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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, February 8, 2013, at 11 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2013

The Senate met at 9:30 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 spirit, the fountain of life and truth, You make our plans succeed. Today, shine the light of Your presence upon our lawmakers, providing them with the wisdom You have promised to all who request it. May they primarily focus on pleasing You rather than on political consequences, trusting You to guide them during these challenging days. May what they declare with their lips be proven with their deeds. Lord, teach our lawmakers to love You as You have loved them.

We pray in Your sacred 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume

consideration of the Violence Against Women Act. The time until noon will be divided and controlled equally between the two leaders or their designees. At noon, Senator-designee COWAN of Massachusetts will be sworn in to be a Member of the Senate.

We expect to complete action on the Violence Against Women Act. We hope to be able to do that today. If we cannot, we will do it tomorrow.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 209

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am told S. 209 is at the desk and due for a second reading; is that correct?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 209) to require a full audit of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System and the Federal Reserve Bank by the Comptroller General of the United States, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill.

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

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am optimistic that today the Senate will complete work on an important bipartisan measure that has been directed by the President pro tempore of the Senate;

that is, the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

But Senate passage means little if our counterparts in the House fail to act on this crucial legislation. They failed once before. Let's hope this year they will get it past the finish line.

The Republican-controlled House, I repeat, failed to act last year, and the women of America do not want them to fail again. I was reassured to hear House Majority Leader CANTOR say yesterday that he "cares very deeply about women." He went on to say the House would act to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

But Americans heard the some promise last year. Despite overwhelming evidence that this legislation saves lives, House Republican leaders used procedural gimmicks and stalling tactics to block its reauthorization. I would remind Leader CANTOR and his Republican colleagues of the seriousness of the delay.

Every minute House Republicans wait to act, another 24 Americans will become victims of domestic violence. Every day House Republicans stall, another three women will die at the hands of their abusers. Every year House Republicans put off action in order to please extremists within their own party, during that period of time more than 200,000 women will be sexually assaulted, more than 2 million will be stalked, and more than 1.3 million women will be abused by their partners.

It has been almost 300 days since the Senate passed a bipartisan bill to help law enforcement officials protect women and their families across this

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



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country. But despite strong bipartisan support in the Senate, Republicans in the House refused to join the efforts to end domestic abuse.

Those partisan delays put women's lives at risk. Thousands have written letters and e-mailed and called to support this legislation. One Nevada woman shared her story of how her partner held a gun to her head and threatened to pull the trigger. She escaped with her life, but many women are not so fortunate. Every year more than 1,000 women are killed by domestic abusers. Since the Violence Against Women Act expired, more than 16 million women have been victimized.

The law is effective. In the two decades since it was enacted, the law has helped millions of women escape their attackers and seek justice. There is obviously much more work to do. I say to my friend Leader CANTOR: It is time for the Republican leaders to stop talking about how much they care about women and start acting to protect women. More than one-third of the women in this country have been the victim of violent sexual assault or stalking. Congress must do everything in its power to help law enforcement officials prevent these terrible crimes and prosecute the perpetrators. Reauthorizing this legislation would help law enforcement improve strategies to prosecute crimes against women. It would provide legal assistance to the victims of violence and funding for shelters to allow women to escape their abusers. It would safeguard youth who are experiencing dating violence and stalking.

Until we fully reauthorize this law, authorities will not have all the tools they need to fight domestic violence. Today—we hope it does not go over until tomorrow—we do not need another day's delay. For the second time in 2 years to protect American women and their children, we hope to take bipartisan action. I hope the House will act quickly to follow suit, as they did not do last year. I trust Leader CANTOR's words that this legislation is a priority. I will not be the only one holding him to his promise he made yesterday, to swiftly reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. In fact, there will be 160 million American women who are watching and waiting to see if he turns his words into action.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2013

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 47, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 47) to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act of 1994.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, first, I wish to applaud the distinguished leader Senator REID for his statement. He has helped us over and over again to get this bill to the floor. The reason it is here is because of the action of the distinguished majority leader in getting it up here. I was pleased to hear his comments about hopefully finishing this today or tomorrow. Anyway, it should be done soon. This is a landmark law.

