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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP, a Senator from the State of North Dakota.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, thank You for this opportunity to commune with You. Inspire our lawmakers to daily create time when they can meet with You. Lord, keep them from becoming discouraged by the difficulty of achieving their goals, knowing that You monitor their efforts and will reward their faithfulness.

Help us all to pause and be grateful for all the blessings we receive from You each day. May we never take for granted the blessings of life, salvation, sunshine, flowers, and countless other gifts from You. Alarm us with disappointment in our souls if what we planned is less than Your best. And, Lord, we ask You to bless Francis, the new Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP 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. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 14, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP, a Senator from the State of North Dakota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. HEITKAMP 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, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 933. There will be an hour of debate equally divided and controlled on the Harkin amendment. At 11:15 this morning, or approximately 11:15, there will be a rollcall vote on the Harkin amendment. We will continue to work through the amendments to the bill throughout today's session. Senators will be notified when votes are scheduled.

Last night I filed cloture on the substitute amendment and the bill. As a result, the filing deadline for all first-degree amendments is 1 p.m. today.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 558

Mr. REID. I understand S. 558 is at the desk and due for its second reading.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 558) to prohibit the Administrator of the Environmental Protection

Agency from awarding any grant, contract, cooperative agreement, or other financial assistance under section 103 of the Clean Air Act for any program, project, or activity outside the United States.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings with respect to this legislation.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. REID. 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.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank the Chair.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THE BUDGET

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yesterday I asked Senate Democrats to forward a thoughtful budget that Americans of both parties could rally around, one that controls spending, gets our economy healthy again, and advances the serious reforms necessary to make government programs more efficient, effective, and responsive to the needs of 21st-century Americans. I asked them to please shelve the tax hikes. That is because we understand the negative effect more taxes would have on our fragile economy and the millions of Americans still looking for work. It is also because we know Washington Democrats already got \$600 billion in taxes they demanded earlier this year. Remember, that is in addition to the

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



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more than \$1 trillion they got in taxes from ObamaCare as well. So now it is time for the balance they promised. Washington does not need to tax more; it needs to finally figure out how to spend less.

I said that these things were the least Senate Democrats owed the American people, given their lack of responsibility in not producing a budget for the last 4 years. I am sorry to report that the plan they put forward yesterday will do none of these things. Instead of getting Washington spending under control, their proposed budget doubles down on the same wasteful stimulus spending we already know does not work. We have tried that. In fact, at a time when Americans believe that about half of every dollar they send to Washington is wasted, the Democratic budget would increase spending by nearly 62 percent. Their budget will do more to harm the economy than to help it, and it will let Medicare and Social Security drift ever closer to bankruptcy.

Then there is the Democrats' \$1.5 trillion tax hike—that is trillion with a “t.” Let me repeat that. Any Senator who votes for that budget is voting for a \$1.5 trillion tax hike—the largest tax hike in America's history. So the Senate Democratic budget is more than just disappointing, it is extreme. It is really one of the most extreme, most leftwing budgets of the modern era.

I think it says something about today's Washington Democrats. There was a time when the Democratic Party cared about fiscal responsibility, when Democrats understood the need to be concerned about the impact their policies would have on hard-working taxpayers, a time when they would have rejected this budget as a joke. But those voices of reason have been mostly chased out of today's DC Democrats. The few who remain have been sidelined and silenced throughout the budget process. Even the chairman of the Finance Committee has been pushed aside so his fellow Democrats can quickly ram through their massive tax hike.

It will be no surprise to hear that my conference opposes a leftwing manifesto masquerading as a responsible budget, and when Americans get a chance to digest their budget and the one House Republicans put forward earlier this week, they will see some very clear differences between a budget that balances and one that enshrines waste and cronyism; between a budget that helps bring the economy back to health and one that kills jobs; between a budget that measures compassion in how many people it helps and one that counts compassion in how many hard-earned tax dollars are sent to Washington for politicians to waste; between a budget that strengthens Medicare and one that would put Medicare even further out of reach for future generations. In short, they will see a bold, reformist Republican budget centered on their needs and an extreme

Democratic budget centered on the needs of Washington bureaucrats and politicians.

