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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.

Almighty and everlasting God, in whom we live and move and have our being, as we grieve the loss of life in the Newtown, CT, shooting, show us Your way and teach us Your path. Make us all responsible stewards of Your most precious gift of time by teaching us to number our days that we may have hearts of wisdom.

May the incomprehensible destruction of lives still framed by springtime remind us of the importance of not delaying in seizing our opportunities to do good. Make our lawmakers willing to act promptly, remembering that time is fleeting and that they shall not pass this way again.

Bless those who mourn, eternal God, with the comfort of Your love that they may face each new day with hope and with the certainty that nothing can destroy the good that has been given them. May their memories become less painful as You encircle their lives with Your love.

We pray in Your merciful 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, December 17, 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate observe a moment of silence for the tragedy.

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

(Moment of silence)

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 3 p.m. today.

Following morning business, we will begin consideration of H.R. 1, the legislative vehicle for the supplemental appropriations bill. That bill will be managed by Senator PAT LEAHY.

At 5 p.m. the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the Olguin and Durkin nominations, both to be U.S. district judges of Illinois and California, respectively.

At 5:30 p.m., the Senate will vote on confirmation of the nominations. It is expected there will be a rolloccall vote on

the confirmation of the Durkin nomination and a voice vote on the confirmation of the Olguin nomination.

NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT TRAGEDY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this afternoon the families of Newtown, CT, are burying two 6-year-old boys—Noah Pozner and Jack Pinto. Noah turned 6 last month. Even though he was only 6, Jack was a New York Giants fan.

In the days to come, many of their classmates will also be laid to rest—the victims of a tragedy too terrible to comprehend. Twenty little girls and boys, twenty tiny daughters and sons, sisters and brothers, friends and playmates, twenty children who will never grow up to learn to drive, go on a first date or graduate from high school, twenty 6- and 7-year-olds who will never have the chance to fall in love, get married or have children of their own: Noah and Jack, Charlotte, Daniel, Olivia, Josephine, Ana, Dylan, Madeline, Catherine, Chase, Avielle, Jesse, Grace, Emilie, Caroline, Jessica, Benjamin, Allison, and James.

No words of condolence could possibly ease the pain of families who lost cherished little children, but I hope it is some small comfort that the entire Nation mourns with them. My heart and warm wishes go out to all those affected by Friday's massacre. My thoughts are with the students and faculty of Sandy Hook who witnessed such unspeakable violence.

Newtown and the Nation have seen great evil. We have also seen incredible bravery.

In her final act on Earth, 27-year-old Victoria Soto hid the children of her first grade class in closets and cabinets and then sacrificed herself to save them.

Dawn Hochsprung, the principal, forcibly—as the word goes—attacked the assailant, and he killed her.

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



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Mary Sherlach, Lauren Rousseau, Rachel Davino, and Anne Marie Murphy also died trying to safeguard the children in their care.

These six educators devoted their lives to teaching Newtown's children how to read, how to add and subtract, and how to be good boys and girls. They gave their lives to keep these children safe. They are a source of hope in a hopeless situation.

I commend the teachers of Sandy Hook Elementary who didn't hesitate when they saw danger coming. Some barricaded their students inside classrooms or hid them in closets, preventing an even greater loss of life.

I thank the first responders who rushed into the school, despite the danger and horrors around them, knowing they had a job to do.

It is hard to comprehend this type of tragedy, let alone recover from it. But in the words of Helen Keller: "Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it."

As the families of Newtown mourn, all America mourns with them, and we will stand with them as they overcome this suffering and begin the healing process.

Part of the healing process will require Congress to examine what can be done to prevent more tragedies such as the ones in Newtown, CT; Aurora, CO; Oak Creek, WI; and Portland, OR. These are fairly recent.

As President Obama said last night, no one law can erase evil. No policy can prevent a determined madman from committing a senseless act of violence. But we need to accept the reality that we are not doing enough to protect our citizens.

