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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, January 25, 2013, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2013

(Legislative day of Thursday, January 3, 2013)

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Senator from the State of Hawaii.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord, You alone deserve all our praise because of Your love and faithfulness. Inspire our Senators to trust You to help protect and guide them. May they learn and depend upon Your promises, believing that Your blessings will keep America strong. Reveal to them Your priorities and plans so that they will stay within the circle of Your will. Lord, make them agents of Your visible impact on our Nation and world as You guard their hearts and minds with Your peace.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 24, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Senator from the State of Hawaii, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SCHATZ 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, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The majority will control the first 30 minutes and the Republicans the final 30 minutes.

Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

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 debate only until 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first half hour.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

CONFRONTING FISCAL CHALLENGES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I do not know if you know anyone who has climbed to the top of Mount Everest, but I am told it is quite an undertaking. It apparently took Sir Edmund Hillary several weeks to do it back in the 1950s. I am told my friends across the aisle could have scaled Everest almost 300 times in the nearly 4 years

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



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that have gone by since they last passed a budget. They could have taken 179 trips to the Moon or built three Pentagons.

Well, today it looks like that is all about to change. It is nice to see that after years of playing budget peekaboo, Senate Democrats are finally ready to take up their most basic of responsibilities—and only a few weeks after the chairwoman of the Budget Committee indicated they might skip it, for the fourth year in a row.

There is an indication now that the majority is committed to passing a budget. What is unfortunate is that it has required so much pressure for them to do so. It is in stark contrast to the House of Representatives, who have taken their duties very seriously.

Over there, committee hearings have been held, budget resolutions have been marked up, amendments have been considered. More importantly, the House has passed serious budgets annually, as the law requires. They have laid out their priorities for the public to see: their plans to control spending, to save our most important social programs from collapse, to reform an outdated anticompetitive Tax Code, and to streamline government bureaucracies that are literally suffocating job creation.

They have done their jobs while Senate Democrats have tried to keep their priorities a secret.

We know Senate Democrats do not like the House budgets. And we know they do not even support the President's budgets—at least not with their votes. What we have not known for nearly 4 years is what they are for because they have refused to put their plans for the country down on paper and actually vote for them.

It is my hope the Democrats' sudden interest in passing a budget is not just another attempt to actually raise taxes. As I have said repeatedly, we are done with the revenue issue. The President has already said the so-called rich are now paying their "fair share," and, of course, middle-income families are already on the hook for new taxes as a result of ObamaCare.

So the question is, Who would be in the firing line this time? And at what cost?

Look, struggling families should not have to pick up the tab again for Washington's inability to live within its means. We need to start solving the actual problem, which is spending, and we need to do it together.

So if—and I say if—Democrats are finally ready to confront the massive fiscal and economic challenges facing our country, and to do so in a serious way, I assure them they will find partners on this side of the aisle.

As for the debt limit, there is no need to wait for final resolution of the House's short-term legislation before we start putting a long-term debt reduction solution together in the Senate. If the bill the House passed yesterday is signed into law, Congress will

have another 3 months to take the debt challenge—to take it on seriously—but that does not mean we should wait a minute longer to start working on it. There is no reason, for instance, that the Finance Committee should not begin preparing the critical spending reforms that will be necessary, for example, to get my vote and the vote of many of my colleagues for any kind of long-term increase in the debt ceiling.

So let's get the process moving. No more brinksmanship. No more last-minute deals. The American people have already had to wait 4 years—4 years—for a budget from Senate Democrats. They should not have to wait nearly as long for us to confront a debt that threatens the economy, our jobs, and the future of our Nation.

Yesterday I laid out the realities of the fiscal challenges we face as a country. We have delayed facing them long enough. Let's put the politics aside and finally do the work we were sent here to do.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. 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. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

WILDFIRE RELIEF

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. President, I rise to speak in favor of a critical issue for my State; that is, much needed wildfire relief.

I wish to be more specific. Colorado has been in dire need of emergency watershed protection funds since fires raged in my State just 6 months ago. Just 6 months ago we were in the news not only in our country but around the world because of fires in our State.

This is an important issue, one of the most important issues confronting my State because the last fire season was the worst, literally, on record. Although the fires no longer burn, the threats they pose to entire communities persist long after the final embers are extinguished. Literally, hundreds of thousands of Coloradans remain vulnerable to flooding and tainted water supplies in the aftermath of these fires.

To people not from the West, the reason why this is an emergency may not be immediately clear, so let me explain. In my State, the Hyde Park and the Waldo Canyon fires—these are two fires that were all over the news—tragically took lives, burned more than

100,000 acres, and led to catastrophic property loss. President Obama declared them national disasters, and he actually came to Colorado and joined me and the rest of the delegation to visit the scenes of destruction, where over 300 homes were destroyed in Colorado's second largest city, Colorado Springs.

But that initial impact in those initial scenes could pale in comparison to threats these communities will face in the coming days, months, and years. Why is that so? Because once a mountainside is stripped of all its trees and foliage and the soil is burned down to bedrock, there is nothing left to hold back the water and debris as it races downhill toward our communities.

Without rehabilitation and restoration, the watersheds that provide municipal and agricultural water are at risk from landslides, flooding, and erosion. In turn, that could result in serious infrastructure damage, water supply disruptions, and even loss of life.

Stabilizing and protecting these communities' watersheds is simply the right thing to do and, moreover—and this is important—taking action now is also fiscally responsible. Quite simply, if we do not do the repairs now, we will pay more later.

When Coloradans came to Senator BENNET and me to share these needs confronting our State, we immediately went to work. We delivered on the promise of providing fire relief when the Senate passed the emergency supplemental spending bill in December of last year, which also provided much needed relief funds for Hurricane Sandy victims. That was a bipartisan bill supported by Senate Republicans and Democrats alike. But the Republicans in the House regrettably gutted the bill and sent back legislation that explicitly cut out wildfire relief.

In that context, let me make one point absolutely clear. This is an emergency. Some people question the need for funding and have asked why we wouldn't limit dollars to just Hurricane Sandy areas, such as the bill does before us today. The short answer is it is a fiscally smart thing to do, the right thing to do, and the fair thing to do.

This bill is an emergency appropriations bill for all national disasters, not just Hurricane Sandy. It is our best hope of seeing wildfire relief.

I emphatically note the Colorado emergencies occurred before Hurricane Sandy, and the West should not have to continue to wait. Very few emergency supplemental bills pass Congress. This bill is passing now, and it should include aid for Colorado and other States across our country.

We, as Americans, are in this together. When deadly disasters strike, we all support each other. I know the Presiding Officer's home State of Hawaii has experienced natural disasters. We stand together when we get into these situations. That is why I am so frustrated that the House of Representatives dismissed Colorado's needs and