



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, JANUARY 22, 2013

No. 7

Senate

(Legislative day of Thursday, January 3, 2013)

The Senate met at 10 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

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

O thou beginner of our yesterdays, mystery of our today, and the hope of our tomorrows, Lord, we sometimes take Your mercies for granted. Forgive us when we forget to be thankful for Your presence in our Nation and world.

Thank You for the inauguration of our President and for this new chapter in our Nation's history. Bless President Barack Obama. May the last words of King David of Israel characterize the leadership and legacy of his Presidency: "Those who rule over people must be just, ruling with Godly reverence. And they shall be as the light of the morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the Earth by clear shining after rain."

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable PATRICK J. LEAHY 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, if any, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 today. During that period of time, Senators will be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. We will be in recess from 12:30 until 2:15 to allow for our weekly caucus meetings.

WORKING TOGETHER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today, with the inspiration of the second inauguration of President Obama fresh in our minds, we renew our efforts to fulfill the promise of prosperity for every American.

The theme of yesterday's inauguration was "Faith in America's Future." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birth and life we also celebrated Monday, once said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase." I have faith that the Members of the 113th Congress will bring this Nation closer to realizing the promise of prosperity. The last Congress was too often characterized by sharp political divides—divides that hampered efforts to foster success for all Americans. I am hopeful and cautiously optimistic that the 113th Congress will be characterized not by our divisions but by our renewed commitment to cooperation and compromise. I urge every woman and every man fortunate enough to serve in this Chamber to remember that it is possible to hold fast to our principles while making the compromises necessary to move our country forward.

Democrats will hold fast to the guiding principle that a strong middle class—and an opportunity for every American to enter that middle class—is the key to this Nation's success. Democrats will stand strong—strong for the standard of balance. We will remain resolute—resolute in the pursuit

of fairness for all Americans, regardless of where they were born or the color of their skin, regardless of the size of their bank accounts, regardless of their religion or sexual orientation.

Those principles will direct our course as we introduce our first 10 bills today—a tradition we have had in the Senate, which is that the majority party introduces the first 10 bills—as we mend our broken immigration system, strengthen our schools, and rebuild our roads and bridges, and we will look to those principles as we bring forth other measures included in those 10 bills. Those principles will be foremost in our minds as we balance the right to bear arms with the right for every child to grow up safe from gun violence. Those principles will be our North Star as we work to end wasteful tax loopholes and balance thoughtful spending reductions with revenue from the wealthiest among us. And those principles will point the way as we work to ensure that this country's uniformed servicemembers never struggle to find employment when their military duties end. Through every struggle and every triumph, those principles must be our guide.

Not a single piece of important legislation can pass the Senate or become law without the votes of both Democrats and Republicans, so we will be willing to compromise and work with our colleagues across the aisle. Unfortunately, a number of bipartisan bills passed the Senate during the last Congress that were never acted upon by the House of Representatives. So this year the Senate will revisit some of those legislative priorities that passed on a bipartisan basis here.

We will again take up the Violence Against Women Act. This is an important piece of legislation that is expiring. We will take up the farm bill, which is a revolutionary piece of legislation that would save the country up

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



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to \$24 billion. We will again revisit historical reforms to save the U.S. Postal Service, and we will take up legislation to make whole victims of Hurricane Sandy. Each of these initiatives passed the Senate on a bipartisan basis after deliberation and debate during the last Congress but was left to languish by the House.

The Senate will continue to help our fellow Americans recover from Hurricane Sandy before another similar disaster strikes. Hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed in New York, New Jersey, and New England, and tens of thousands of Americans were left homeless by this destructive storm. We have a responsibility to aid our countrymen as they rebuild their lives and their communities, as we have after terrible floods, fires, and storms in other parts of our Nation.

Once we complete that vital legislation, the Senate will take action to make this institution we all love—the U.S. Senate—work more effectively. We will consider changes to the Senate rules. Because this matter warrants additional debate, today we will follow the precedents set in 2005 and again in 2011. We will reserve the right of all Senators to propose changes to the Senate rules, and we will explicitly not acquiesce in the carrying over of all the rules from the last Congress. It is my intention that the Senate will recess today rather than adjourn to continue the same legislative day and allow this important rules discussion to continue later this month. I am hopeful and cautiously optimistic that the Republican leader and I will reach an agreement that allows the Senate to operate more effectively in the coming months.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Republican leader is recognized.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start by congratulating President Obama on his inauguration. Presidential inaugurations are always a time for the country to come together. We all feel a certain pride in the event, and we are reminded of how fortunate we are to live in a Nation where we have the ability to choose our leaders freely and resolve our differences in peace. Inauguration Day is also a time for new beginnings, a chance to learn from the mistakes and missed opportunities of the past as we reengage in some vitally important debates about our future.

