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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, our Sustainer, silence everything in our Senators that would keep them from hearing Your wisdom. Control their minds this day that their focus may concentrate on You. Illuminate their path with the light of Your presence, providing them with the strength to walk with integrity.

Lord, give them a sense of duty that they will leave nothing that they ought to do undone. May they not be content to wait and see what will happen, but give them the wisdom and courage to make the right things happen.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL 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 24, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of

Connecticut, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL 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 soon be considering the motion to proceed to S. 1925, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

At 10:30 this morning, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 36, which is a resolution of disapproval regarding the NLRB election rule. The time until 12:30 today will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders, or their designees.

The Senate will recess from 12:50 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings.

At 2:15 p.m., there will be a rollcall vote on the motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 36. If that motion is defeated, there will be several votes following it in order to complete action on the postal reform bill.

We are going to do our utmost to finish the postal reform bill today. I recognize that there is an important event with the Supreme Court today with the legislative branch, the Senate. Therefore, we might have to come back after that to complete work on this bill, unless there is a way forward.

I suggest to everyone, if their amendments can be accepted by voice vote, take that. If something can be worked out with the managers, do that; otherwise, we might be here until very late tonight. I would like to avoid that, if possible, for everyone's benefit.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act passed both Houses of Congress on strong bipartisan votes. In the 18 years since then, incidents of domestic violence have fallen by 53 percent.

Despite that progress, staggering rates of abuse make it clear that we still have a long way to go. More than a third of women and more than a quarter of men in this country have been victims of violent sexual assault or stalking by a partner. Because of the unique nature of the crime, combating domestic violence and protecting those affected also requires unique tools.

Victims have been abused by the very people who are supposed to love and care for them, so Congress must make certain law enforcement has the means to stop these heinous crimes, and we must ensure communities have the resources to support victims and help them heal. That is why the Senate must move quickly to reauthorize this legislation, which expired last year.

Many of the programs under the act have been funded for the last year by continuing resolutions, but a full reauthorization is necessary to ensure authorities have all the resources they need to fight domestic violence.

Women and families across the country are depending on us to act. Several from Nevada wrote to share their stories.

When I practiced law, this law was not in effect. The only good news during that period of time that developed as I began to do more work in the domestic relations field was as a result of some generous people establishing in Las Vegas a domestic crisis shelter. What is that? It is a place where women and children can go to stay away from husbands who were abusing them. It is so important. These are secret locations; you cannot find them in the phone book. It gives these women and their children—sometimes just a woman—a place to go.

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



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I had a leadership meeting this morning and spent some time talking to them about some examples of things that took place before this law passed. It was very difficult to find ways of helping these women. With this law, it is much easier. We must continue this extremely important legislation. The women who wrote to me had some very sad stories. Without this legislation, it would be even worse.

Coincidentally, I talked to Vice President BIDEN this morning and reminded him of what he had done. He has been watching what we do here. He said thanks for continuing this legislation. It was his idea, and it has been extremely valuable for this country.

Every day in America, three less fortunate women die at the hands of their abusers—by being abused by their spouses. In addition to those three who die, there are nine more who are abused very much. They have serious injuries. Some have been made paralyzed as a result of the beatings. It is hard to believe these beatings take place, but they do. It is in our power—the 100 of us—to protect them and help them.

Reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act would help law enforcement continue to develop effective strategies to prosecute cases involving violent crimes against women. But also, in addition to the criminal aspect of it, it allows these women a place to go.

It would provide funding for shelters and transitional housing programs for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and it would help victims get back on their feet. It would make legal assistance available to victims of violence, and it would safeguard children victimized and affected by dating violence and stalking.

This reauthorization would also enact important improvements to the law, gleaned from 18 years of experience combating violence against women.

It would extend better protections for Native American women. The most significant spousal abuse and abuse to children takes place on Indian reservations. This legislation will enlarge the breadth of the bill to protect these people who are so badly in need of help.

This legislation also includes non-discrimination protection for all victims, regardless of what they look like or where they are from.

It reduces bureaucracy and implements new accountability measures to ensure Federal investments are properly spent.

