



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 158

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2012

No. 60

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Cholyan from the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America in New York City.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Almighty God, eternal guide of humankind, we seek the grace of Your wisdom in our lives and in the lives of our leaders. We thank You in the name of the Armenian people for Your divine mercy in providing them a safe refuge in this blessed country, the United States of America, where they were delivered from the depths of despair of genocide and welcomed with new life. We beseech You to spare all of Your children from tyranny and persecution.

Reveal Your infinite Spirit to the Members of this Senate, that they may be inspired toward a greatness of purpose and ennobled in their request for good governance. We offer to You our sacrifices upon the altar of freedom in an act of redemption for all of humankind with hope of harmony, compassion, and tolerance. We stand before You today and ask this in Your Name and for Your glory. 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 25, 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. GILLIBRAND, 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, the Senate is now considering the motion to proceed to S. 1925, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

The Republicans will control the first half hour, and the majority will control the second half hour this morning. The Republicans will also control the time from 11:30 to 12:30 today. The majority will control the time from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

At 2 p.m. the Senate will resume consideration of the postal reform bill. There will be several rollcall votes—six to eight votes—at that time in order to complete action on the bill.

POSTAL REFORM

I am very gratified about the work that has been done over the last many months, which will culminate today in

the passing of this postal bill. It has been extremely difficult. Lots of people have worked on this bill, and it has been a bipartisan effort. It is going to send a message to the House that we can do big things.

It is an important piece of legislation—one of the biggest and most complicated we have dealt with in a long time. As I said, I am gratified, and I congratulate and applaud Senators LIEBERMAN, COLLINS, and others on our side—especially Senator TOM CARPER, who worked hard with the chairman and ranking member and many others who were stalwarts. We saw that yesterday when there was an effort to bring the bill down. That was the first vote we took. Senators stood at their desks in the Chamber on a bipartisan basis and indicated how important this legislation is. It was a very important day for the American people.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

We will be on this legislation I announced dealing with violence against women. Each year about 5 million Americans are victims of violence by their spouses or partners. Every single day 3 women are killed at the hands of their abusers, and every day 9 or 10 are beaten very badly. They are hospitalized, and some have permanent injuries from their abusers. We authorize and ensure in this law that the police have the tools to more effectively stop this and prosecute those people who are the abusers.

As I said yesterday, I held hearings many years ago on this subject, and the one issue that was pronounced so clearly is that in many instances the only thing that helps these abusers is to send them to jail. It works better than counseling, better than threats, and people should realize we need law enforcement to have better ways of approaching these calls they get all the time.

I also mentioned yesterday that in Las Vegas one of our prized police officers, a sergeant on the police force for

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



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many years, was called to a scene along with one of the junior police officers, and he was killed as soon as he walked in the door. This is an important piece of legislation. It has 61 co-sponsors, and we should pass it.

STUDENT LOANS

Madam President, the Senate has a long list of things to do. One of the things we have to do is stop the raising of interest rates on students who borrow money to go to school. We were fortunate to reduce this rate from 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent. We cut it in half. We did this in 2007. We had just obtained a majority in the Senate, and we worked on this very hard. It went to President Bush, he signed the law, and rightfully so.

Everyone should understand this is a bill that was signed by President Bush. We need to go back to what he signed. We cannot have these rates go up. If we don't act by July 1, more than 7 million students will be forced to pay an average of \$1,000 more each year for these student loans. College is already unaffordable for too many people. I hope we can get this done.

I am going to stop my comments because I was, of course, impressed by the remarks of the guest Chaplain. Many years ago I went to the Armenian Church, and it was a wonderful experience. I say to my friend from Rhode Island, to whom I will yield in a second, we went to Armenia after that very brutal winter when the Turks had cut off the oil to Armenia. The Armenians cut down a lot of trees, and they survived. Most said they could not. It was a brutal winter. Peace Corps volunteers were there and not one left Armenia, even though they suffered along with the Armenian people.

So I have fond memories of my visit to Armenia. I understand the resiliency of the people of Armenia, and I remember visiting that church.

