

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, December 15, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOE DONNELLY, a Senator from the State of Indiana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. DONNELLY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY
LEADER

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

SENATE CHAPLAIN, DR. BARRY C.
BLACK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for those watching the opening of the Senate, I am sure some are wondering why the Chaplain was dressed in a Navy dress uniform. He is an admiral in the U.S. Navy. He has spent many years traveling the world, and we are so fortunate to have this good man here.

It is always difficult to know what to call him—doctor, chaplain, mister, admiral, and on and on. But what I call him is just a fine man, a real gentleman. So for those who are watching, he has his uniform on because he is an admiral in the U.S. Navy.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks, the Senate will proceed to executive session to debate the Murthy, Santos, Rose, Saldana, and Blinken nominations.

BLINKEN NOMINATION

I am not going to speak extensively on any of these. I will just say now, Tony Blinken I have known for many years. He was integral to the success of JOE BIDEN, as U.S. Senator, and has been with him as Vice President. Now he is going to be the second in command at the State Department.

When we have our briefings in the classified room, there is no one who is more articulate and can answer the questions any better than Tony

Blinken. I have great admiration for him. I think we as a country are so fortunate he is going to be in the position he is in.

At 5:30 today there will be four roll-call votes. Those votes will be as follows: cloture on Murthy to be Surgeon General of the United States, confirmation of the Murthy nomination, cloture on the Santos nomination to be a member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board, and cloture on Executive Calendar No. 635, Frank Rose to be an Assistant Secretary of State.

This man has been waiting 513 days, an extremely important job: verification of plants, nuclear. I don't think the Republicans dislike him. They don't like the job he is going to have. They have left it basically empty for all this time.

So we have some important stuff to do. We can complete everything we wanted to today—today. Everything that is scheduled now for the week, we can finish today. I hope everyone understands we can move forward, but we are going to have to be here until we finish our work, whether that is Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or Saturday. So everyone should understand they can't be leaving.

I know we all have things to do. I haven't been home in such a long time and I want to go home. I bought a new home there. As everyone knows, I sold my place in Searchlight and bought a home in the Greater Las Vegas area. I would like to be able to see the home. I have not slept in it. We bought it in May and I have not been there. My wife is there waiting, getting ready for the move in, which is now taking place. So we have a lot of work to do. We have to work together to get it done as quickly as possible.

TRIBUTE TO DEPARTING
SENATORS

MARK BEGICH

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Alaska is a State unlike any other State in the country. Often referred to as the "last frontier," Alaska's landscape is as breathtakingly beautiful as it is immense. Its residents are some of the most kind and accepting people one would ever meet. Any person who represents the State of Alaska must possess a true love for the exceptional beauty of this region and the vastness of it. It is so far away from everything. The capital Juneau, you can only get there in an airplane. That is the only way you can get to the capital of the State of Alaska. So I am going to spend a little bit of time talking about Senator MARK BEGICH and his faithful service to the people of Alaska.

There is no surprise that he is dedicated to Alaska and the people of Alaska. His father, Congressman Nick Begich, was dedicated to Alaska, as has been his mom Peggy. They moved to the then-Territory of Alaska in 1957 to teach school. Congressman Begich became involved in Alaskan politics and

successfully ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Tragedy struck. The whip of the House, Hale Boggs, and he were in Alaska campaigning and they were flying to an event. The plane disappeared. They searched, they searched, they searched. After 2 months, Congressman Boggs, Congressman Begich, and the pilot were declared dead. Their plane and bodies to this day have not been found. They are hidden someplace in the vastness of Alaska, in one of the mountains or the many bodies of water. We don't know.

In spite of this heartbreaking loss, the Begich family has pushed on. His mother continued to raise six children alone while managing real estate properties and being active in local politics.

By the age of 17, MARK had already acquired his mother's business acumen, starting his first business, a jewelry venture, and also owning and managing real estate. One reason Senator BEGICH has been a good Senator is because of his innate business acumen.

At age 26, he was elected to the Anchorage Assembly, which is the city council, a position he held for 10 years. Then in 2003 he was elected mayor of Anchorage. He served two terms before running for the Senate.

Now, 2008 was a dark time for Alaskan politics, but MARK's Senate victory brought a fresh face and new hope to the State. From the time he stepped foot on the Senate floor, he has not let the people of Alaska down. He has fought to expand economic opportunity, to defend the rights of Alaska Natives, and to fortify rural Alaska. Senator BEGICH's efforts to reform the Alaskan veterans health care system was exemplary, and it is a blueprint for a bipartisan solution that the Senate reached this year to reform the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Senator BEGICH has made tremendous contributions to the Senate over the past 6 years. I know he will continue to fight for what is best for Alaska as he transitions into the next stage of his life. I hope public service is somewhere in MARK's future. Every State needs a man of his quality. He will always have his wife Deborah and his son Jacob by his side.

I can remember the first time I saw Jacob was right behind us by the Ohio clock. President Obama walked by and that little boy yelled "Obama!" So his little boy loves politics.

It has truly been an honor to serve with Senator BEGICH. I am glad he has been part of our leadership team as head of the steering committee. He has done a remarkable, good job. I thank him again for his service to the Senate and certainly to our country.