The Senate has before it a bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, a landmark law we enacted that has made a difference in women's lives. By providing new tools and resources to communities all around the country, we have helped bring the crimes of rape and domestic violence out of the shadows. The Federal Government stood with the women of this country and sent the message that we would no longer tolerate their treatment as second-class citizens. Our bill renews and reinforces that commitment.

Ending violence against women is not an easy problem to solve but there is a simple and significant step we can take, right now and without delay. I, again, thank Majority Leader REID for making this unfinished business from the last Congress a priority for the Senate early this year.

Senator CRAPO and I have worked hard to make this bill bipartisan and I am proud that it has more than 60 Senate cosponsors. It also has the support of more than 1,300 local, State and National organizations from around the country that work with victims every day and know just how critical this law has been. I included their most recent letter of support with my remarks on Monday. I, again, thank them for their tireless efforts.

On Monday the Senate voted to proceed to consideration of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act. I was disappointed to see that 13 Republican Senators did not vote to proceed to the bill. I do not know why. They did not say.

I worry that there are Senators who do not appreciate the role of the Federal Government in helping improve the lives of Americans. That is what the Violence Against Women Act is intended to do and it is what this law has successfully accomplished for nearly 20 years. This is an example of how the Federal Government can help solve problems in cooperation with State and local communities. The fact is, women are safer today because of this law and there is no excuse not to improve upon it and reauthorize it without delay.

We are working to protect victims—all victims—of domestic and sexual violence. I hope that those who previously opposed our efforts to improve the Violence Against Women Act will join with us and help the Senate send our strong bill to the House of Representatives so that we can get it enacted. Let us not undercut the provi-

sions to help protect Indian women from the serious problems they face.

If anyone needs a reminder of how important government help can be, just think about the way that Federal and local law enforcement worked together earlier this week to rescue Ethan, a 5-year-old kidnapped boy, from an underground bunker in Alabama, where he had been held hostage for almost a week. Ask the family and local law enforcement if they appreciated the help of the FBI, the Defense Department and so many who contributed to the safe return of that innocent victim.

I spent years in local law enforcement and have great respect for the men and women who protect us every day. When I hear Senators say that we should not provide Federal assistance, we should not help officers get the protection they need with bulletproof vests, or that we should not help the families of fallen public safety officers, I strongly disagree. In our Federal system, we can help and when we can, we should help. And that is exactly the opportunity that is before us today. We have the power to help improve the lives of millions of people in this country by renewing and expanding our commitment to end domestic and sexual violence. A recent study from the Centers for Disease Control, CDC, found that more than 24 people per minute are the victims of rape, domestic violence and stalking in this country. We can take action to change that and we must.

I am proud that our bill seeks to support all victims, regardless of their immigration status, their sexual orientation or their membership in an Indian tribe. As I have said countless times on the floor of this chamber, "a victim is a victim is a victim."

I appreciate the administration's support for this legislation and our goal in reaching all victims. In particular, I note the support of the administration in its Statement of Administration Policy for our bipartisan proposal, first developed by the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, to "bring justice to Native American victims." Three out of five Native women have been assaulted by their spouses or intimate partners. We can no longer idly stand by while this epidemic of abuse continues.

The language in the bill is that which the Senate adopted last April. The best legal views of which I am aware believe these provisions are both constructive and constitutional. We are building on the Tribal Law and Order Act and recognizing tribal authorities with respect to domestic violence in Indian country. No one should be able to get away with domestic violence and rape, not in any community, and not because the victim is a Native American victim in Indian country. I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the Statement of Administration Policy expressing the administration's strong support for this provision and the bill as a whole, be made