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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray. Eternal Spirit, You are sovereign and in good and in bad times our eyes turn to You. Fulfill Your purposes for our Nation and world by using our Senators as instruments of Your providence.

Lord, have Your way in our lives for You are the potter and we are the clay. Mold and make us as You desire, working for our good in all things for we are called according to Your purposes. Inspire our lawmakers to seek first Your guidance so that everything in time will fall into proper place. As they seek greater intimacy with You, empower them to relate honestly with themselves and one another.

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. HATCH).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, January 13, 2015.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COTTON 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. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning the Senate will continue to debate the motion to proceed to the Keystone XL Pipeline bill, with the time equally divided until 12:30 p.m.

Some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle continue to filibuster the motion to proceed to the bill. All Senators should know that we will get on this bill today and begin the amendment process. We can do it the easy way or we can do it the hard way. Either we will get on it this afternoon by consent or shortly after midnight without consent. But we will get on it today.

It is surprising to me that some Democratic Senators are choosing to exercise their procedural rights in order to block their own colleagues from offering amendments to the bill, although at this point the only Senators who have filed amendments at the desk are Republican Senators.

I want to make it clear to everybody that we are committed to an open amendment process but not an open-ended one. So we are hopeful—I have read that Democrats have a number of amendments—that we will be given a chance to get on the bill and begin to offer amendments so the Senate can work its will.

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Democrats and Republicans cooperated last night to bring the Keystone Pipeline another step closer to construction. Thanks to that bipartisan cloture vote, the Senate can finally begin an open floor debate on this committee-vetted and approved legislation.

It is a debate many of us have actually been looking forward to—and not just because of the substance of what we are considering. But we have also been waiting a long time to have a debate where individual Senators actually matter again, which is why earlier I suggested that our colleagues on the other side of the aisle allow us to get on the bill and let us offer amendments. This is going to be an open process, but as I indicated, not an open-ended process.

This is a debate where Senators can offer amendments and have them considered by the Senators. It is a debate where Senators can make the voices of their constituents heard. That is just the kind of serious legislating many of us have been waiting a long time for, and the fact that we are finally seeing it today is a direct consequence of our constituents' calls for a functioning Congress. It is the latest example of the new Republican majority putting Congress back to work.

Getting Congress back to work means working to pass legislation that is good for jobs and for the middle class, and that is why we are focused on getting measures such as the bipartisan infrastructure bill over to the President's desk.

Even though he may not sign it—and we all know that he may not sign everything we pass—we are getting the Congress out of the business of protecting the President from good ideas. That is our commitment to the American people.

When it comes to the bipartisan Keystone bill, it is hard to see a serious reason why President Obama would

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



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veto these jobs anyway. The Nebraska Supreme Court just cleared away the last pretense many of us could imagine. So we hope President Obama will listen to the American people, and we hope in the end, after due consideration, he will decide to sign it. But, no matter, we will not be dissuaded from our path of working for the middle class. The new Republican Congress is not going to stop working for more jobs and more opportunity.

Let's get the debate started. Let's see what Members of both parties can accomplish by actually working together, and let's continue trying to pass as many good ideas as we can, starting with this bipartisan jobs and infrastructure bill.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The assistant Democratic leader is recognized.

KEYSTONE PIPELINE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is true that we are in the process of negotiating and discussing on the Democratic side the amendments that will be offered, and yes, there will be amendments offered. Senator BOXER has been part of this effort—and I just got off the phone with her—and she is now working with her staff to come up with amendments she believes will withstand any procedural challenge on the floor and, hopefully, those amendments will be brought up to the floor soon.

Senator CANTWELL, who is the floor leader on our side on this particular measure, is also open. There is no question that we will be prepared to and will offer amendments. We are trying to finalize the language at this point and the order in which the amendments will be offered.

We will be working with the Republicans once we have our own set of amendments in place. There is no effort to obstruct this process. We generally agreed that we would not be voting today on amendments. It is possible—before the end of the day—that we will have an agreement to move forward in terms of the submission and debate on the amendments and the votes to occur perhaps next week. But that is still unresolved, and we are still talking about it.

What is interesting is to put this in perspective. We are talking about S. 1. This is the very first bill offered by the new Republican majority in the Senate. It is a bill, as they say, to approve the Keystone XL Pipeline.

The Republicans' highest priority and their No. 1 bill now that they have majority status in the Senate is the approval of a pipeline project to benefit one company—a Canadian company—and create 35 permanent jobs. The highest priority of the Republican majority in the Senate is to debate and

pass a bill to benefit a Canadian company to create 35 permanent jobs.

