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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

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. Lord, cleanse our hearts, forgive our sins, and teach us to amend our ways as Your transforming grace changes our lives.

Today, inspire our Senators to be 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 please You. We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS 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, February 13, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 4:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 4:30 p.m. today. Following morning business, the Senate will go to executive session to consider the nomination of Adalberto Jordan to be a circuit judge for the Eleventh Circuit. At 5:30 p.m., there will be a cloture vote on the Jordan nomination. We hope to be able to yield back postcloture time and confirm this nomination this evening.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in the 1950s, America embarked on the largest public works project in its history: a new web of interstate highways. This came about as a result of then-President Eisenhower reflecting upon a time when he was given an assignment as a young major to bring a caravan of vehicles across the country as part of his duties

in the Army. It was a terrible experience—roads were dilapidated, rutted—and it was something he never forgot.

When he became President of the United States, he decided something should be done about that. This was a tremendous undertaking; 47,000 miles of highways would, for the first time, connect businesses and communities from sea to shining sea. President Eisenhower—of course, a Republican—said the investment would pave the way for a new era of American growth. He said:

America will be a nation of great prosperity, but will be more than that: it will be a nation that is going ahead every day. . . . The expanding horizon is one that staggers the imagination.

President Eisenhower said a new highway system was essential to our economy, our safety, and our progress as a nation. That is just as true today as it was in 1954.

Today, America depends on more than 4 million miles of roadways to keep our economy humming. We use those roads to take the kids across town to school and to take products across the Nation to market. But the system of highways, roadways, railways, and bridges upon which the American economy depends—and in which we invested our great resources during the last century—has fallen into a state of disrepair.

This is hard to comprehend, but more than 70,000 of our bridges are structurally deficient. They need major repairs or need to be replaced completely—70,000 bridges. Every month in America enough pedestrians are killed to fill a jumbo jet. Many of these deaths could have been prevented by proper sidewalks and crosswalks. Bus and train ridership grows every year while public transportation dollars shrink every year. One of every five miles of American roads is not up to safety standards.

Let me repeat: We have 70,000 bridges that are structurally deficient, and we

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



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have 20 percent of our roads not up to safety standards. Crumbling infrastructure is a terrible drag on our economy. But this crisis is also an opportunity. By rebuilding our transportation system, we can put 2 million Americans back to work and boost our economy right away.

The surface transportation bill that is on the Senate floor this week is one of the most important pieces of legislation we will consider the entire year. It will help modernize our transit system, rebuild America's roads and bridges, and create or save millions of middle-class jobs. And, it will do it in a fiscally responsible way.

Democrats and Republicans agree that making America's transportation system great again will boost our economy, and that is what this bill is all about. It is a bipartisan bill sponsored, of course, by the chairman of the committee BARBARA BOXER and the ranking member of the committee Senator INHOFE.

President Reagan called a world-class transportation system an investment in tomorrow that we must make today. So it is no wonder this strong bipartisan surface transportation legislation passed the committee unanimously. I am cautiously optimistic that spirit of cooperation will continue this week.

I hope the junior Senator from South Carolina did not speak for the majority of Republicans last week when he said, "We don't have shared goals with the Democrats." I would like to believe Republicans share our goal of strengthening the economy and creating millions of jobs for American workers. I would like to believe they share a goal, as Eisenhower and Clinton and Reagan did, of rebuilding a world-class transportation system to support a world-class economy.

This week Republicans have an opportunity to prove they share these goals. The surface transportation jobs bill is too important to get bogged down with ideological amendments. Unrelated legislation that would limit women's access to health care has no place on a transportation bill. So let's stay laser-focused on our most important task: putting 2 million Americans back to work rebuilding our roadways and railways. Together we can keep this Nation, as President Eisenhower said, "moving ahead every day."

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, President Obama released a budget today that isn't really a budget at all. It is a campaign document. The President's goal isn't to solve our problems but to ignore them for another year, which will only ensure they get even

worse. Once again, the President is shirking his responsibility to lead by using this budget to divide us.

