

to give some remarks at a later time today, and I would notify all Senators we are going to be in a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. I welcome my distinguished colleague back publicly, as I have privately, and congratulate him on his election. He ran a very spirited, strong election, and I look forward to—and I will address this in my remarks—our work during this next Congress.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we proceed now to a period of morning business.

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

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to S. Res. 1, the Chair appoints the Senator from Nevada, Mr. REID, and the Senator from Kentucky, Mr. McCONNELL, as a committee to join the committee on the part of the House of Representatives to wait upon the President of the United States and inform him that a quorum is assembled and that the Congress is ready to receive any communication he may be pleased to make.

The Chair appoints the Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and the Senator from Utah, Mr. BENNETT, as tellers on the part of the Senate to count electoral votes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, are we now in a period of morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, we are.

WELCOMING THE 111TH CONGRESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on the Fourth of July of the year 1851, the legendary statesman Daniel Webster, himself a former Senator, laid the cornerstone for the Senate Chamber where we now gather. He said:

Be it known that on this day the Union of the United States of America stands firm.

Today marks the 150th year that this Chamber has housed the Senate of the United States.

When Vice President John Breckinridge gave the 34th Congress open in this Chamber in 1859, our Republic had a population of one-tenth what it is today. There were just 64 Senators. Each Senator enjoyed a little more leg room, and that is an understatement. Many of these desks we see behind me, and behind the Republican leader, are from the original Senators of this country. They are real old. This Chamber, for 150 years, has served as the primary working space for most Members. The first session held here 150 years ago began as it did today, with the Vice President of the United States administering the oath of office to new Members.

Today, nine new Senators joined what many have said, and I agree, is

the greatest deliberative body the world has ever known—certainly the greatest legislative body. So I extend my warmest welcome and congratulations to Senator MARK UDALL of Colorado, Senator TOM UDALL of New Mexico, Senator MIKE JOHANNIS of Nebraska, Senator JEANNE SHAHEEN of New Hampshire, Senator MARK WARNER of Virginia, Senator JIM RISCH of Idaho, Senator KAY HAGAN of North Carolina, Senator JEFF MERKLEY of Oregon, and Senator MARK BEGICH of Alaska.

To the profound challenges we face, these nine men and women bring vast judgment and experience at all levels of Government and public service. I am confident every one of them will serve their States and our Nation with distinction and pride.

It was just 2 years ago this inaugural day of Congress that we heralded a new majority for Democrats in both the Senate and House of Representatives, but in the Senate that was a very tenuous majority. We began with 51, but TIM JOHNSON became very ill and the crowded Democratic primary field left us oftentimes short of an outright majority and far short of the 60 votes needed to prevent filibusters and pass legislation. Although we made substantial progress in the 110th Congress, partisanship with divided Government too often ruled the day.

I have said from the day the election was over, we are looking forward. We are not going to be concerned about the previous 8 years, we are concerned about the next 8 years. Since 2006, we Democrats have received a net gain of 14 Senate seats, 45 to 59. Just 2 weeks from today, Barack Obama will become the 44th President of the United States. We are ready to answer the call of the American people by putting the past 8 years behind us and delivering the change our country desperately needs.

We are grateful to begin anew with a far more robust Democratic majority. But both parties learned an important lesson over the past 2 years: When we allow ourselves to retreat into the tired, well-worn trenches of partisanship, when we fail to reach for common ground, when we are unable, in the words of President-elect Obama, to disagree without being disagreeable, we diminish our ability to accomplish real change.

To my Republican counterpart, Senator McCONNELL, and all Republican colleagues, a number of whom I have called and personally visited with, I say to them: With American troops fighting two wars overseas, we are together in all of this. With the American people suffering a staggering economic crisis here at home, we are in this together. With the middle class struggling to make one paycheck last until the next one, we are in the middle of this together. With health care, college tuition, and retirement more expensive and harder to reach than ever, we are in this together. With our cli-

mate in crisis and energy prices rising and falling unpredictably, we are in this together.

Some may fear the depth of the challenges we face, but I remind them that adversity is no stranger to this Chamber or to our country. In America and in this Chamber, we have never failed to persevere and ultimately to prosper. In this Chamber, our Union came unraveled and was mended, great wars were declared and peace has been celebrated. Here, our most fundamental freedoms were challenged, upheld, and expanded. In this Chamber for 150 years we have watched things happen.

In more recent years, we watched the passing of the New Deal by Roosevelt, Truman's Fair Deal, Kennedy's Great Frontier, and Johnson's Great Society. Over these many years, we have outlawed child labor, brought electricity to the western frontier, and ensured a college education for those who serve in uniform.

I had the opportunity yesterday to go to the funeral of Claiborne Pell, a man of wealth, a patrician, a man who went to the finest schools in America but dedicated his life to public service so that other people who were not in his situation could be educated. That is where the Pell grants came from—Claiborne Pell, a very aristocratic man who devoted his life to public service.

We have done those things right here in this Chamber. Of course, we passed, after long, hard struggles and much anxiety, the Civil Rights and Voting Rights acts.

There is no question that the challenges ahead of us are staggering. I do not think anyone would disagree. But I am confident that if we renew, in this body, our commitment to bipartisanship, the 111th Congress will be a tremendous success.

Just a short way from here yesterday afternoon—and I don't remember the exact time, 3 o'clock or something like that, or 3:30—we had a bipartisan meeting of the leadership of the House and Senate. It was a wonderful meeting, with an exchange of ideas. The President-elect was here. I was very impressed. I heard Senator McCONNELL say to him: There are some things I need to talk to you about. Senator Obama said to him, when the meeting broke up: Let's talk now. I assume they talked sometime in the next little bit. But that is what we need: the ability to talk to each other.