This special interest, small-ball effort, is not a national economic or energy policy or a plan to make America energy independent. The Keystone XL Pipeline, sadly, is going to have a negative impact on the environment—and not just in the United States. It will literally affect all adjoining countries.

The tar sands that will be carried in this pipeline will increase the amount of pollution, greenhouse gas emissions—first when they are mined in Canada and later when they are refined. We know this because tar sands are currently coming into the United States—Canadian tar sands—and are being processed at a refinery in Wood River, IL. It is a refinery now owned by the Phillips oil company, and their refined product is distributed throughout the Midwest.

So the Keystone XL Pipeline is not the first Canadian tar sands pipeline. We already have a pipeline, and that existing pipeline—in the course of cleaning up Canadian tar sands so it can be made into products that can be sold on the market—generates something called petcoke. Petcoke is the waste product—the dirty part of the Canadian tar sands—that needs to be removed before they become viable petroleum products.

If you don't believe this petcoke is a danger, you only need to come to the great city of Chicago, which I am honored to represent. I visited the southeast side of Chicago. The British Petroleum refinery, which is at the end of Lake Michigan in the northern part of Indiana, refines the Canadian tar sands and generates, as part of the refining process, literally hills of petcoke—this black, sooty, nasty product they stack up near the refinery. Unfortunately, many times it ends up within the boundaries of the city of Chicago.

What impact do hills of petcoke have on a neighborhood? When the wind blows, this nasty, dirty product blows all over the homes, the families, and the children who live in that neighborhood. I have seen it. I have visited mothers with small children who try to seal the windows of their homes because this petcoke can get through any crack and into their homes, leaving a sooty deposit around them.

For those who argue that these Canadian tar sands pose no environmental threat, come take a look at these petcoke hills that are generated now by the process of refining this product.

Additionally, the Keystone XL Pipeline doesn't move us away from the dangerous tipping point which we face when it comes to climate change and global warming. In fact, it is going to speed up the day of reckoning. Leading scientists warn us that we are running out of time. As a Nation and as a world, if we do not accept the reality of what is happening to our environment, we are going to pay a heavy price.

According to the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, at

least half of the world's energy supply will need to come from low-carbon sources in the future—wind, solar, even nuclear—by 2050, if we are going to avoid catastrophic climate changes. That barely gives us 35 years to do something for our kids and grandkids. This Keystone bill does not even acknowledge that reality.

I have come to the floor many times and offered the challenge which I will renew today. I believe the Republican Party of the United States of America represented in the Senate is the only major political party in the world today that denies global warming and climate change. It is the only major political party which refuses to accept the premise that is well established in science, well established by our departments, such as the Department of Defense, that our activity as human beings on Earth is changing the world we live in—and not for the better.

One Republican pulled me aside off the floor, after I made this challenge several times, and said: DURBIN, you are wrong. There is actually a political party in Australia that denies global warming as well. Well, that may be true, but the fact that they have such little company when it comes to this position suggests that our Republicans are denying reality. This bill denies that reality as well.

If it is about jobs, I suggest—not only to the majority leader but to the labor unions and to others interested in creating American jobs—that there are better alternatives in the energy sector. Solar power is already generating 3.4 million jobs in the United States. Remember, the Keystone XL Pipeline generates 35 permanent jobs, and, according to some estimates, maybe 40,000 temporary supply jobs for the construction of the pipeline. The Keystone XL Pipeline will create 35 permanent jobs while solar power is generating 3.4 million jobs in America. By the end of 2013, 24,000 of them were created just that year. Jobs were created in the solar industry at a growth rate of 20 percent over 2012. It is a growth industry for clean, green jobs. In Illinois, 9 solar projects employ almost 4,000 workers.

Solar isn't the only energy source we can invest in. Fuel cell technology doesn't get much attention but supports 11,000 jobs versus 35 permanent jobs for the Keystone XL Pipeline. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that with the rapid increase in fuel cells, 180,000 new domestic jobs can be created by 2020 and 685,000 by 2035.

The International Renewable Energy Agency found the renewable energy industry in the United States responsible for 625,000 direct and indirect jobs in solar, biofuels, wind, biomass, hydro-power, and geothermal industries. That is a conservative estimate. So if we are interested in clean energy, if we want to do the right thing by our environment for our kids and grandkids and we want to create American jobs—this isn't 35 jobs, which is the highest priority of the Senate Republican Caucus;