The game plan is perfectly clear. Rather than reach out to Congress to craft a consensus budget, the President will take this budget on the road, as he did today, and talk about the parts he thinks audiences will like. What he will not say is that it is bad for job creation, bad for seniors, and it will make the economy worse.

The President's budget is bad for jobs because it includes the biggest tax hike in history and continues policies such as the Democrats' health care law that is making it harder for small businesses to hire.

A little more than a year ago, the President extended current tax rates because he thought raising them would be bad for jobs. Today he will call for raising them anyway because he thinks it is good for him.

The President's budget is bad for our seniors because it doesn't protect the security of Medicare and Social Security and assures those programs keep careening toward insolvency.

The President's budget is bad for our country's economic security because yet again the President failed to take the prime opportunity this budget provides to address the Nation's \$15 trillion debt.

Contrary to the President's claims out on the road, this budget is literally loaded with deficit reduction gimmicks that would trigger an IRS audit for anybody else and make our current economic situation even worse.

Now, the President isn't going to mention any of those things, but Americans deserve to know the whole truth about this budget. They deserve to know why the President's own party doesn't want to vote on it and why his own top advisers are trying to deflect serious questions about what is really going on here.

Yesterday, the President's Chief of Staff said the reason this budget will not get anywhere in the Senate is because it would take 60 votes to pass—60 votes to pass—and the Democrats don't have that many votes on their own.

Well, I would suggest Mr. Lew review his Sunday briefing materials a little more closely next time. As someone who has run the Office of Management and Budget for two different Presidents, he knows as well as anybody in Washington a simple majority is all it takes to pass a budget resolution in the Senate, a simple majority. In other words, Democrats could pass this President's budget without a single Republican vote—not one.

The inconvenient truth that President Obama and his own top advisers don't want to admit is that this budget isn't going anywhere because the President's own party doesn't want to have anything whatsoever to do with it. Indeed, the majority leader in the Senate has already declared it "dead on arrival."

Now, Jack Lew knows this as well as I do, and the fact that he does proves

beyond any doubt the President has no intention of this budget ever actually being implemented. If he can't even count on members of his own party to support it, who does he expect is going to support it?

The truth is, Democrats want to have it both ways. The President wants to be able to take his budget around the country to talk about the parts of it he thinks people will like, and Democrats in Congress want to be able to avoid a vote on it because it is so damaging for job creation and seniors and the economy.

Well, if anybody wants to know what a failure of leadership looks like, this is it. This is it. Three years ago, President Obama promised to cut the Federal deficit in half by the end of his first term. He hasn't even come close. Here he is once again proposing the same failed policies that have prolonged this economic crisis well into the President's fourth year in office. After the national debt increased under his watch by more than 40 percent, he is still throwing good money after bad. He is still spending money we don't have on things we don't need. He still refuses to lead.

Democrats in Congress have been more than happy to enable him. They haven't passed a budget of their own in 3 years, and all indications are they will not pass one this year either—a failure of congressional leadership that will surely go down in history. At this point, nothing seems capable of rousing this President to action. Every day we hear the alarm bells sounding from across the Atlantic. It doesn't seem to phase him. Every day we hear the warnings from experts and economists that our fiscal situation is unsustainable.

Just a few months ago, the unthinkable happened when America's credit rating was actually lowered for the first time in history.

What is this President's response? A budget he knows even his own party will not support. That is his response to this \$15 trillion debt. So this is a charade—a charade. The only question is when this President's own refusal to lead will catch up to all the rest of us.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I wish to continue the comments along the line of our distinguished Republican leader and talk about the President's proposed budget that was released today.

Unfortunately, the President's budget proposes more debt, more spending, and higher taxes. It is bad news for job creation and for America's job creators and portends nothing good; indeed, only does it portend ominously for our country getting back on the right economic track and creating the kind of growth that will generate jobs and prosperity.

The President's proposed budget again ignores his own bipartisan fiscal