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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable CARL LEVIN, a Senator from the State of Michigan.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, who does wondrous things, blessed be Your glorious Name forever. Remake us in Your image and bring our wandering, wayward hearts under Your control.

Lord, infuse our Senators with a love for You that will make their obedience willing and joyful. Astound them with Your limitless resources and supply all their needs from Your bounty. Keep them humble with the conviction that they can't breathe a breath, think a thought, speak a word, or perform an action without Your mercy and grace. Grant our supplications. We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CARL LEVIN 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 23, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CARL LEVIN, a Sen-

ator from the State of Michigan, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. LEVIN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SENATE CHALLENGES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, America has the best, brightest, and most dedicated workers in the world. All those workers need is a fair shot to succeed. But right now many workers in this country don't enjoy the same rights as the wealthy CEOs; that is, the right to negotiate the terms of their employment.

A new rule from the National Labor Relations Board will remove unnecessary obstacles to workers' rights to form a union. I solidly support this rule, and I urge my colleagues to vote tomorrow against the resolution of disapproval which strikes down this commonsense rule.

The new rule doesn't change or do anything to encourage unions, but it doesn't discourage them either. It just gives workers the ability to vote yes or no while minimizing the chance of intimidation and stalling.

Mr. President, tomorrow the Senate will vote on a number of amendments to a bipartisan postal reform bill. This important legislation will safeguard more than 8 million jobs of people who depend on a vibrant postal system. It will also protect postal customers—particularly elderly and disabled Americans and people who live in rural parts of this country.

I am pleased we reached an agreement to allow Senators to offer amendments to this bill. I hope once we work

through the amendments to the bill tomorrow we will see a strong bipartisan vote to modernize the Postal Service and save this important institution from insolvency. This institution is so important it is contained in our Constitution.

Once we pass postal reform tomorrow, as I expect we will, the Senate will move on to the consideration of another very important piece of legislation, the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. Since its passage in 1994, this legislation has reduced the annual incidence of domestic violence by more than 50 percent.

Despite that incredible progress, we still have work to do to keep women and their families safe. Three women die in this country every day at the hands of abusive partners—on weekends, all days, no days off. For every victim who is killed there are nine more who narrowly escape death and are beaten savagely. It would be unacceptable to step back from our national commitment to stop violence and abuse now.

This legislation was the brainchild of Vice President JOE BIDEN when he was a Member of the Senate. It does very important work. For example, it allows communities to get support in setting up shelters for these women and their families to go in secret.

The legislation was unanimously reauthorized by the Senate in 2000 and 2005. This effort should be—and traditionally has been—above partisanship. I hope that proves to be the case again this year. This year it has 60 cosponsors and the support of 47 State attorneys general. I cannot imagine why my Republican colleagues would oppose such a worthy piece of legislation. I am hopeful and I am confident they won't.

By joining Democrats to pass this legislation, Republicans can help us send a clear message that this country doesn't tolerate domestic violence. If the Senate doesn't complete the work on this critical issue before we recess

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



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for this work period, we will continue after we come back to try to work through any problems. I don't see any, Mr. President.

But the Violence Against Women Act isn't the only pressing matter the Senate has to complete the next work period. We must begin work on a number of appropriations bills, consider additional judicial nominations, and take up legislation to cut taxes for small businesses so that they can expand and hire.

Cybersecurity legislation, I have been told, the House will take up soon, and I appreciate that. We must address the looming crisis for millions of students in America: the July 1 deadline for interest rates to double on Federal student loans. That is fast approaching.

With middle-class families struggling and fewer families able to afford the rising cost of higher education, we cannot afford to put college out of reach for more promising young people. Doubling interest rates from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent—effectively socking 7.4 million students with \$1,000 a year in student loan costs—would do irreparable harm to our ability to educate young men and women.

Today Americans have more student loan debt than credit card debt. Why would we want to double what they pay? The average graduate owes \$25,000 when they graduate. Getting a college education should not burden young people with unsustainable debt. Unfortunately, many of my Republican colleagues have signaled that they would rather cut taxes for the richest of the rich than invest in the next generation of American workers. But the business community agrees that making college affordable is the key to keeping America competitive in a global economy. An investment in education is an investment in our economy.

