legislation reauthorizing

this measure has the firm backing of the Chamber of Commerce and organized labor. This is a strong combination that equals one result; that is, jobs.

Advancing these two items—the Ex-Im Bank and the small business capital bill—will continue the important bipartisan work we have done this week to get our economy back on track.

I am pleased that Democrats and Republicans in the Senate have been able to find common ground. President Franklin Roosevelt said:

Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off.

I think we have shown this week that achievement comes when Members all strive, as President Roosevelt said, not to compete but to cooperate.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

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, there will now be 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, with the majority controlling the first half hour and the Republicans controlling the second half hour.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. 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.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, consumer protection has been a priority for me throughout my career, as I know it has been for the Presiding Officer. Both he and I served together as attorneys general, and now as Senators he and I have worked to give consumers a voice against companies that harm them through deceptive and dangerous or abusive practices.

This month we recognize consumers in two ways. National Consumer Protection Week, recognized the week of March 4 through 10, is led by government and nonprofit groups and its focus is to encourage consumers to take full advantage of their consumer

rights and make better informed decisions for themselves in the marketplace. This month we also recognize that many of the same consumer issues affecting Americans every day in their lives impact consumers in every corner of the world. So today we celebrate World Consumer Rights Day.

Every day ought to be Consumer Rights Day because, as President Kennedy once said, we are all consumers and we are consumers every day of every year. Organizations here in America such as Consumers Union and other consumer groups around the world celebrate World Consumer Rights Day as members of Consumers International, the nonprofit organization representing over 220 consumer groups in 115 countries.

Today also marks the 50th anniversary of a very special day in American history for American consumers. On March 15, 1962, President Kennedy sent a message to Congress calling for a national commitment to protecting consumer interests. Fifty years ago today, President Kennedy spoke about the consumer right to safety, to be informed, to choose, and to be heard. These rights are the foundation of what we now know as the Consumer Bill of Rights. The Consumer Bill of Rights has grown to include eight specific guarantees: the right to satisfaction of basic needs; the right to safety; the right to be informed; the right to choose; the right to be heard; the right to redress; the right to consumer education; and the right to a healthy environment.

Today, I wish to propose another right, a ninth right: the right to privacy. There is a growing need to defend individual rights to privacy in a multitude of areas. This country was founded—its basic bedrock—on a desire for personal privacy, on the right to be left alone. It is the reason people came to this country, avoiding unwanted and unwarranted intrusion on their personal space and on their rights and liberties. They came here out of a desire for religious freedom, economic liberty, and the security of their person and property against intrusion. It is a unique, bedrock American right—the right to privacy. Concerns about governmental invasion of personal privacy go back literally to the founding of our Republic and the protections guaranteed under the third amendment when the British lodged troops in our homes without permission, and the fourth amendment, when they searched our homes and seized goods and property from them.

I have heard numerous complaints from Connecticut residents who are concerned about their privacy. They are concerned about Federal and State intrusion into women's health care decisions. They are concerned about government efforts to combat terrorism through tracking of individuals by a GPS or cell phone tower location. Those potential invasions of privacy are by the government, by official