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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, source of light and consolation, we need You every hour. Our strength is inadequate to meet the challenges of our time, so we place our hope in You.

Strengthen our Senators. Give them knowledge and wisdom to solve the riddles that beset us. Open their minds to think Your thoughts. Make them quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. May they place themselves under Your control so that You can use them for Your glory. Lead them through life's storms with hope in their hearts. Help them to commit to You everything they think, say, and do today.

We pray in Your transforming Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JON TESTER 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. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 11, 2008.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. TESTER 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. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, there will be a period of morning business for an hour. Senators will be allowed to speak for 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees. The Republicans will control the first half, the majority controls the final half. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of S. Con. Res. 70, the concurrent resolution on the budget, for debate only until the 12:30 recess for the caucus luncheons.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2738 AND S. 2739

Mr. REID. I understand there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2738) to identify and remove criminal aliens incarcerated in correctional facilities in the United States and for other purposes.

A bill (S. 2739) to authorize certain programs and activities in the Department of the Interior, the Forest Service, and the Department of Energy, to implement further the Act approving the Covenant to Establish

a Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in Political Union with the United States of America, to amend the Compact of Free Association Amendments Act of 2003, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. I object to any further proceedings with respect to these bills en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bills will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

THE TAX GAP

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, after reviewing the budget proposed by the other side of the aisle, one thing is clear: the people who wrote it were more interested in growing the size and scope of Washington spending than in growing the American family's budget. But Americans expect more from government than a \$1.2 trillion tax hike and billions of dollars in new spending, especially in these difficult economic times.

But even with a giant tax hike, the new spending in this budget isn't really accounted for. Democrats say they want to "pay for" massive spending by—among other gimmicks—closing what they like to refer to as the "tax gap." This is the gap that exists between what people actually owe in taxes and what they pay.

Well, we need only look back at last year to see that Congress hasn't been very successful in attempting to close the "tax gap". In 2007, Congress passed the Democrat budget resolution which promised to reduce the tax gap by \$300 billion over 5 years. Unfortunately, this promise was never followed up on with actual legislation to make it law and no progress was made.

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



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