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Senate

The Senate met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Holy God, You make the clouds Your chariot and walk upon the wind. We see Your works in the rising of the Sun and in its setting. For the beauty of the Earth and the glory of the skies, we give You praise.

Today, make our lawmakers heirs of peace, demonstrating that they are Your children as they strive to find common ground. May they take pleasure in doing Your will and fulfilling Your purposes in our world. Lord, You are never far from us, but often we are far from You. So show us Your ways and teach us Your paths.

We pray in Your great 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, April 2, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD J. MARKEY, a

Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MARKEY thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MINIMUM WAGE FAIRNESS ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 250.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 250, S. 1737, a bill to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend increased expensing limitations and the treatment of certain real property as section 179 property.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3979, which is the legislative vehicle for the Unemployment Insurance Extension bill, with the time until 10 a.m. equally divided and controlled. The filing deadline is 9:30 a.m. today.

At 10 a.m. there will be a cloture vote on the Reed amendment. Additional votes are expected throughout the day. Senators will be notified when they are scheduled.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2198
AND S. 2199

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are two bills 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 assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2198) to direct the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to take actions to provide additional water supplies and disaster assistance to the State of California and other Western States due to drought, and for other purposes.

A bill (S. 2199) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide more effective remedies to victims of discrimination in the payment of wages on the basis of sex, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I would object to any further proceedings to both of these matters at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the measures will be placed on the calendar.

HOUSE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in what has become an annual frustration for the American people, the tea party-controlled House Budget Committee released its budget proposal yesterday. This budget is frustrating for Americans because it doesn't reflect what they envision for this Nation. In fact, the Ryan budget more closely resembles the wants of the multibillionaire Koch brothers than it does a pattern for helping America.

For those who haven't seen the prequels; that is, the newest budget proposal, it is the same old story, and it is a story of broken promises—of broken promises to our children, to our seniors, and to our families.

To our children we have promised we will protect and provide for them, safeguarding them during the vulnerable years of childhood and adolescence—at least try to do everything we can to help them. Yet by repealing the expansion of health care to millions of Americans by cutting Medicaid by \$1.5 trillion, the Ryan-Koch budget tells our Nation's children they are on their own.

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



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We must provide for our children by supplying the tools they need to succeed—most importantly, a quality education. But evidently House Republicans don't see the need for us to invest in education because their budget slashes tens of billions of dollars in funding for schools and rolls back Federal financial aid to college students.

The Koch-Ryan budget breaks the promise to seniors we have had in existence since the Great Depression. It would be the end of Medicare as we know it. Health insurance premiums for seniors would skyrocket as would their prescription costs.

Finally, a Ryan-Koch budget breaks a promise to every American family that we in the Federal Government have given them; that by working hard and playing by the rules, they can get ahead. That isn't what the Ryan-Koch budget would allow.

What do the Republicans propose to do with this money they cut from Medicare, Medicaid, and education? They will create more tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy, but it is more than that. It is some of the things not written—these holes in the budget that we have heard before. We know they want to whack Social Security. They are just afraid to put it in writing. The Koch budget would cut the corporate tax rate to 25 percent and lower the top individual tax rate for America's highest earners.

I guess what I would say to the House Budget Committee and all the House Members—Democrats and Republicans—isn't \$80 billion personal wealth of the Koch brothers enough? I think most everyone would say, yes, it is enough, but not the Koch brothers. They want more. They are the richest people in the world. Individually they are only fifth, but put them together and they are the richest in the world.

Under this budget I have talked about, middle-class families would pay about \$2,000 a year more in taxes, but the rich would pay less. Democrats believe in growing the economy from the middle out, but the Republicans are still trapped in the trickle-down economics based on handouts to the super-wealthy and special interests.

Perhaps the Ryan-Koch budget is summarized best by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' Robert Greenstein: "More poverty and less opportunity." That is what their budget is all about: more poverty, less opportunity.

