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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 Dr. Calvin V. French, Pastor Emeritus, Community of Christ Church, in Washington, DC.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Shall we pray.

Almighty God, we come as children in our Father's house, asking that we may envision the same spirit of our Founding Fathers—that we are one nation under God. May this oneness of spirit and purpose prevail that our legislation will be seamless.

The challenges we face are difficult, but we turn to You asking for wisdom to interpret rightly the signs of our times. Through our prayer, O God, in our search for understanding, we repeat our solemn oath of office: "So help me God."

We remember those who have served in this Chamber and will soon be leaving. Grant to them peace of mind, joyful hearts, and hallowed memories, reminding them that when they were in the service of their fellow beings, they have been doing Your work.

In this Advent season, may we be comforted by the words of Isaiah 9:6, "The government shall be upon His shoulders, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." May this counsel guide us as we do our work this day. 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 4, 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.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield to my friend, the junior Senator from Iowa.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. HARKIN. I wish to take a moment to introduce and thank our guest Chaplain today.

Dr. Calvin French is the pastor emeritus for the Community of Christ Church in Washington, DC, where he served that congregation for 30 years before retiring. He has served as a pastor for 60 years of his life, considerably more than, I would note, my 40 years in Congress.

Calvin French, Dr. French, is a native of Iowa. He holds degrees from the University of Iowa, Graceland College, and Drake University in addition to his

graduate studies at Harvard and Princeton.

For the past 25 years he has represented the parent church of his denomination in governmental affairs, providing liaison service to the various agencies of the government as well as to Congress.

I personally have known Dr. French for going on almost 50 years now. When we first met in Iowa, his now deceased wife LaVon was a great friend of my wife's. They were lawyers together in Iowa. We were close family friends, and this brings back so many fond memories of our times together in Iowa and later on.

I would note that Dr. French's granddaughter Dr. Kelsey French is here in the gallery today with her husband Vince Bzdek, the news editor for the Washington Post. Their two children are also here today Zola and Xavier who is celebrating his birthday today. Xavey is 13 years old today, so he was able to be here to see his grandfather give the opening prayer of the Senate.

I also note that in 1975, when I first came to the House of Representatives, I invited Dr. French to give the opening prayer in the House. So now, almost 40 years later, I am privileged to have had him here to give the closing prayer before I retire from the Senate.

Dr. French, I would say, is someone I have admired for his commitment not only to his church but the broader commitment he has had to humanity, to all that he has done to infuse—and all around him—a spirit of kindness, generosity, and a spirit of understanding that while we may be different in so many ways, we are all the same in our humanity. He is one of the most wonderful human beings I have had the privilege of knowing and being with in my lifetime.

I say to my good friend, Dr. Calvin French, thank you. Thank you for all your pastoral work. Thank you for your leadership and your guidance through the past 50 years of my life.

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



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I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will proceed to executive session, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

At 10 a.m. the Senate will proceed to five rollcall votes on confirmation of Franklin Orr to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy; Joseph Hezir to be Chief Financial Officer for the Department of Energy; and cloture on the nominations of Gregory N. Stivers to be U.S. district judge for the Western District of Kentucky; Joseph F. Leeson to be U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania; and Lydia Kay Griggsby to be a judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

There will be another series of up to six rollcall votes at 1:45 p.m.

COST OF HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, a brief word. I was struck this morning by looking at the newspapers and listening to the news that:

Spending on health care in the United States grew in 2013 at the lowest rate since the Federal Government began tracking it in 1960. . . .

It was the fifth straight year of exceptionally small increases in the closely watched indicator. The data defied critics who had said such growth would not continue for long once the recession ended in mid-2009.

Health care spending was up last year but only 3.6 percent. It is very remarkable.

As I indicated:

The 3.6 percent increase in 2013 is the lowest increase on record in the national health expenditures going back to 1960.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

TRIBUTE TO MIKE JOHANNIS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to pay tribute to a truly outstanding Senator, who will soon retire from this body after more than 30 years of public service.

Of course, I am speaking of Senator MIKE JOHANNIS. MIKE has had a remarkable career. He is the only current Member of this body—besides Senator ALEXANDER—who has served as Senator, Governor, and Cabinet Secretary.

Yet for all he has accomplished, MIKE isn't the flashiest Senator. He doesn't hold the most press conferences, he doesn't yell the loudest, and you never have to worry about him knocking you over to get to a TV camera, but in his steady and determined style, MIKE has

proven himself a remarkably successful Member of this body.