MARK UDALL

Mr. President, the famous English poet William Blake once said, "Great things are done when men and mountains meet." There could be nothing more apt when talking about MARK UDALL than when we talk about men and mountains. He knows mountains.

He has climbed nine Himalayan peaks. He has climbed Mount McKinley. He has climbed 99 of the highest summits in Colorado, and that is the place where we have the great Rockies. Those are big mountains. He once attempted to scale Mount Everest but was stopped by a severe storm. Some of us, while we were waiting to finish our work on Saturday, told me they were hoping to go skiing on Sunday.

I said: Where are you going to go skiing?

I don't know the name of the place.

How high is that place?

Eight hundred feet.

In the Sierra Nevada mountains where I am from, and the Rockies, that is not a mountain. We have mountains in Colorado and Nevada.

MARK UDALL once attempted to scale Mount Everest and was nearly there when one of the most violent storms came. Using good sense, he decided they shouldn't do it, and it was the right thing to do. People die by saying they are stronger than nature. He understands his limitations, and his limitations are not very much. MARK is a tremendous athlete. He could do anything athletically. He has the genes of his dad, Morris Udall, whom I had the good fortune of serving with in the House of Representatives. Morris Udall is the only person to have played professional basketball being blind in one eye, couldn't see, but he was able to adjust his perceptive qualities with a basketball hoop to play professional basketball.

We all felt MARK'S loss when his brother Randy was found dead. He was found dead in the place he loved more than anyplace else, the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming. That is where Randy loved to go. That is where MARK loves to go. People told Randy he shouldn't go alone, but he went alone and it appears maybe he had a heart attack while he was out there. They found him several weeks later in the mountains he loved, dead. It was real tough for MARK, who looked up so much to his brother. MARK, though, has met many mountains and done many great things.

He served in the House of Representatives where he was stellar. But it is the work in the Senate where his greatest feats have been accomplished. In 2013 there were storms in Colorado and there was catastrophic flooding. It was very bad. Lives were lost, homes washed away. The people of Colorado needed help, and MARK would not stop. He held up legislation until the people of Colorado got what they deserved. He helped secure nearly \$1 billion in Federal assistance for the people of his State, money to rebuild homes, bridges, roads, and reestablish lives.

While he dedicated himself to protecting the people of Colorado, he also was committed to safeguarding the constitutional rights of all Americans. Who has done more in exposing what has been going on with the invasion of people's privacy? No one has done more

than MARK. He has done this in a number of different ways. But as a member of the Intelligence Committee, his work sounded the alarm about the National Security Administration's bulk data collection program. He fought to end the CIA's detention and interrogation program, and together with Senator FEINSTEIN has pushed to make public the committee's study of the CIA's torture program.

People have said: Perhaps if MARK had not been so concerned about individual rights, about the bulk data collection, about the torture, maybe he would have been reelected. But that is not MARK UDALL. He comes from a family with a long tradition of public service, as I have indicated. His uncle Stewart was Secretary of the Interior, after having served in Congress for many years representing the State of Arizona, as did his dad Mo Udall. Mo Udall was one of the most recognizable Congressmen in the entire 20th century, having run for President, and he had a sense of humor that was really quite remarkable.

Here in the Senate MARK has cousins. It has been interesting. During the last few years, we have had a lot of cousins: MARK, TOM, MIKE LEE, Gordon Smith—all cousins, first cousins. How did that come about? MARK would, as he did just a day or two ago, look and kind of smile and say: It could have been polygamy. And it was. But they are a very, very close family, a very close family.

In spite of the closeness of TOM and MARK—two brothers could not be closer than these two men. They climb mountains together. I have talked to them about putting on crampons, these spikes you put on your shoes to climb the ice. These are adventurers.

So we are going to miss MARK. But he has forged his own path and his own legacy.

Now, as his time in the Senate draws to a close, he will carry that legacy to other endeavors.

I wish MARK all the best. It has been such a privilege to serve with him. He will be deeply missed.

TAX INCREASE PREVENTION ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 627, which is H.R. 5771.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 627, H.R. 5771, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend certain expiring provisions and make technical corrections, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for the tax treatment of ABLE accounts established under State programs for the care of family members with disabilities, and for other purposes.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF VIVEK HALLEGERE MURTHY TO BE MEDICAL DIRECTOR IN THE REGULAR CORPS OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE, SUBJECT TO QUALIFICATIONS THEREFOR AS PROVIDED BY LAW AND REGULATIONS, AND TO BE SURGEON GENERAL OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

NOMINATION OF DANIEL J. SANTOS TO BE A MEMBER OF THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

NOMINATION OF FRANK A. ROSE TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (VERIFICATION AND COMPLIANCE)

NOMINATION OF SARAH R. SALDANA TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY

NOMINATION OF ANTONY BLINKEN TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE

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

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Vivek Hallegere Murthy, of Massachusetts, to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, subject to qualifications therefor as provided by law and regulations, and to be Surgeon General of the Public Health Service; Daniel J. Santos, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board; Frank A. Rose, of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Verification and Compliance); Sarah R. Saldana, of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security; and Antony Blinken, of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of State.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MURTHY NOMINATION

Mr. BARRASSO. I rise today to oppose the nomination of Dr. Vivek Murthy to be Surgeon General of the United States. The Surgeon General is known as America's doctor. Americans have great respect for this important position. They expect their Surgeon