So whether it is current law such as the Affordable Care Act or much needed legislation such as comprehensive immigration reform or an overhaul of the tax system, I ask my Republican colleagues to work with us for a better America.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

DELIVERING REAL PROSPERITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the Democratic majority led us to believe

the Senate would be discussing jobs this week, but it seemed to be a pretty one-sided discussion.

Republican Senators came to the floor to talk about our innovative ideas to create jobs and grow opportunity for all Americans. As for Senate Democrats though—well, they wouldn't even stand to call for votes on the jobs proposals.

I think this reflects a growing divide in the Senate between a Republican Party focused on the middle class and a Democratic Party that is obsessed with November 4.

That is very disappointing for America. The American people need two serious political parties in this country. But at least our constituents can be assured of one thing: Republicans are laser-focused on delivering real prosperity to the families who have struggled so much in this economy. It is the impetus behind basically everything we do, and it is the impetus behind the numerous jobs proposals Republican Senators are rolling out this week.

For instance, several Republican Senators will take to the floor again today to talk about energy's potential for driving growth and American job creation and why the government needs to stop holding Americans back from sharing in the energy boom. I also plan to join and discuss my own amendment that would fight back against the President's war on coal jobs. I am looking forward to that colloquy.

But right now I wish to talk about another jobs proposal Senator PAUL and I have again introduced: national right-to-work legislation. It would allow American workers to choose whether they would like to join a union, and it would protect the worker from getting fired if she would rather not subsidize a union boss who fails to represent her concerns and priorities. It is such a commonsense proworker proposal. According to one survey, about 80 percent of union workers agree that employees should be able to decide whether joining a union is right for them. One obvious benefit is increased take-home pay for workers who choose to keep the hundreds of dollars that would otherwise be taken from their paychecks by union bosses. There is a huge opportunity component here as well, because most unions operate on a seniority system with pay raises often based off the amount of time the worker has spent at a company rather than on her performance. Well, I think an American worker deserves an opportunity to earn more money if she works hard. I think she deserves the opportunity to rise through the ranks and put more money in her pocket if she is determined to do it. That is real paycheck fairness.

These are bedrock American values—core workers rights that should never be denied to our constituents, especially in a terrible economy such as this one. Many of Kentucky's neighboring States have gone right-to-work

with great success, and I hope Kentucky will join them soon. I recently read an op-ed that laid out how much we could have gained over the last decade if we had. It noted that private sector jobs have grown about 15.3 percent in right-to-work States compared to just 6.9 percent in Kentucky; manufacturing had expanded three times faster in right-to-work States and compensation had grown about 14.2 percent compared to just 4.3 percent in Kentucky.

So I am encouraged by the members of Kentucky's legislature who continue to fight for right-to-work legislation. Kentuckians shouldn't be subjected to that kind of prosperity gap any longer, and neither should millions of other Americans struggling across our country. I believe they should have a more equal chance of finding work in every State, and they should no longer see their communities failing to secure new investment because their State hasn't passed right-to-work. That is just one more reason why I believe in our national legislation too.

So I am asking our Democratic friends to join Senator PAUL and me in standing up for workers rights and a stronger middle class to join us in passing right-to-work legislation.

Let's be honest. After more than 5 years of economic misery under their watch, that is the least Washington Democrats can do for the American people. Unfortunately, I suspect we will hear a lot of excuses instead about why Washington Democrats cannot or won't stand with us in this fight. No matter what they say, though, the American people will know the truth: It is because big labor bosses have such sway over today's Democratic Party and because big labor bosses aren't about to give up their perks or their vise grip over American workers.

Well, big labor bosses should know that Republicans are determined to fight for American workers, American jobs, and a stronger middle class, even if the bosses work against us every step of the way. Right-to-work is a smart way to get America on the path to real recovery, and it is critical to empowering workers and giving them more freedom.

I commend Senator PAUL for his leadership on this legislation and for his long-time advocacy on this issue. I hope our colleagues on the other side of the aisle will prove me wrong by working together to pass important job initiatives such as right-to-work for the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3979, which the clerk will report.