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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. WALSH, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's opening prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain Dean Chambers, who is the associate pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Elkview, WV.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our heavenly Father, we come before You humbly to thank You for the awesome privilege it is to live in this great Nation. Thank You for all the many blessings You have given us past and present, as well as the continued blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as we continue toward the future.

We ask that You protect us from all who threaten the cause of liberty. We especially pray that Your hand of protection be upon all those serving in our Armed Forces and all those who serve the cause of freedom around our world.

In this assembly today, we invite Your leadership and guidance as the affairs of state are pursued. I ask also that You give to each person wisdom and understanding for the decisions that are made. In times of debate and difference, may we remember that at the end of the day we are, indeed, "one Nation under God."

May the love of God the Father, the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus, and the communion of Your spirit rest upon the Members of our Senate today.

In Jesus's 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 13, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN E. WALSH, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WALSH 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 my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m. this morning, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1086, the child care and development block grant reauthorization bill.

We did extremely well yesterday. I expect more rollcall votes on it today. We are also working on an agreement on flood insurance, we are working on additional executive nominations, and we are seeing what we can do on minimum wage. We have Ukraine sanctions out there someplace, and we are trying to put it all together. We hope we can finish that today, but it is not guaranteed.

Senators will be notified with as much notice as possible when votes are scheduled.

CAMPAIGN DISTORTION

Mr. REID. Over the last couple of weeks I have taken some heat from Senate Republicans and conservative pundits for exposing two multibillionaires. These are two oil barons, and they are trying to rig the political system to favor the rich and especially favor themselves.

After the 14th statement adverse to me issued by a spokesman for the Koch brothers, it seems abundantly clear I have gotten under their skin.

As the saying goes, from the great Senator Pat Moynihan: "Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not to his own facts."

But I had guessed the Koch brothers have been able to buy their facts over the years, not paying any attention to whether they are true or false. This week media outlets from New York, and especially the New York Times, to the Washington Post, to the Detroit News, revealed the truth. The truth is millions in political ads sponsored by these two multibillionaires are misleading at best and outright false in many instances.

The truth is the Koch brothers are willing to do anything, even exploit Americans suffering from cancer, to advance their campaign of distortion.

I am not afraid of the Koch brothers. None of us should be afraid of the Koch brothers. These two multibillionaires can spend millions of dollars of their money rigging the political process for their own benefit, but that doesn't mean we have to lie down and take it—because we are not going to. They may believe that whoever has the most money gets the most free speech. That is wrong, it is unfair, and it is untrue. I will do whatever it takes to expose their campaign, their campaign to rig

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



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the American political system to benefit the wealthy at the expense of the middle class.

A number of Republican Senators have rushed over here to defend the Koch brothers. That is hard to comprehend, but they have done it. If someone asked me—and no one has, but I will give my opinion anyway—billionaires seem perfectly capable of defending themselves. They do it with hundreds of millions of dollars. I am sure it has over the past couple of years reached close to \$1 billion spreading these falsehoods. Remember, they don't just do it under the phony banner of Americans for Prosperity, they divert money to a lot of other organizations; for example, millions of dollars to the chamber of commerce, which runs ads against Democratic Senators.

They are capable of defending themselves. But when Senate Republican Senators rush to defend the Koch brothers, they are also defending the Koch brothers' radical philosophy—and it is radical. How do we know it is radical? Because they said it is radical. They said so. I am not making those words up. One of the brothers kept harping on the fact that he had a radical philosophy, and they do.

I ask my Republican colleagues in the Senate, is even one—is even one—willing to stand and disavow the Koch brothers' radical agenda? It is radical. It is radical because they say it is radical—and it is radical. All we have to do is look at it.

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to privatize Social Security?

Will they come to the floor and reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to end Medicare as we know it?

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to end the guarantee of affordable, quality, health care and put insurance companies back in charge so tens of millions of Americans are again one heart attack or car accident away from bankruptcy?

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to allow insurance companies to deny coverage for a child with a heart murmur, a survivor of breast cancer, a teen who suffers from acne or absolutely anyone with a preexisting condition no matter how minor?

