

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 JOHANNS

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 JOHANNS. 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 JOHANNS 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 Corsica.

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 JOHANNS 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 JOHANNS: Senator JOHANNS 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 JOHANNS, 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

reduction, and just about any other issue you can think of over a long and distinguished career in public service.

We all want to thank Senator JOHANNS for his loyal and dedicated service to the Senate and to the people of Nebraska. We wish MIKE and Stephanie the best as they look forward to their next adventure together.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to join in the remarks of the distinguished Republican leader, but add to that that Stephanie is one of the funniest people Landra and I have ever known. She has a great sense of humor. What the Republican leader laid out is perfect, except this woman has a sense of humor that is really quite remarkable.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Will the Senator withhold his request?

Mr. REID. Yes, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNS. Mr. President, just a word or two to both leaders. Thank you so much for your kind words. I also want to say thank you for mentioning my wife Stephanie. This has been a remarkable partnership for a lot of years, and I could not have done what I did without her. So thank you to Senator MCCONNELL. Mr. Leader, thank you. It has been an honor to serve in this body. I will have more to say next week in my farewell speech, but I did not want this day to go by without expressing my appreciation. Thank you.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF FRANKLIN M. ORR, JR., TO BE UNDER SECRETARY FOR SCIENCE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nomination of Franklin M. Orr, Jr., of California, to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 10 a.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The assistant majority leader.

CHICAGO NURSE CARES FOR EBOLA PATIENTS IN LIBERIA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the holiday rush is underway and millions of Americans are decorating, shopping, and preparing to spend Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa with their loved ones. I want to draw attention to one woman from Illinois who is doing something very different.

Janet Teasley is a registered nurse in Chicago. She has volunteered to spend her holiday season in Liberia treating patients with the potentially deadly Ebola virus.

When Janet Teasley first told her family and coworkers of her plan, she says she encountered some resistance. One doctor with whom she works was only half kidding when he said he thought she was crazy. But once he realized she was serious, the doctor told Teasley he admired her. I share that admiration.

The U.S. Agency for International Development estimates that nearly 16,000 people have contracted the Ebola virus. Nearly 6,000 have died. Today, it is estimated that 7,000 people in Liberia, where Janet Teasley is volunteering, have Ebola. She is helping some of the neediest patients in that country that has been the hardest hit by this disease.

Although Ebola has been contained so far here in the United States, the outbreak is still raging in parts of West Africa. Teasley is part of a wave of U.S. health care workers being recruited to help stop the spread of the disease in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and now Mali.

Teasley got involved through AmericaCares, which is one of about 150 nonprofits working with our government to recruit workers nationwide.

Teasley has been a nurse for 17 years, working in emergency care and infectious disease units, most recently at Holy Cross Hospital in Chicago—a hospital which I know well in the inner city, which serves some of the poorest families in our town.

Now she will spend 8 weeks in Buchanan, Liberia, training and then treating patients. She explains:

I came here for a purpose, and I want to see that through. . . . I honestly believe no man is an island; each man's death diminishes me. That's why I became a nurse.

Teasley's daughter Danica Miller wasn't surprised by her mom. She says for leisure, her mom doesn't read novels but pours over books about infectious diseases.

Despite her family's support, Teasley is conscious of the increased risk she faces. In fact, many of those who have fallen ill have been health care workers themselves. Teasley is just sure she is not going to be one of them. She says

she is confident in herself and her team and that she will be able to come home safely.

To stop this epidemic, we need many things. First and foremost we need more people like Nurse Teasley. The Federal Government is seeking medical professionals to work in the 23 Ebola treatment units being established in Liberia. While the number of volunteers increased steadily this fall, it did drop off a bit when there was confusion over quarantine policies for returning medical workers. With time and perspective, this confusion seems to be settling. Illinois has brought its quarantine policy in line with that of the Centers for Disease Control. With a scientifically grounded and carefully measured approach, the hope is health care workers with the same passion and courage as Nurse Janet Teasley will volunteer to help those in need.

I met with Tom Frieden, Director of the CDC, a couple of weeks ago. He and members of the international public health community maintain that the way to control the spread of Ebola is to contain the virus at its source.

To prepare for the possibility of Ebola patients here in America and to help with containment overseas, the Obama administration has requested \$6.18 billion in emergency funding, including \$1.83 billion for the CDC. I support the President.

Janet is a valuable and commendable part of this effort, and I hope people will hear her story and the stories of people like her and support the efforts of the United States in Liberia.

VOTE ON ORR NOMINATION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question now occurs on the Orr nomination.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Franklin M. Orr, Jr., of California, to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy?

The nomination was confirmed.

NOMINATION OF JOSEPH S. HEZIR TO BE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

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

The bill clerk read the nomination of Joseph S. Hezir, of Virginia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Energy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There will now be 2 minutes of debate prior to a vote on the nomination.

Mr. HELLER. Mr. President, I am opposed to the nomination of Joseph S. Hezir for the position of Chief Financial Officer, CFO, at the Department of Energy, DOE. The CFO position plays an influential policy role within the DOE, overseeing all financial matters and ensuring the successful implementation of Departmentwide policies. Given that Mr. Hezir, as recently as 2 years ago, lobbied the Obama administration and Congress in favor of Yucca