That was true in his successful battles to defend Nebraska's rural communities against government overreach, it was true when he worked with the late Senator Byrd to sink a national energy tax that threatened his constituents, and it was true when he led the first successful legislative effort to revisit ObamaCare, working with many Democrats to repeal the so-called 1099 provision.

MIKE has never looked for drama. He is always aiming for results. So it didn't take long for people in the Senate to recognize that MIKE was more than just another freshman in the minority. He became the guy you would turn to if you wanted to get an amendment up to 60 votes.

That is truly remarkable for a first-term Senator. It is especially remarkable when we consider that MIKE came to the Senate at a time when Republicans were in the deep minority. But then again, MIKE is a very remarkable guy: county commissioner, city councilman, mayor, Governor, Secretary of Agriculture. You name it, MIKE has done it, and that was before he even set foot in the Senate.

Some think MIKE must have a secret that allows him to assemble bipartisan coalitions on conservative issues, but I don't think it is much of a secret at all. MIKE works across the aisle. He works in good faith, and he works hard. He doesn't care what party you are from and absolutely no one can out-work him.

MIKE makes sure of that by getting up earlier than anyone else. It is a habit he learned growing up on a farm in northern Iowa. He would get up at 5 a.m. every day and then from age 4 he would work. He would shovel muck. He would fill the hog tanks. He would even deliver piglets.

The point is, MIKE developed an appreciation for hard work and responsibility at an early age. Along with his strong Catholic faith, these are the traits that still define him today, but they don't paint the whole picture, because MIKE JOHANNIS may be an accomplished man, he may be one of the smartest and most capable public servants you will ever meet, but he is absolute putty in the hands of his wife Stephanie. She is always by his side. She is his best friend, and they complement each other perfectly.

Their idea—listen to this—of a perfect night out is a night in together. They are both Husker fans and, as MIKE put it, "Steph is almost never in a bad mood." He said: "She jumps out of bed, and she's got a big smile on her face and she thinks this is bound to be the best day of her life."

It is a personality perfectly suited, as one can imagine, to the campaign trail, which is a good thing because the two of them have logged tens of thousands of miles together campaigning across Nebraska, usually in matching T-shirts, sometimes in a beat-up old Cor-

They have plenty of stories from the trail, too, but one from MIKE's run for Governor stands out particularly. This is what happened: The Johanns were driving home after a long day of marching in parades in the hot Sun. They passed a barn on the way, assuming it was a cattle sale. They figured they would drop in and press a few palms. Stephanie parked the car, MIKE opened the door, and dozens of well-dressed Nebraskan eyes fell on them.

The Johanns, in their sweaty T-shirts, hadn't dropped by a cattle sale; they had crashed a wedding. I will give them this, they made the best of it. MIKE ended up dancing with the bride, and of course he went on to win the election as well.

This is the sequel: Months later, at an inaugural ball in Lincoln, two uninvited guests showed up. It was, of course, the bride and her husband.

They had a simple message: "You crashed our wedding, Governor, and now we're crashing your inaugural."

So the senior Senator from Arizona may like to brag about his Hollywood cameo with Vince Vaughn, but our colleagues know the truth. Senator MIKE JOHANNIS is the original—the original—wedding crasher.

MIKE and Stephanie certainly have traveled a long and interesting road from when they first met while serving on the Lancaster County Board in the 1980s, when MIKE would draft up walking lists on an old typewriter and they would go out and campaign door to door.

A lot has changed. For one thing, MIKE isn't a Democrat anymore. But much is the same too. MIKE still cares deeply about mental health issues. It is what brought him into politics in the first place. It is what he considers his crowning achievement as Governor. He still has loyal fans on staff who remember all of his efforts on the issue.

It is a rare thing, the loyalty MIKE inspires in people. This is the Senator with staffers who have been with him for many years, some since his days in local politics, and here is what they all say about MIKE JOHANNIS: Senator JOHANNIS is a man who cares—cares about his family, he cares about the people who work for him, and he cares about his constituents. That is why he has given his cell phone out to half of Nebraska.

He has made his mistakes, of course. As mayor of Lincoln, he had to cancel Halloween one year. But that is old news. To many Nebraskans he is still Governor, to others he is simply MIKE. But whatever Nebraskans call MIKE JOHANNIS, they respect him, and I know they are going to miss him. And so are we.

At least retirement will give MIKE more time to pursue his hobbies. We hear he is a voracious window washer. He has even been known to pull out the Windex on vacation. Whatever he does, we know this is a retirement that is well earned. He has dealt with bird flu, mad cow disease, the farm bill, deficit