In the coming days and weeks, we will engage in a meaningful conversation and thoughtful debate about how to change laws and culture that allows this violence to continue to grow. We have no greater responsibility than keeping safe our most vulnerable and our most precious resource—our children. Every idea should be on the table as we discuss how best to do just that.

HURRICANE SANDY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today we have an opportunity to pull together to help the citizens of New York, New Jersey, and other parts of the Northeast as they recover from the damage of Hurricane Sandy.

As we did when Hurricane Katrina struck the gulf coast and Irene struck communities up and down the eastern seaboard, we have an opportunity to help make families and communities whole again. I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in moving quickly to send aid to those affected by Sandy as they continue to recover and rebuild.

The Senate must move swiftly to approve the supplemental disaster act and act to give the intelligence community the tools it needs to keep our Nation safe before the Christmas holi-

day. In short, before we leave for Christmas, we are going to have to finish our work on Sandy and FISA. They are both extremely important and they have to be completed. So everyone should understand we have that to do. We will see if anything changes, but it appears we are going to be coming back the day after Christmas to complete work on the fiscal cliff and a few other leftover items.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT TRAGEDY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start by extending my deepest sympathies to the families of the victims of Friday's massacre and to the whole community and to thank the first responders and all those who are helping in the aftermath of this darkest of tragedies.

Three days after the horrors of Newtown, we are all still reeling from what happened. Anytime there is a shooting such as this, we are crushed with sorrow. But there is no escaping the fact that the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary stands out for its awfulness. The murder of so many little children and the adults who tried to save them doesn't just break our hearts, it shatters them.

The last few days have been searing for all of us, and the days ahead will be too. Over the weekend, we began to see the faces of the children and to hear their stories.

One parent, Robbie Parker, stood in front of the cameras on Saturday and shared with the Nation an impromptu eulogy of his 6-year-old daughter Emilie. It was a remarkable moment. Emilie was bright and creative and very loving, he said, and we marveled at his courage. Now the funerals—10 of them this week in 1 church alone.

It has been said many times that no words are adequate to lift the agony of a parent such as Robbie Parker. What happened in Newtown on Friday is something for which no parent of a young child could ever prepare. But I think President Obama spoke for all of us in the very moving meditation he offered last night on the singularity of parental love.

There is literally nothing we wouldn't do for our kids and that is one of the things that makes this massacre so terrible and which makes the stories of courage we have heard so inspiring; the young teacher who stood between the gunman and her students and lost her life in the process; the principal and the school psychologist who sprang into action and gave their lives too. As the President said, these luminous acts of self-sacrificing love are the moments that will define this tragedy in the

years ahead because the heroism and the courage we never fail to see in the midst of tragedies such as this become the starting points of something better and more lasting than the vagaries of this life. They give us the hope we need in the face of so much evil and sorrow.

We stand with the people of Newtown today and in the days ahead. We can do nothing to lessen their anguish, but we can let them know we mourn with them, that we share a tiny part of the burden in our own hearts, and that we will lift the victims and their families and the entire community in prayer.

The Scripture says that while "now we only know in part, in the life to come we shall know, even as we are known."

Scripture also says that in that day ". . . every tear will be wiped away, because there will be no more death, or sorrow, or crying, or pain, for the former things will have passed away."

May the people of Newtown and all Americans be consoled by this certain hope. May their burdens be lightened by the loving care of their neighbors and friends and even strangers in the days and weeks ahead. May this terrible tragedy prompt all of us to cherish the lives we have been given, our family members and friends and all who surround us in our daily tasks.

This is no lasting city, we know. May we pass through it with a little more gratitude and with a firmer determination to live the kind of lives we have been called to live.

I yield the floor.

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 until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT TRAGEDY

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise with a heavy heart at the senseless tragedy in Newtown, CT, that took place this Friday. We are all shaken