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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 Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl, senior rabbi of Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto, Canada.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

God of us all, we assemble before You in humility, recalling both triumph and defeat, summer drought, autumn hurricane, and the cooperative resilience of our Nation. In this season after elections and before the new Congress, we ask that You give these Senators and our government the wisdom to avoid the exclusion of either/or and to embrace the blessings of both/and.

Rather than fear falling off a cliff, help our leaders to learn to chimney. In climbing, chimneying requires pushing off one side of a mountain cleft and then the other to advance higher. The resistance of each face of the rock contributes to the ascent. Help these leaders to appreciate individual initiative and care for the distressed, to value competition and find a path for cooperation, to be mindful of human liberty and be grateful for mutual help, to recognize the occasional need for force and to forcefully pursue peace. Enable them to chimney up the cleft of our differences, to reclaim fiscal integrity and maintain social concern, to be exemplars of responsibility and reasonableness, so that all Americans may respect and rejoice in their leadership of this great country.

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 Repub-

lic 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, November 29, 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. INOUE,
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.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the second half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the Defense authorization bill. We will continue to work through the amendments to the bill during today's session. Rollcall votes are expected all throughout today.

I would now yield to my friend, the senior Senator from the State of Wisconsin. I will have more of an opportunity at a later time to say things about Senator KOHL, but I have had a

wonderful experience in getting to know this quiet, very productive man. I have enjoyed his innate skills. He is one of the best businesspeople we have in America today, one of the best Senators we have in America today.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wisconsin.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise today to thank Rabbi Baruch Frydman-Kohl for his invocation this morning and welcome him and his beloved wife Josette to the Senate.

Rabbi Baruch's father Jack and my father Max were brothers and Europeans during the First World War. Both were exiled to Siberia. Later, after my father immigrated to America, he helped Jack and his family come to Milwaukee.

Baruch is the Anne and Max Tanenbaum senior rabbi of Best Tzedec Congregation, the largest synagogue community in Canada. The focus of his rabbinate has been family education, lifelong learning, and care for the housebound, hospitalized, and homeless. Beyond the synagogue, the rabbi is the president of the Toronto Board of Rabbis and recently organized the Path of Abraham mission to bring Jews, Christians, and Muslims to the Holy Land to explore the challenges of three religions, two nations, and one land.

Baruch's list of accomplishments and credentials is as impressive as it is long. I ask unanimous consent to have a copy of his biography printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. KOHL. I will just add to this list his place in my heart as a beloved cousin, valued friend, and welcomed reflection of all about our fathers that was

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



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strong, smart, and good. I thank the rabbi for his time and attention to the Senate today.

EXHIBIT 1

RABBI BARUCH FRYDMAN-KOHL

Baruch Frydman-Kohl is the Anne and Max Tanenbaum Senior Rabbi of Beth Tzedec Congregation, the largest synagogue community in Canada. The focus of his rabinate has been a commitment to family education, life-long learning and care for the housebound, hospitalized and homeless. Rabbi Baruch initiated the development of a "synaplex" of innovative ritual and educational opportunities to encourage more participation in synagogue life.

Beyond the synagogue, the Rabbi is the President of the Toronto Board of Rabbis and recently organized the Path of Abraham mission to bring Jews, Christians and Muslims to the Holy Land to explore the challenges of three religions, two nations and one land. He serves on the Board of UJA Federation of Toronto, has served on the Executive Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly, and as past president of two of its regions. He was awarded a Coolidge Fellowship to pursue research in an inter-faith community at the Episcopal Divinity School at Harvard University. The Rabbi received his doctorate in Jewish Philosophy from the Jewish Theological Seminary and is a Rabbinic Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute of Jerusalem. Rabbi Frydman-Kohl is the author of scholarly articles in the area of Jewish philosophy and mysticism.

Rabbi Baruch's father, Jack, and Senator KOHL's father, Max, were brothers and young teenagers during the First World War when they were caught between the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and Czarist Russia. They were taken captive and sent to exile in Siberia. Later, after Max's immigration to America, he helped to bring Jack and his family to Milwaukee. Through their love and care for each other, the two brothers enabled each other to survive war and to build a new life in America.

Rabbi Baruch is married to Josette. They are the parents of Yakov (married to Sarah), Rafi and Amir and the doting new grandparents of Ilana Adi.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is a remarkable short history, very amazing how wonderful our country is. I note just in passing that my wife's father, my father-in-law, was born in Russia, immigrated to the United States like the rabbi and Senator KOHL's father.

FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it took 4 months, but Republicans are finally realizing their way back from the fiscal cliff has been right in front of them all along. In July the Senate passed legislation to give economic certainty to 98 percent of American families and 97 percent of small businesses, to every American making less than \$250,000 a year. For 4 months we have been one vote away from a solution to this looming crisis. For 4 months House Republicans have refused to act. Instead, they have held the middle class hostage to protect the richest 2 percent of taxpayers—people who have enjoyed a decade of blooming income and shrinking tax bills.

One has to admire the President, who went out and campaigned on this issue. He did not in any way walk away from the issue. He said: That is how we are going to get our fiscal house in order. And independents by a huge margin, Democrats by a huge margin, and 41 percent of Republicans support what the President asks us to do.

So now reasonable Republicans—I think it is very important—are coming around to what Democrats have said all along: Let's reassure millions of Americans that taxes will not go up by \$2,200 a year on January 1; that is, those people who are the middle class of America.

Prominent Republicans are calling on Speaker BOEHNER to end the suspense for millions of these American families. Yesterday Republican Congressman TOM COLE of Oklahoma, a veteran in the House of Representatives, urged his caucus to pass the Senate's legislation keeping taxes low for those making less than \$250,000 a year. That would pass by an overwhelming margin. All the Speaker has to do is let it come up for a vote. I would bet a lot of his Republicans would vote for it. I would bet a majority of his Republicans would vote for it. Virtually every Democrat would vote for it. They only need 218. There are 435 Members in the House. We also noted yesterday that Republican Congressman TIM SCOTT of South Carolina, who is noted for his conservatism, admitted yesterday that if the Speaker brought our bill to a vote, it would surely pass. So it is time the House Republican leadership listened to the will of the American people—Independents, Democrats, and Republicans—and also the advice of the reasonable members of their own caucus. The way out of this standoff is clear. Yet we are left wondering how long Republicans will force middle-class families to wait and to worry.

Unfortunately, resolving the standoff will not resolve every conflict over the fiscal future. We have to end wasteful tax breaks for the richest Americans. We agree. We agree with the majority of Americans. We are serious about reducing the deficit. It will take a balanced approach. Last year we successfully worked across party lines to cut \$1 trillion worth of spending we could not afford. Even our Republican colleagues acknowledge budget cuts alone will not solve our fiscal challenges. We can argue over whether to give more wasteful handouts to the wealthy. They can do that tomorrow. We can discuss balanced, responsible ways to reduce our deficit tomorrow. But let's take care of the middle class today.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak for 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, throughout the week, I have raised questions about the President's level of seriousness and engagement when it comes to resolving the short- and long-term fiscal challenges we face. I have done this because, as I have said repeatedly, the President is the key to success in all of these discussions. So I am hoping that when Secretary Geithner comes up to the Capitol today, he brings a specific plan from the President that the two parties could agree to for the good of the country. I hope to hear the administration's specific plans for protecting jobs and promoting economic growth for middle-class Americans, while reducing the debt by strengthening entitlements, reducing Washington's spending, and preventing a tax hike on every American taxpayer.

Up until now, the White House has preferred talking points and an appeal to the hard left to a serious discussion about how we fix the economy, reduce the Federal debt, and return the country to a path of growth and prosperity for all. They are stuck on the same old tired slogans, and it is really completely counterproductive. So this morning I would like to address one of these recurring talking points in a little more detail in the hope that the White House puts it aside and starts talking in a way that suggests they are actually serious over there about finding a solution. I am referring to the oft-repeated assertion by the White House and reporters alike that those of us who insist on not raising income tax rates on anybody are doing so to "protect the rich." I assure you, that has absolutely nothing to do with it. Check the polling data. The super-rich vote for the Democrats. We are not insisting on keeping tax rates where they are to protect some tiny sliver of the electorate; we are insisting on keeping tax rates where they are first and foremost to protect jobs and because we do not think government needs the money in the first place.

The problem, as I have said, is not that Washington taxes too little, but it is that it spends too much. But if more revenue is the price Democrats want to exact for supporting other necessary reforms, then we should at least agree that we do it in a way that does not cost jobs and disincentivize work, as we all know raising rates would do.