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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 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.

O God, in whose presence our souls take delight, to whom in affliction we call, forgive us for continuing to sow to the wind even when hearing the sounds of the approaching whirlwind.

Lord, when our Federal shutdown delays payments of death benefits to the families of children dying on far-away battlefields, it is time for our lawmakers to say "enough is enough." Cover our shame with the robe of Your righteousness. Forgive us, reform us, and make us whole.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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, October 9, 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. Following leader remarks the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only until 2 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

MEASURES READ THE SECOND TIME

Mr. REID. There are two measures at the desk due for a second reading.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1569) to ensure the complete and timely payment of the obligations of the United States Government until December 31, 2014.

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 77) making continuing appropriations for the Food and Drug Administration for fiscal year 2014, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I would object to any further proceedings with respect to these measures en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bills will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

DEBT DEFAULT

Mr. REID. Madam President, it is very hard to find, on occasion, common ground in Washington. Of late, it has been hard all the time.

There is one thing on which Republicans and Democrats should be able to

agree: there is no more important issue before Congress than to prevent a catastrophic default on our debt. Default would put our economy in grave danger, and that is a gross understatement. I have said it, so many of my Republican colleagues have said it, and the business community is shouting it from the rooftops.

Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein said this about averting default—he is not known as a great liberal or outstanding Democrat, but he is known as a great businessman. He said:

While the current government shutdown is unfortunate, the impacts of a debt default would be magnitudes worse and should not even be considered a viable option. The economic damage associated with default or near default would be severe and have serious consequences for the recovery of the U.S. and global economy.

That was amplified the last couple of days by Christine Lagarde, head of IMF, who says this is just awful for the world economy.

The world economy affects us. We affect it. No country in the world affects the world economy more than we do. We are going to affect it in a very negative fashion, which will have tremendous negative consequences for us.

There are some Republicans in Congress threatening default, even elated that we are going to have one, saying it doesn't really matter.

Warren Buffett said that using the threat of default to extract political payment "ought to be banned as a weapon. . . . It should be like nuclear bombs, basically too horrible to use." Warren Buffett said this, and his father was a Republican Member of Congress.

Business leaders are begging us to do the right thing and to do it now, quickly. In addition to America's reputation in the world, the bedrock of the global economy is at stake, as I have already stated.

Yesterday a bill was introduced that would remove the specter of default and allow the United States to pay its bills with no preconditions or strings

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



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attached. Republicans and Democrats may have our differences, but neither side should hold the full faith and credit of the United States hostage while we resolve them.

Let's reopen the government. Speaker BOEHNER could end this government shutdown today, an hour from now, by letting the House—the entire House—vote on the Senate's clean bill and reopen the government. When the Speaker is on national TV and other places saying: We don't have the votes, he will never know that because he won't let the measure come to the floor. Of course it has enough votes.

Let's reopen the government and pay our bills. There is no reason for Republicans to drag out this process and force the Nation's economy ever closer to an economically catastrophic default. Then let's negotiate. Two hundred days ago to the day, Senate Democrats passed a budget, led by Senator MURRAY, that reflects our priorities. Since then we have asked 20 times to negotiate a compromise within our budget and the one passed by Republicans in the House. We are not afraid to negotiate, but we need someone to negotiate with. We need a dancing partner. If Republicans end this irresponsible, as it appears now, government shutdown, remove the threat of a cataclysmic default, and stop objecting to a budget conference, we could start negotiating now.

Republicans have already been so harsh on rhetoric. Republicans have already done enough harm to our economy with a reckless shutdown designed to undermine the law of the land, ObamaCare. But the consequences of a first-in-history default on the debt would be far worse—even worse than the 2008 financial crisis from which we are still recovering. Two years ago, the last time the Republicans flirted with this terrible idea, America's credit rating was downgraded for the first time in the history of our great country. The stock market dropped 2,000 points. It has already dropped 7 or 8 percent over the last few weeks.

