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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Merciful God, enthroned above all powers, thank You for bestowing on us the dignity of being called Your children. You are mighty in power and we are grateful for the masterpiece of another day. Lord, forgive us when we forget that You are still in charge of what happens in our Nation and world. This world belongs to You, and though the wrong seems very strong, Your sovereignty still prevails. Your power is far beyond any conceivable authority.

Guide our Senators with Your sovereignty. Use them, Lord, to solve the critical problems in our time, contributing to the peace and stability of this land we love. Bless those who support them in their work as You surround us all with the shield of Your divine favor.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, it is hard to believe what we saw yesterday. Democrats actually filibustered a bill

to help victims of modern slavery apparently because leftwing lobbyists told them to. Yes, their historic mistake is callous and extreme, but more than that it is tragic.

I mentioned the story of Melissa yesterday. Melissa was sold into sexual slavery before she had even become a teenager. She still bears the scars of her years of torment, the beatings, the shackling, the emotional cruelty. When Melissa finally escaped, she wasn't embraced as a victim, she was branded as a criminal.

Melissa's story is heartbreaking, but it is anything but unique. Stories such as hers remind us how important the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act is. It is stories such as hers that remind us that no excuse about not reading a bill and no command from leftwing lobbyists could justify filibustering the critical help this human rights bill would provide.

So we have not given up on the thousands of victims in this country who suffer as Melissa did—shaken and shackled but still hanging on to hope. Democrats owe these victims, not lobbyists, help—help the Senate is so close to passing.

A strong majority of the Senate, including several Democrats, have already voted in favor of this human rights bill. Now all it takes is a few more Democrats of courage to ignore the lobbyists and do what is right. All that will mean is the Democrats on the Judiciary Committee supporting the very same bill they voted for just a few weeks earlier.

Apparently, all of these Senators were for this human rights bill before they were against it, and it is not like the bipartisan provision now suddenly in question is anything new. As the Congressional Research Service notes, bipartisan provisions such as this one "have been enacted in a variety of contexts since 1970," appearing in authorizing legislation as diverse as the State Children's Health Insurance Program,

the Legal Services Corporation Act, the Department of Defense Authorization Act, the Foreign Assistance Act, and others—language that is quite common and has been voted for numerous times by our friends on the other side of the aisle.

That is why the distinguished Democratic leader, my friend, had been such a strong supporter of the bipartisan Hyde provision for so many years and why he said during his tenure as majority leader: "My belief in the sanctity of life is why I have repeatedly voted against using taxpayer money for abortions." That was my friend, the Democratic leader. That is the declared view of my friend. It is what he said just a few short years ago before he and his party voted to filibuster a bill that would help the victims of modern slavery.

So this afternoon we invite Democrats to ignore the lobbyists and do the right thing. We invite every Democrat to help us write a happy ending to this story, where the forces of hope and humanity, not powerful lobbyists, prevail.

THE SENATE BUDGET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, several weeks ago the White House released an unserious budget that would have raised taxes by nearly \$2 trillion and increase the national debt by more than \$7 trillion. In other words, it was more of the same old tired, failed policies of the past. Hardly anyone took that budget seriously mostly because it was not meant to be taken seriously.

Contrast that with the balanced budget the Senate will introduce this morning. It is a budget that controls spending, reduces the deficit, and improves programs such as Medicaid. It is a budget that will support economic growth and more opportunity for hardworking families while protecting our most vulnerable citizens. It is a budget

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



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that will allow us to repeal and replace a program that hurts the middle class, ObamaCare. It will allow us to repeal and replace a program that hurts the middle class, ObamaCare.

I thank the chairman of the Budget Committee, Senator ENZI, for his good work on this sensible budget.

We have heard some talk of shrinking deficits these days. Of course, Republicans are proud to take credit for helping force some fiscal responsibility on the Obama administration, but we know these deficits will soon shoot up dramatically if Washington does not start making more commonsense choices.

The reality is our country still has many tough fiscal challenges to confront. These are not challenges that can just be taxed away. These are not challenges that can be denied away either. But by working together these are challenges we can overcome, and the way we can overcome them is with sensible ideas to get spending under control and make government more efficient, more effective, and more accountable, just as the Senate's budget proposes to do.

TRADE PROMOTION LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I have one final matter. For all the issues that may divide Democrats and Republicans these days, there is one thing many of us can agree on—trade is good for America. There is bipartisan agreement that trade is good for American wages with export-related manufacturing jobs paying nearly 20 percent more than other kinds of jobs, and there is bipartisan agreement that trade is good for American jobs overall.