I yield to my friend, the Senator from Rhode Island.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. I thank the leader for yielding.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. REED. Madam President, I am honored to be here today to welcome His Eminence Archbishop Oshagan Cholyan. Archbishop Cholyan serves as the Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America. He has led the Eastern Prelacy since 1998, and he plays a significant role as the spiritual shepherd for several thousand Armenian Americans from Maine to Florida and west to Texas.

In Rhode Island, we are extremely blessed to have the Archbishop as such a strong spiritual and community leader. We continue to benefit from his wisdom, his compassion, and his generous spirit. It is an honor to have him here today as we not only listen to his mov-

ing and thoughtful words, but also as we commemorate the 97th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Ninety-seven years ago, on April 24, 1915, the Young Turk leaders of the Ottoman Empire summoned and executed over 200 Armenian community leaders and intellectuals, beginning an 8-year campaign of oppression and massacre. By 1923, nearly 1½ million Armenians were killed, and over a half million survivors were exiled. These atrocities affected the lives of every Armenian living in Asia Minor and, indeed, throughout the world.

The survivors of the Armenian genocide, however, persevered due to their unbreakable spirit, their steadfast resolve, and their deep commitment to their faith and their families. They went on to enrich their countries of emigration, including the United States, with their centuries-old customs, their culture, and their innate decency.

In fact, not only were the Ottomans unable to destroy the Armenian Empire, they strengthened it. And the participation of Armenians worldwide has made this world a much better place. Indeed, my home State is a much better place. That is why today we not only commemorate this grave tragedy but celebrate the traditions, the contributions, and the extraordinary hard work and decency of the Armenian Americans and Armenians throughout the world.

This year I once again join my colleagues in encouraging the United States to officially recognize the Armenian genocide. Denial of this history is not consistent with our country's sensitivity to human rights and our dedication to the highest and noblest principles that should govern the world. We must continue to educate our young people against this type of hatred and oppression so we can seek to prevent such crimes against humanity in the future. It was indeed an honor to be here to listen to the wise words of the Archbishop, to hear his prayer, his reflection, and to go forth knowing that he is a powerful force in our country for tolerance and decency. I thank him for being here today.

With that, I yield the floor.

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 assistant 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. Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the second 30 minutes.

The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, I rise today in support of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

I am glad the Senate is finally considering this important legislation, and I am proud to be the crucial 60th co-sponsor of the bill. I commend Chairman LEAHY for producing a bill that enjoys broad bipartisan support, and I look forward to swift passage of the VAWA reauthorization.

Violence in all its forms is unacceptable, but it is particularly horrifying when it takes place in the home, which should be a sanctuary for all who live there. Yet a recent CDC report found that nearly half of all women living in my home State of Nevada at the time of the survey experienced domestic violence at some point in their lifetime. This statistic is sickening and unacceptable. Women and children often feel powerless to escape abusive or dangerous situations, which too often end in tragedy.

My home State knows this sad reality all too well. Nevada is ranked first in the Nation for women murdered by men in domestic violence. Sadly, our State has appeared in the top three States in this horrific category in the last 7 years. Thankfully, organizations throughout the State of Nevada work tirelessly to help those jeopardized by domestic violence. While these groups have faced significant challenges due to funding cuts in recent years, they are doing their best with what they have to provide assistance to families who need it most.

According to last year's Nevada Census of Domestic Violence Services, nearly 500 Nevadans received crisis assistance through Nevada's domestic violence programs on a single day; 272 found refuge in emergency shelters or temporary housing; 204 received non-residential assistance. Staff and volunteers fielded an average of six hotline calls every hour. Despite the best efforts of our State's domestic violence programs, 25 cases of unmet requests for services were reported on a single day due to shortage of funds and staff. That means thousands of Nevadans could not access the services they needed last year.

Nevada's struggling economy has limited State resources to help those who are affected by domestic violence. Reauthorization of VAWA will provide greater certainty for organizations that work hard every day to prevent and address domestic violence. I trust this bill will ensure and enable domestic violence programs to plan for the future and serve even more Americans in need. Importantly, this bill will also