Raising the debt limit doesn't cost taxpayers a single dime, and Republicans shouldn't claim it does because it doesn't. That is certainly not what they claimed when George W. Bush raised the debt ceiling seven times. Congress has raised the debt limit more than 90 times since it was created in 1939, the majority of those times with Republican Presidents. Ronald Reagan asked Congress to raise the limit 18 times—twice as many as any other President. He, being the great orator he was, said that to do what is being done now, to use an example of why someone should never do that, he called it “outrageous.”

Raising the debt ceiling simply allows payment of bills we have already incurred—bills for wars and tax breaks paid for with borrowed money—and basically the simple operation of our government.

I heard one Republican Senator today—I read about it—he said: Well,

we have enough money coming in to pay the interest.

Social Security payments would not go forward, and that is only the beginning.

To even consider defaulting on these obligations or to use the threat of default to extract concessions is terribly irresponsible in a negative fashion.

Republican Governor Jon Huntsman, Governor of Utah, an extremely liberal State, said this about the current Republican brinkmanship over default:

It's pretty sad, pretty pathetic for the greatest economy on Earth to be experiencing this . . . Russian roulette with our . . . economy.

He continued:

We have to see it as an economic issue. . . . If you think the government shutdown is a big deal, that's a hand grenade compared to a thermonuclear weapon that would be hitting the debt ceiling.

Yesterday the minority leader suggested that the only way to disarm this weapon is for me to engage in one-on-one talks with the Speaker of the House. I am happy to talk to JOHN BOEHNER anytime. We have talked. But it is obvious to me that no amount of talking will make Speaker BOEHNER either willing or able to end this shutdown and prevent a catastrophic default.

In fact, as my friend the senior Senator from Arizona said yesterday, it is time for the Senate to deal and to lead. He is right. We have an issue coming before us momentarily—the debt ceiling. We have to be the Senate, lead, get that passed, and send it over to the House of Representatives. We have already passed a bill to reopen the government. We have already done that. We are going to go a step further. Senate Democrats have introduced legislation to avert a default on this Nation's obligations.

I say to my Republican colleagues in the Senate, the time for misleading rhetoric is through, and the time for responsible leadership is here. We are happy to work with our Republican colleagues, open the government, pay our bills, and negotiate anything—anything they wish to talk about.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

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 2 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant majority leader.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Each morning, the Senate opens with the customary prayer

by our Chaplain and the Pledge of Allegiance. This is an opportunity for Members of the Senate to reflect on two important things: first, our mission on Earth not only as elected officials but as human beings and, second, our devotion and loyalty to this great country.

I have listened to most of the prayers that have been offered over the past 9 days of the government shutdown by Dr. Barry Black. He is a retired admiral from the U.S. Navy and came again before us this morning to offer a prayer. This prayer had a very important message. It was short and direct. He talked about this government shutdown. He reflected on the fact that we literally have families who in the last few days had that awful knock on the door where they were told their son or daughter had died in service to his country in the U.S. military. There were 5 over the weekend and I understand 17 over the course of this government shutdown.

Sadly, the support we always give to these families is not there. It is not there. Customarily, within 24 to 36 hours they are given a sum of money in advance on the benefits that soldier earned so they can take care of funeral expenses and the obvious needs of their family. We can't do that because the government is shut down. That awful knock on the door was not followed by the consolation of this government helping these families. We offered to many of these families an opportunity to come and to be there to welcome, at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, the return of their fallen hero. We can't offer them that benefit because the government is shut down.

Dr. Black said to all of us this morning, all of those who believe a government shutdown is just another political gambit—what he said, we should remember, and his words were direct and simple: Enough is enough. Enough is enough.

It isn't only a matter of these families losing that loving son, daughter, husband, wife, brother, or sister; it is a matter that our government that asked them to risk their lives for this great Nation will not stand by them in this moment of grief.

Yesterday, the junior Senator from Texas came in and said: Oh, I think we have already voted to take care of that. It is not true. What is happening now is the House of Representatives—the House of Representatives, which refuses to reopen the government—is scurrying to pass a little bill that will take care of these families. Let's get that bill in, they said. We don't want to face the embarrassment of another headline like this.

That isn't enough. It isn't nearly enough because the embarrassment of this government shutdown goes beyond this grievous situation with these bereaving families. It goes to so many different levels.

Think about this for a moment: In the United States of America, when it