According to one study, trade supports nearly 40 million jobs nationally—about one out of every five jobs and more than one-half million jobs in my State of Kentucky alone. In fact, Kentucky's exports in goods and services have already increased dramatically since the enactment of trade agreements with countries such as Australia, from about \$10 billion a year to almost \$30 billion a year. Trade is good for Kentucky and trade is good for America, and that is why this is an issue where the White House and Congress are working together to support American jobs and wages.

While the United States has historically been a world leader in opening more markets to the products our country makes and grows, we have fallen woefully behind in recent years.

Thankfully, emerging agreements with countries in Europe and the Pacific present us with a real chance to catch up. These agreements present us with the unique opportunity to export more of what we make over there so we can create more American jobs right here at home. But we cannot make this important progress for America's middle class without passing the right kind of trade legislation in Congress first.

There is bipartisan agreement—at least in principle—to do exactly that, but the details will obviously be important. We want to ensure we get those details of that legislation right so we can get the best agreements possible for the American people. We certainly don't want to be considering legislation that would make these goals harder to achieve—undermining future economic and job growth.

The good news is our country has decades of experience with the kind of bipartisan trade promotion legislation that allows for the best deals for American workers to be negotiated by America's trade representatives and then approved by Congress. Several members of my conference will speak about that issue on the floor today. Like many of our Democratic friends, these Senators are interested in getting the best deals possible for the American people—the kind of deals that would only be possible with truly effective and bipartisan trade legislation. So they will explain this important issue, and that is just what is needed. They will explain it in further detail.

Before I leave the floor, I wish to recognize the good work of the chairman of the Finance Committee for being an incredible advocate on this issue, and allow me to also recognize the ranking member of the Finance Committee for working hard to try to get this right. We all look forward to working with these Members, and all Members, on this very important issue.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THANKING SENATOR PAUL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, just as an aside, most everybody knows at this point that on New Year's Day I fell and hurt myself and injured my right eye.

During this period of time, the Presiding Officer—who by the way is a medical doctor, an ophthalmologist—has been so kind and thoughtful and considerate in visiting with me, giving me encouragement and some expert advice as to what he has seen in the past and given me hope for better sight out of my right eye. I appreciate it very much.

I want the people of Kentucky to know how thoughtful and considerate and kind the Presiding Officer has been to me over these past few months.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, instead of being bogged down in another Republican-contrived fight, I have proposed a path forward that is very simple and very direct. While we work toward an agreement to pass trafficking legislation—and there is work being done on that as we speak—we should move to

the Executive Calendar and consider the nomination of a very fine person, Loretta Lynch.

Democrats are fully committed to voting for Lynch's nomination and returning immediately to the trafficking bill. The Senate can do two things at the same time. We can certainly work on coming up with a path forward on trafficking and also do something to move forward and have a vote for a new Attorney General.

The chief law enforcement officer of this country—the man who is now the Attorney General—said months ago he wants to leave. He has been winding down. It is not right for this country not to have a fully engaged Attorney General.

I am disappointed that with all the work the Senate needs to accomplish, the majority leader is bound and determined to waste the rest of this week with the same votes we took yesterday. I was told we are going to have the same votes today that we had yesterday, and we will have the same votes on Thursday that we are going to have today and that we had on Tuesday.

Albert Einstein, a genius, said the pure definition of insanity is somebody who does the same thing over and over again and comes up with the same result. It is insane to keep going forward on these votes that everyone knows are going to turn out the same way.

Loretta Lynch has waited 130 days. There is no reason to delay her confirmation another minute. We can vote for her confirmation now and move back to the trafficking bill right now.

THE HOUSE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Gandhi said, "Action expresses priorities." Action expresses priorities. Congressional Republicans' actions on the budget clearly demonstrate how little regard they have for the American middle class. I want to get into a few examples. Their budget proposal—the one the House is going to send to us soon—ends Medicare as we know it, replacing it with another voucher program. It takes health care away from 16.4 million Americans now insured through the Affordable Care Act. It guts Medicaid and undercuts millions of families who rely on it to fund nursing homes and other care. It cuts billions in education funding—billions—and it cuts job training and employment services for 4 million American workers. The list goes on and on.

But we know one thing their budget does not do. It doesn't cut a single tax loophole for the superwealthy to reduce the deficit. Not one. Instead, this budget is brimming with more tax breaks for the megarich—many new tax breaks. In fact, the Republican budget would drastically cut the tax bill for the average millionaire while raising taxes on the middle class. That is not just irresponsible, it is immoral.

Of course, lowering taxes for millionaires and billionaires will add to the