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to eliminate minimum-wage laws and workplace safety standards? That is what the Koch brothers want.

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to decimate America's public education system? That is what they want.

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to roll back environmental safeguards and give themselves the unfettered right to pollute our air and water? We have to look out for our children and our grandchildren having pure water to drink, good air to breathe—not with the Koch brothers. That isn't what they want.

Will Senate Republicans reject the Koch brothers' radical plan to give more tax breaks to the richest of the rich—to profitable oil companies, corporations who ship jobs overseas, and billionaires who pay lower taxes than their secretaries?

Not one Republican stepped forward, so obviously they must agree with the Koch brothers' radical philosophy. Republicans are willing to defend the Koch brothers on the floor of this Senate, but are they willing to defend the Koch brothers' radical agenda as well? I guess that is what they are doing by coming to the floor.

If Republicans don't support the Koch brothers' "survival of the richest" philosophy, all they have to do is say so because the truth is it will be terrible to allow the Koch brothers to buy Congress and to buy our country. And that is what they are trying to do.

It would be catastrophic to allow the Koch brothers' Congress to devastate the American middle class with their richest-take-all policy agenda.

This discussion isn't only about fairness or the democratic way. This discussion isn't only about the inherent danger in allowing two multibillionaire oil barons to buy America's political system. This is also about how these two multibillionaires would use a political system, once they have bought it, and how they would abuse it in order to add zeros to the bottom line while hurting middle-class families.

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. MCCONNELL. 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 minority leader is recognized.

U.S. TRAGEDIES

Mr. MCCONNELL. I begin this morning by extending my sympathy to families of the victims in yesterday's explosion in Harlem. News reports suggest a truly tragic loss of life and a lot of injuries, so it is a very sad day in New York today.

As usual, in a catastrophe such as this, the response from firemen, police, and first responders was both quick and courageous. Many ordinary citizens who just happened to be in the area showed a lot of humanity and a lot of heroism too.

We are grateful for them and we are all hoping and praying for a fully speedy recovery for those who were injured. These kinds of tragic accidents always take a big toll on the communities where they take place.

A few months back there was a horrible house fire in western Kentucky that took the lives of eight children and their mother. It was devastating to the entire community and still is, so we are thinking of them also today.

ANTI-FREE SPEECH

Mr. MCCONNELL. I wish to take a moment to address anti-free speech legislation the Obama administration has made a priority for this term. It is a regulation that comes in the wake of an unprecedented IRS attack on Americans' civil liberties and it represents a direct assault on the First Amendment.

First, let's be clear. This is not some partisan issue. Right across the political spectrum the American people agree this is a terrible idea. That is probably why it has generated more public backlash than any similar regulation in our entire lifetime.

Americans on the left hate it. Americans on the right hate it. Unions, business groups, environmentalists, conservatives, the ACLU, all of them have expressed concern. It is very rare to see a coalition that broad agree on anything in this town. Yet it is easy to see why Americans would be so united in opposition to this regulation.

The First Amendment exists to protect political speech. That was what the Founders had in mind when they wrote First Amendment political speech. The government should be doing everything it can to protect that right, not hurt it.

That is why we saw a record number of Americans register their complaints with the IRS. In fact, there were more than 140,000 comments—140,000 comments—on this regulation, which I hear is the highest number ever received in the agency's entire history. And let's not forget the IRS has a long way to go to regain public trust these days. Too many Americans look at the agency and see an instrument of political harassment rather than a bureau of tax processors. So if the agency wants to regain trust and return to its true mission, then it simply has to get out of the speech regulation business altogether. The IRS needs to get out of the speech regulation business altogether, and the Obama administration can do that.

Look. The administration ran this idea up the flagpole. In the midst of a historic crisis of public confidence at the IRS, it decided to upend more than half a century of practice and rewrite the rules on how Americans could express themselves, how they could be heard. They asked for comments, and the American people let them know what they thought in over 140,000 comments, almost all of them in opposition.

This regulation needs to go. This regulation needs to go, and it needs to go now. It is in the administration's power to make that happen. All it has to do is to listen to the American people who are speaking out in record