I hope we will all join together, hear the message, and work to stop 8 million students in this country from having an increase in the amount of money they are obligated to pay back for the loans they get for an education in America today.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

CHALLENGES REMAIN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, over the past several months, President Obama has kept a pretty busy schedule of campaign events. But as the President heads out for more campaign-style events this week, let's not forget that what he is actually doing here in Washington is far more important than what he is saying out on the campaign trail because when the speeches are over and all the chairs and posters are put away, great challenges remain.

Millions of Americans are still looking for work. The Federal debt continues to cast a shadow over the American dream. Despite assurances made last year, there is no budget in sight from the Democratic-controlled Senate. As the Associated Press reported today, about half of college graduates can't even find a decent job in this country. I understand why the President wouldn't want to talk about these things, but that doesn't change the fact that he should, and it doesn't change the fact that his policies are the problem.

The American people elected this President to change direction, not to change the subject. They elected the President to change direction, not change the subject. Yet, day after day, week after week, as our Nation's challenges deepen and another economic crisis draws nearer, this President wants to change the topic. He wants people to either focus on something else or to overlook the things he is actually doing to make the situation worse.

Let's take, for example, gas prices. Gas prices have more than doubled under this President. Yet, rather than doing something about it, he blames it on speculators and energy companies. Instead of increasing domestic production, he is focused on a plan to tax American energy manufacturers—a plan that would increase the cost of energy rather than lower the cost of gas.

The national debt has skyrocketed more than \$5 trillion under this President. Yet, rather than actually doing something about it, he pretends that we should erase it, that we could somehow erase it by just whacking millionaires.

Look, millions are looking for work. Yet, rather than doing something about it, he passes a health care bill that would impose massive new costs, he continues to threaten new taxes, and he empowers Federal bureaucrats to cook up new rules and regulations that make it even harder for businesses to grow and to hire. Unless Congress acts, one such rule goes into effect next week. Most people haven't heard about it because the President hasn't been talking about it. But I am happy to because it says all you need to know about this President's approach to jobs and the economy.

As a favor to big labor, the President is right now rushing a plan that would restrict an employer's ability to educate workers about unionization efforts, as well as increase their legal bills and the already high cost of complying with Federal regulations. And get this: The administration hasn't even provided an analysis of the cost involved in moving forward with this proposal.

Tomorrow, Senators, led by Senator ENZI, will have an opportunity to vote on this effort to make it even harder to do business in this country. We will have a chance to stand up against what the President is doing to the economy,

and in the process we will be reminding people to focus on what the President does rather than what he says.

Look, at a time when America's corporate income tax is now the highest in the world, we should be looking for ways to make it easier for businesses to hire, not harder. At a time when unemployment is above 13 percent for young people between the ages of 20 and 24 in this country, we should be finding ways to make it more likely they can find work, not less likely. But this is the Obama economy. This is the President's approach. This is the painful legacy of his failed economic policies. The President may not want to discuss it, but Republicans will.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1925, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. 1925, a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, it has been announced by the clerk that the Senate is now considering the motion to proceed to S. 1925, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

At 2 p.m. this afternoon, the Republican leader or his designee will move to proceed to S.J. Res. 36, a resolution of disapproval regarding the NLRB election rule. The time until 4 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

At 5 p.m., the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of Brian Wimes to be a U.S. district judge in Missouri. There will be a rollcall vote on confirmation of the Wimes nomination at 5:30 p.m.

POSTAL REFORM

Mr. President, as you and our colleagues know, after a lot of work and good-faith negotiations, we reached a bipartisan agreement last week to complete action on the bipartisan postal reform bill tomorrow, with an agreement that includes almost 40 amendments—39, I believe, is the number—to be voted on tomorrow.

Although, we—and particularly our staffs—have been working with sponsors of the amendments, we expect that probably more than half of them will be negotiated to agreements, modified, and/or accepted. But there still will be a significant number of rollcall votes,