I hope Senate Democrats think again before they choose to push such an extreme budget forward because I think they will find that Americans agree with Republicans on the most important point: We need to grow the economy, not the Government.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN MCCAIN

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, more than four decades ago, millions of people watched in awe as Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the Moon. I remember that day still, and I am sure many of you do. It remains one of our country's proudest moments. But not every American was able to share in the excitement. As the senior Senator from Arizona put it, when the momentous event occurred, I had no idea it was happening. I and several hundred comrades were otherwise engaged. That is because 2 years earlier, on his 23rd bombing run over Vietnam, a missile hit Lieutenant Commander MCCAIN's plane. He ejected, his body spiraling through the air until it hit water thousands of feet below—a lake right in the center of Hanoi.

An angry mob set upon him. They ripped off his clothes; they hit, kicked, and spat upon him. They bayoneted his ankle and his groin. The Senator was left with two broken arms and a broken leg, and he passed sort of in and out of consciousness. But he has never forgotten what came next, when Vietnamese forces gathered him up and took him to the so-called Hanoi Hilton. As the massive steel doors locked shut behind him, Senator MCCAIN said he felt “a deeper dread than [he has] ever felt since.”

He would remain an enemy captive for the next 5½ years, cut off from family and friends, from even the simplest joys of life, things you and I take for granted: the aromas of Thanksgiving, the far-away thrill of cheering a hometown team on to victory, the sounds that let us know the world around us is alive with action, with movement, with hope. But JOHN MCCAIN never lost hope even when he was locked in solitary confinement and even when he was tortured. His captors poorly cast his broken arms on purpose. They broke an arm again and hung the young captive by his lifeless limbs so they could torture him some more.

Eventually, Vietnamese officials discovered he was the son of a high-ranking Navy officer and offered him a release. He turned their offers down. It was partly because he knew an early release would be used cynically by the Communist propaganda machine but, more importantly, because he refused to skip the line ahead of his fellow POWs.

It is one thing to talk about attributes such as courage and bravery in the abstract, it is quite another to demonstrate those qualities in the

most trying of circumstances. It reminds me of an old saying: “The superior man is modest in his speech but exceeds in his actions.” That kind of man—well, that is just who JOHN MCCAIN is.

His campaign motto in 2008 was “Country First.” For some politicians that might have been just a slogan, but for my colleague from Arizona I know it was authentically and truly him. Senator MCCAIN still wears the scars of his long detention. He cannot raise his arms above shoulder level. One of his legs still has not fully healed. I can only imagine the weight of the memories he still must carry with him. Yet he endures—a man who has always seen his life in service, transformed from a captive of the enemy into a servant of the people.

For more than 30 years he has represented Arizona with great distinction, in both the House and Senate. He is a valued member of the Senate Republican Conference, especially when it comes to issues he cares about most passionately—defense being at the top of the list. As someone who experienced the horrors of war in the truest sense, he understands what it means to send young Americans into harm's way, and he never takes those decisions lightly.

Because he knows what it means to be in chains, he also understands what it means to be free. He was able to leave his prison behind, but for millions around the world there is no escape from suffering and despair. That is why Senator MCCAIN has always been so outspoken about his view of the responsibility we, as a free people, have to help others secure their own liberty, whether in Pyongyang, Libya, Damascus, or—a cause close to my own heart as well—Burma.

He has been absolutely unafraid to take unpopular and sometimes solitary stands on issues when he believes in the cause. He never wavered in his support for the surge in Iraq, for instance, even when others said it would take a “willing suspension of disbelief” for the policy to succeed, but it did. That is why when he speaks, others listen—even when they may not agree with him.

Senator MCCAIN provides a unique and much needed perspective in the Senate, and we are fortunate to have him as our colleague. He certainly knows I am grateful for his contributions. Let's take a moment today to mark the 40th anniversary of Senator MCCAIN's release from captivity and to thank him for his sacrifice on behalf of all of us for enduring the unendurable, for keeping faith with his fellow POWs, and for believing in our country when others had given up hope. We honor him for his service, service that began as a plebe so many years ago, and service that continues today as a Member of the Senate.

We thank you, Senator MCCAIN.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona.