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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, the explosions at the Boston Marathon remind us that we live in a dangerous world and that human life, regardless of the level of physical excellence, is fragile. The knowledge that You, O God, can bring order from chaos inspires us to number our days so that we may have hearts of wisdom. Use our lawmakers as instruments of Your Providence. May they labor with such faithfulness and integrity that You will surround them and our Nation with the shield of Your favor. Remind them that it is better to fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed than to succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks the Senate will be in a period of morning business for an hour. The majority will control the first half, the Republicans the final half.

Following morning business the Senate will resume consideration of the

Safe Communities, Safe Schools Act, with the time until the recess for the caucus meetings for debate only.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings.

Today we will continue to work on a path forward to consider amendments to the gun safety bill. Currently, the Manchin-Toomey amendment on background checks is pending to the bill. Senators will be notified when any votes are scheduled.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 729 AND S. 730

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading. I would ask, if it is appropriate, for the clerk to report whatever the Chair advises.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the titles of the bills for a second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 729) to protect law abiding citizens by preventing criminals from obtaining firearms.

A bill (S. 730) to prevent criminals from obtaining firearms through straw purchasing and trafficking.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would object to any further proceedings on these two bills at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

BOSTON MARATHON VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in the prayer given to the American people and to

the Senate through our wonderful Chaplain, he basically said it all. We are still reeling from the senseless violence at the Boston Marathon yesterday. The one thing, though, we are united in is sympathy for the victims of this senseless attack and the families of the victims who are suffering today.

Adding to the horror of this tragedy are the questions of who did this and why. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security are investigating this attack as aggressively as possible.

As the President said last night, rest assured that the perpetrators will feel the full weight of justice for this terrible crime.

ANTI-GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on the anti-gun violence legislation before the Senate, we are making good progress in the effort to schedule a series of votes on amendments.

I have had constructive conversations with my Republican counterpart, Senator McCONNELL.

The American people deserve to know where we stand on these important antiviolence proposals. There are disagreements as to what we should do with gun legislation, if anything, and I understand that. We have already spent a week and a half on this legislation, so it is time to begin processing these amendments.

I hope we will be able to reach an agreement earlier rather than later—hopefully, sometime by early afternoon—to hold votes on a number of amendments, including both Democratic and Republican amendments.

That series of votes would include a number of issues, not the least of which is the compromise background check proposal crafted by Senators MANCHIN, TOOMEY, KIRK, and SCHUMER. This bipartisan measure has the support of antiviolence advocates and law

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



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enforcement groups as well as second amendment advocates, including the second largest gun rights group that exists, consisting of more than 650,000 members.

The measure would keep guns out of the hands of dangerous criminals by requiring background checks for private gun sales at gun shows and over the Internet.

Mr. President, whether you are from a pro-gun State such as Vermont or Nevada—even in those States, huge amounts, huge numbers of people support this legislation. Nationwide, about 90 percent of the people support this legislation, including 75 percent of NRA members.

So I am optimistic and hopeful that cooperation from both sides will continue and that victims of gun violence will get the debate and votes they deserve, including pro-gun advocates who want votes of their own liking.

So I hope we can move forward. It would be a shame if we got into a procedural hassle on all this stuff. We want to debate the issues. And as I have indicated to the Republican leader, we are not trying to cut off amendments. The ones we agree to start debating, that is not a limit as to what we are going to do. I want to have a full, complete debate on guns, and we will carry this on just as long as possible.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

BOSTON MARATHON ATTACKS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today the thoughts of every American are with the people of Boston but especially with the many victims of yesterday's horrendous attacks and their families.

Many who were looking forward to celebrating the achievement of a loved one yesterday woke up to the grim reality of facing the rest of their lives with a disfiguring injury. For them, yesterday's attacks were the beginning of a long and difficult journey. Three others who lined up to encourage others, including an 8-year-old boy who was there to cheer on his dad at the finish line, lost their lives in the blast.

We pray in a special way for these families.