It places great emphasis on training police to respond to reports of sexual assault, which has among the lowest conviction rates for any violent crime. For police officers, it is one of the most dangerous things they can do. Last year, we had a peace officer in Las Vegas—a sergeant who had been in law enforcement many years—who went with another officer to respond to a domestic violence phone call. He was shot

and killed as he walked in the door. So we do need to understand that we need to continue to help train police and also make them better trained to convict the people doing these bad things.

Many years ago, when I was a freshman in the Senate, I held a hearing, under the auspices of the Appropriations Committee, on spousal abuse. Maybe things have changed over the years—and I hope they have. There are better counseling programs. But one thing we learned during those hearings many decades ago was that the main thing that helped a man stop abusing his wife was to put him in jail. Maybe things are better now. At least we need to have better tools to make it so these people can be convicted of these brutal crimes.

We know the tools and training this legislation provides are effective. Consider this legislation's successful record of reducing domestic violence by 53 percent and helping police punish these abusers. We need to do better, but what we have done has been a big step forward from the time I was holding those hearings, before this legislation became effective.

That is why the Senate reauthorized this law unanimously in 2005, on a 95-to-0 vote. That is pretty good. Again, in 2005, we did it unanimously. And in 2000, we did it by a 95-to-0 vote. Both times it was unanimous. I hope we can do it again.

I look forward to a similar bipartisan vote this year, as Democrats and Republicans join together to renew our national commitment to ending domestic violence.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before the majority leader leaves the floor, with regard to the Violence Against Women Act, we would be very happy to enter into a short time agreement. He is entirely correct; this law has passed in the Senate on an overwhelming bipartisan basis, and there is very strong bipartisan support for it again this year. We are happy to work with him to expeditiously approve that bill in short order. Those discussions over some kind of a very short time agreement could begin as soon as now. We are happy to work with him to facilitate passage of that.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I think that is a positive statement, as long as there are not efforts made to weaken this legislation. But if this moves forward quickly with a short time agreement, but in an effort to weaken the bill, we want no part of that.

I look forward to conversations to begin with staff and to bring in Senator LEAHY and others, and Senator MCCONNELL and I can work on this.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, there is no reason to fight over something that nobody wants to have a fight over. We are happy to work on a reasonable time agreement and pass that in short order.

BROKEN PROMISES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, it is no secret that most Americans are tired of candidates for political office who make promises they don't keep. And who can blame them? For years, politicians have been going to Washington promising to make government more effective, more efficient, to balance the books, make life more secure, and restore Americans' confidence in their country again. And time and time again, they have either failed to get it done or didn't even make an effort in the first place.

Frankly, it is hard to think of any politician who has promised more and delivered less than our current President. He was the one who would erase old divisions and bring people together. He was the one who would rise above politics as usual and usher in a new era of bipartisan harmony. A lot of people believed him. Naturally, a lot of them are even more jaded now than ever. They are jaded because a candidate who said he was different turned out to be just another politician who seems more concerned with reelection than reform. Not only has he failed to step up to the challenges we face, he has actually aggravated them. Social Security, for example, is now expected to go broke 3 years sooner than we expected. The Tax Code is more complicated than ever. The national debt is bigger than any of us could have imagined. Health care costs are higher. Gas prices are up. Millions cannot find work. And even most college graduates—those best equipped to step into the modern economy—either cannot find work to match their skills or can't find any work at all.

Instead of fixing problems, he has made them worse.

What is he doing now? Well, the President who was supposed to change the direction of the country now wants to change the subject. He spends his days running around the country blaming whatever doesn't happen to poll well that day for the consequences of his own policies. He spent 2 years expanding government and constricting free enterprise, and now that the results are in he spends his time pointing the finger at others for problems that originated right in his White House. It is the millionaires; it is the banks; it is big oil; it is the weather; it is Fox News; it is anything but him. And it's absurd. I mean, if you believe that a President who got everything he wanted for 2 years—2 whole years—has nothing to do with the problems we face, then I have a solar panel company to sell you.

The President spent 2 years reshaping America in the image of Western