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Senate

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 PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by the Reverend Dr. Douglas Gerdts, Senior Pastor of First and Central Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, DE.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Would you pray with me, please.

Holy God, little can be said that doesn't add to the cacophony of prayer that arises from humanity. Surely from this august Chamber the volume and intensity is at times deafening. Yet these, O God, are the servants of the people and of You. So like Solomon we pray, "Here's what we want: Give us a God-listening heart so we can lead Your people well, discerning the difference between good and evil. For who on their own is capable of leading Your good people?"

Who indeed, O God.

Our prayer this morning is quiet and simple: Instill wisdom and compassion, the quest for peace and the drive for justice, the humility to recognize our ignorance and the grace to welcome another's point of view, and the awe of the responsibility conveyed upon us and the gratitude to relish our part in shaping the future. Most of all, let us never think that we travel this road alone, for who on their own is capable of leading Your good people?

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 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. INOUYE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, September 20, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, 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. INOUYE,
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.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield to my friend from Delaware and ask that I be recognized when he finishes his remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Delaware is recognized.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my gratitude to Leader REID and to Chaplain Black, to all of us in the Chamber, and my gratitude to the Reverend Dr. Douglas Gerdts. It is my honor and privilege to welcome him to our Chamber this morning as one of Delaware's strongest and finest faith leaders.

Reverend Gerdts leads the congregation at First and Central Presbyterian

Church in Wilmington. Each time I join with him on Sunday mornings, I am uplifted by the stirring music, I am challenged by his passionate sermons, and I leave engaged for the week, rooted in my faith and moved forward by his words and by his leadership.

But Reverend Gerdts' leadership extends far beyond the walls of his church. It touches those most in need in our community. The church literally opens its doors every Saturday, welcoming in homeless Delawareans as well as welcoming in schoolchildren who need smaller class sizes and better instruction to succeed.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Reverend Gerdts for more than a dozen years. In my own service in county government I knew him as chair of the Diversity Commission, and he helped lead the charge for equality and civil unions in Delaware last year. He has made a real and lasting contribution to our community. He and his wonderful wife Walle are part of what makes Delaware a great place.

As he shared with us in his prayer, he is exactly the sort of person who, through a listening heart, has become a powerful and effective servant leader of faith in my home community.

My thanks to the Chaplain for allowing guest Chaplains, and my thanks to Rev. Doug Gerdts for his friendship, his faith, and his leadership.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senator from Delaware has been such a great addition to the Senate. He is well respected on both sides of the aisle, and he is a man of spiritual quality. Among his other attributes, he has a divinity degree from Yale University. Without elaborating, I am just so pleased he is my friend and a Member of the Senate.

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



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SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate is now considering the motion to proceed to H.J. Res. 117, which is the continuing resolution, postclosure. The next 2 hours will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees with the Republicans controlling the first half and the Democrats the second half.

At 2 p.m., all postclosure time will be yielded back and there will be a roll-call vote on the motion to proceed to the continuing resolution.

I am hoping we can reach an agreement on our unfinished business and avoid a weekend session and a session in the early part of next week.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 3576

Mr. REID. Mr. President, S. 3576 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for a second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3576) to provide limitations on United States assistance, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I would object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this month I join more than 52 million Latinos in Nevada and across the country to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month.

Each year Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity to honor the contributions of a population that is so important to our national identity—a community that has contributed to our country's progress for centuries.

We see those contributions in every facet of our society: on the battlefield and in the boardroom, in the courtroom and the classroom, at the art gallery and in the recording studio, and on the playing field. In Nevada Hispanic influence is evident in the name of our State—Nevada, snowcapped Las Vegas, and the meadows.

Today, more than one-quarter of Nevada's population is Hispanic. Nationwide, Latinos are expected to make up 60 percent of the population growth in the coming decades. To ensure our country thrives, we need to make sure its Hispanic population thrives as well.

That is why President Obama and Democrats in Congress have fought for the policies that are making the Hispanic community stronger and more prosperous. Despite opposition, we have made progress on economic and educational issues that are important to Latinos and to all Americans. The Recovery Act, which included tax cuts for working families and improvements

in unemployment insurance, kept more than 2 million Hispanics out of poverty.

Unlike Governor Romney, we know Americans who access the employment benefits they have earned while working are not “victims” who are unwilling to take “personal responsibility” for their lives. “Victims” is Mitt Romney's word; “personal responsibility” are his words.

Democrats secured tax credits for more than 8 million Hispanic children and their families. Mitt Romney, on the other hand, believes tax credits for working parents struggling to make ends meet are a hand out, not a hand up.

Democrats fought to give small business loans to almost 9,000 Hispanic-owned businesses. Under a Romney administration, loans for small businesses would be a thing of the past—one more remnant of the dependency culture he loathes.

Mitt Romney was caught on tape telling wealthy donors he would be winning this election if he was Latino. That is what he said. But we know Mitt Romney's problem isn't that he is not Hispanic; his problem is that he opposes the commonsense policies that are good for Hispanic families.

Republicans have been paying lip-service to concerned Hispanic families in the months leading up to election day. Democrats are helping Hispanic families tackle the challenges they face every day.

To us, Hispanic Heritage Month isn't just about recognizing the incredible contributions Hispanic Americans make to our Nation; it is also about building a brighter future for Hispanic Americans in our Nation.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

NEED FOR NEW LEADERSHIP

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we all understand there is an election going on around here in a few months, but I would like to remind my colleagues on the other side that we also have a job to do right now. We have multiple crisis-level issues to deal with. Yet our Democratic friends don't seem to want to do a thing. Never before—never before—has a President and a Senate done so little to confront challenges so great.

We have a \$16 trillion debt. Democrats haven't bothered to pass a budget in 3 years. Every single American will get hit with a massive tax hike in just 3 months if we don't act to prevent it.

Democrats are saying we shouldn't do anything about it; just go off the cliff. Go off the cliff, and let's see what happens. The defense budget is about to suffer automatic cuts that the President's own Defense Secretary—the De-

fense Secretary in this administration—has described as devastating. But Democrats can't be bothered to figure out a way to avoid them.

The Middle East is in turmoil. We remain at war in Afghanistan and with al-Qaida, and Senate Democrats have not even bothered to pass the Defense authorization bill.

Gas prices have more than doubled over the past 4 years—doubled in just 4 years. Democrats responded by conspiring with the President to make sure a domestic pipeline didn't get built. They just let the debt grow, let taxes go up, let the defense cuts stand, and let gas prices get higher and higher. They don't pass a budget, don't pass any spending bills, don't do anything that involves making tough choices; just sit around and kill time in the hopes that the voters will focus on the other guys instead.

Look, our constituents didn't send us here to watch the clock or to offer running commentary on the Senate floor. They sent us here to make a difference. We have jobs to do. It is about time we did them. In these very challenging times, Americans deserve leadership. Never before—never before—has a President and a Senate majority party done so little when our challenges were so great. There is no excuse for it.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the next 2 hours shall be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees with the Republicans controlling the first half of the time.

The minority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we have a number of colleagues who will be speaking this morning during our 1-hour morning business time. Given the number of speakers, I ask the Chair to help remind colleagues when they have consumed roughly 1 minute, and I thank the Chair for doing so.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will do so.

The Senator from Tennessee.

SENATE LEADERSHIP

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, some say the reason for a do-nothing Senate—or the cure for it—is that we need to change the rules. I say we need a change in behavior, and I wish to offer a single example.

We have a big spending and borrowing problem: 42 cents out of every dollar we are borrowing. We are headed off a fiscal cliff. The minority leader has described that.

The Australian Foreign Minister has said the United States of America is