Too often over the past 4 years, political considerations have trumped the need to put our country on a sound financial footing and a path to prosperity. Today we should recommit ourselves to the task of facing up to our

problems head-on. I understand that the passions of an election can sometimes overshadow the business of governing, but the Presidential campaign is now behind us, and so it is my hope that the President will finally be willing to do what Republicans have been asking him to do since his first inauguration 4 years ago, and that is to work with us on identifying durable solutions to the problems we can only solve together, to put aside those things we know we can't agree on and focus on what we can.

We should start with spending and debt because if we don't get a handle on that, nothing else matters. If we don't work together to strengthen our entitlement programs, they will go bankrupt. Automatic cuts will be forced on seniors already receiving benefits, rendering worthless the promises they have built their retirements around. It is nice to say, as the President did yesterday, that these programs free us to take the risks that make our country great, but if we don't act to strengthen and protect them now, in a few years they simply won't be there in their current form. And if we don't work together to control the debt, then the cost of our interest payments alone will eventually crowd out funding for things we all agree on—from defense, to infrastructure, and assistance for those who need it most. In short, the debate we are now engaged in over the growing Federal debt is about much more than numbers on a page; it is about the cost of inaction in terms of promises broken, jobs lost, and dreams deferred. That is why there is simply no more time to waste.

Over the past 4 years, while the President focused on reelection and too many Senate Democrats focused on avoiding tough decisions, the debt grew by more than \$6 trillion. We saw the President blast House Republicans for doing their job and passing a budget while Senate Democrats didn't even propose one. Rather than work with us to save existing entitlements, we saw the President team up with Democrats in Congress to force through a brandnew entitlement that will make it even harder to cover the cost of programs we already have. In short, Democrats have put off the hard stuff until now, and our problems have only gotten worse.

But that was the first term. A second term presents the opportunity to do things differently, and in the Senate that means a return to regular order. Later this week the House plans to send the Senate a bill to address the debt limit in a timely manner. Once we get it, the Senate should quickly respond. If the Senate version is different from the one the House sends over, send it to conference. That is how things are supposed to work around here. We used to call it legislating.

I know a lot of Democrats are afraid of a process that exposes their priorities, particularly on spending and

debt. After nearly 4 years of refusing to pass a budget, they have only now reluctantly agreed to develop a spending plan for the coming fiscal year. All I would say to that is since the revenue question has been settled, I am sure the American people are eager to see what other ideas Democrats might have to bring down our ruinous deficits.

Let me just say that one thing Americans will no longer tolerate is an attitude that says we can put off our work until the very last minute. They are tired of eleventh-hour deals. They are tired of careening from crisis to crisis, and so am I.

The good news is that a return to regular order is the surest way to solve the problems we face. And I hope some of my friends on the other side will agree that there is value in this body actually functioning the way it was intended to. Let's face it. The status quo isn't working. The Senate isn't functioning as it should. It has nothing to do with the process that has served us well for a very long time. But if we work together and strive to avoid some of the bad habits that have developed around here, I truly believe we will be able to achieve the kinds of solutions that have eluded us for the past 4 years and deliver some positive results for the people who sent us here, with time to spare.

We can do better. I know my constituents expect better than what they have been getting from Congress in recent years, and so should we.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Indiana.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of the minority leader, and I think he essentially gets to the point all of us, in this first week for the 113th Congress, need to be focused on and need to address. This is our first workweek back after the inauguration festivities of yesterday, and I think it is an appropriate time for the Members of this body to discuss the challenges that lay before us over the next 2 years.

The most critical and, in my opinion, the most pressing of these challenges is one we have been dealing with for the past 2 years and is now of even more critical importance, and that is the out-of-control government spending that weakens the health of our economy, threatens the security of our country, and jeopardizes opportunities for future generations.

When I arrived here 2 years ago, it was clear the American people were