As the President said yesterday, the two parties stand united today in our deepest sympathy for all those who were affected firsthand by these heinous attacks and in our unshakable—unshakable—resolve to bring those responsible, and any others who are contemplating acts like this, to justice.

These horrific attacks are a grim reminder of the hatred and contempt that many continue to harbor in their hearts not only for our Nation and its freedoms but for innocent human life. On 9/11 we were forever disabused of the

notion that attacks like the one that rocked Boston yesterday only happen on the field of battle or in distant countries. With the passage of time, however, and the vigilant efforts of our military, intelligence, and law enforcement professionals, I think it is safe to say for many the complacency that prevailed prior to September 11 has actually returned. So we are newly reminded that serious threats to our way of life remain.

Today, again, we recommit ourselves to the fight against terrorism at home and abroad.

Another point: As always, we marvel at the courage and the selflessness of those who rushed to the scene after yesterday's blasts. In moments like this, we see the worst of humanity and the best of our fellow citizens: whether it was the exhausted marathoners who became helpers and healers the moment they realized what had happened; the doctors and nurses who had expected the usual marathon day uptick in cases of dehydration or exhaustion but who spent the rest of their day handling far worse; or the first responders and law enforcement officials who rushed to the scene with total disregard for their own safety, including those who tore down a fence to get to the wounded before they were even sure the area was safe.

We honor all of them today.

Those responsible for this act of terror will be brought to justice for their deeds. But today our thoughts are mainly with the victims, their families, and friends—and all those whose lives have suddenly been turned upside down by the wicked designs of those responsible. For most of us, it is hard to imagine how anyone could even contemplate doing something like this. But, as always, as a nation, we will face this sad reality head on and show the world that America does not cower in the face of it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half.

The Senator from Maryland.

LIBRARY PROJECT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, Baltimore, like many other major cities, has struggled to educate its children. Recent statistics indicate that the

number of third graders reading below grade level in Baltimore is double the State average. This is especially troubling in light of the numerous national studies showing that for every six students who are not reading proficiently by third grade, one will not graduate.

Across the United States, research has shown that students in schools with good school libraries learn more, get better grades, and score higher on standardized tests than their peers in schools without libraries.

We have a program, the qualified zone academy bonds, that is available to help school districts in areas such as improving their libraries. Since 2001 Baltimore City has used those funds. Recently we extended the program through 2013. Academy bonds are important, but much more needs to be done to help our students.

Let me share with my colleagues a wonderful initiative, the Baltimore Elementary and Middle School Library Project, which is leveraging academy bonds and bringing in additional partners to maximize the resources available for hard-pressed schools and students. The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation is spearheading this initiative. The Weinberg Foundation is one of the largest private charitable foundations in the United States. The Weinberg Foundation provides approximately \$100 million each year to nonprofits that provide direct services to low-income and vulnerable individuals and families, primarily in the United States and Israel. Since 1990 the foundation has made grants totaling \$1.6 billion—that is billion with a “b.”

The foundation was created by Harry Weinberg. His family emigrated from Eastern Europe to the United States in 1911. Harry Weinberg began his life in poverty, but he eventually built a transportation empire which extended into real estate. The fortune Harry Weinberg amassed now has grown to more than \$2 billion. These are the assets behind the Weinberg Foundation's grant-making.

Senator MIKULSKI and I are very proud that the Weinberg Foundation is based in our Baltimore City. I knew Harry Weinberg. I know the Weinberg family. I am very fortunate to have that relationship. The foundation has helped so many people, particularly in affordable housing, immigrant services, poverty issues, and humanitarian needs.

I would like to acknowledge the role my former State director, Bailey Fine, has played with the Weinberg Foundation.

I could list dozens of major charitable projects and initiatives that bear the name of the Weinberg Foundation, including a \$10-million grant to fund emergency services for Holocaust survivors in North America; a \$9.6 million commitment to make Maryland a model for care of lower income, older adults; a \$3 million investment in affordable housing for persons with disabilities, which includes a joint venture with the State of Maryland—the