There is no script that can be written where Senator McCONNELL and I will agree on everything that happens here. But there is a script being written today that says that even though we disagree on things that take place in this body, we can do it in a way that is constructive and works toward the good of our country. The State of Kentucky is much different from the State of Nevada—they are two different States. That was the genius of our Founding Fathers, that this Senate, which came about by reason of the

Great Compromise in 1787 in Philadelphia, has allowed people to work together. Even though the State of Kentucky has more people than the State of Nevada and the State of California has more people than the State of Nevada, the State of Nevada has as much power in the Senate as Kentucky and California.

I have confidence we can work together. I am convinced that Senator MCCONNELL and I—our critics and the press can call us a lot of names and make suggestions, but one thing they cannot say about us is we are not experienced. We have been through a lot of political wars. We are ready to take on whatever wars face us.

I say to my friend, Senator MCCONNELL, I have every confidence we will be able to move this country forward.

We need to have the 111th Congress a tremendous success, and we can do that. In the coming days, my fellow Democrats and I will introduce our priorities for this Congress. It happens every Congress. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle will introduce their legislative priorities. We look forward to developing dialog between the two sides of the aisle to see if we can meet somewhere in the middle.

This day marks not just the 150th year of this Chamber but also the 50th year of the service of Senator ROBERT BYRD of West Virginia. For 50 years he has been a Senator, but he has been a Member of Congress for 56 years because he served in the House before he came here. It is no secret, when it comes to reverence for the Senate, we have all learned a lot—I have learned a lot—from President BYRD's love of this body. I also have learned a lot from Senator BYRD of his desire for all Americans to appreciate that little document we call our Constitution. So on this the 50th anniversary of Senator BYRD's service, I express publicly my affection and admiration for this good man and wish him well in this Congress.

For our nine new Members sworn today and for all Americans, I offer a few of Senator BYRD's words which he delivered to a meeting of new Senators about 12 years ago, when he said:

After 200 years, [the Senate] is still the anchor of the Republic, the morning and evening star in the American constitutional constellation.

It has weathered the storms of adversity, withstood the barbs of cynics and attacks of critics. It has provided stability and strength for the nation during periods of civil strife and uncertainty, panics and depressions.

In war and peace, it has been the sure refuge and protector of the rights of states and of a political minority. And, today, the Senate still stands—the great forum of constitutional American liberty.

So said Senator BYRD 12 years ago.

Today is a new chapter in history. It begins today. Each of us has the honor of taking part in it in some way. We here in the Senate have the ability to help write that history.

As the work starts, the words of Daniel Webster return to mind: "Be it

known that on this day the Union of the United States of America stands firm." I believe that.

I have just a few other brief remarks.

As my colleagues are aware, two Democratic U.S. Senate seats—one from Illinois and the other from Minnesota—are currently vacant. I will briefly address these two unusual circumstances because of the inquiries we have all had.

First, the Illinois seat left vacant by President-elect Barack Obama. Although I do not know Mr. Burris personally—I hope to meet him in the next few days—he has served the State of Illinois in elective office over many years. Mr. Burris and his advisers were welcomed to the Capitol this morning by Sergeant at Arms Terry Gainer, who was chief of police in Chicago, so they have known each other for a long time. They then had a gracious meeting with the Secretary of the Senate, Nancy Erickson, and Senate Parliamentarian Alan Frumin, who informed them that Mr. Burris is not in possession of the necessary credentials from the State of Illinois. A court case in Illinois is pending to determine whether Secretary of State Jesse White is obligated to sign this certification. We are awaiting that court decision. If Mr. Burris takes possession of valid credentials, the Senate will proceed in a manner that is respectful to Mr. Burris while ensuring there is no cloud of doubt over the appointment to fill this seat.

I also understand that Mr. Burris will likely give testimony to the Illinois State Assembly impeachment proceedings in the next few days, these proceedings pending against Governor Blagojevich. We await that proceeding as Senators as well.

As to Minnesota, I know a little bit about close elections. I am only going to talk about two of them because I have had a number of them. I lost one by 524 votes. It was a statewide election for the Senate. That was traumatic, to lose that race to Paul Laxalt, one of the historic Senators from Nevada—but of course for this country because of his very close personal relationship with President Reagan. Paul Laxalt and I are close personal friends, but I lost that vote by 524. We went through a recount. I didn't file any lawsuits. There were no challenges. As hard as it was—and it was hard because that is really the first thing I had ever lost—I lost the race. All over the country, Democrats were winning these Senate seats and I lost in Nevada, but I had to give up because I had no chance of winning.

I won the second by 428 votes. One reason JOHN ENSIGN and I are soulmates is because our politics are so different, but our friendship is as good as it gets. That was a tough election, a bitter election that JOHN ENSIGN and I went through. We had a recount in Nevada that was ongoing. JOHN ENSIGN made a decision that it was a waste of time; I can't win the election. Before the recount was completed, JOHN EN-

SIGN called me—I was having dinner with my wife—and said: You are going to be the next Senator. I thought when he made that phone call, gee, this is some kind of good guy. I didn't handle my loss nearly as well as he did. I remember that.

Anyway, JOHN ENSIGN filed no challenges, didn't complete the recount, there were no lawsuits. And JOHN ENSIGN is now a Member of the Senate. I am fortunate to have a number of good friends, but, boy, he is a friend, and I think if you ask him he would say the same.

So I say to my friend Norm Coleman, watch what I have said and watch what has taken place in the past. The Senate race in Minnesota was very close. It was very, very close—one of the closest in history. The bipartisan State Canvassing Board and Minnesota's election officials have done an exemplary job in handling the recount. There were no allegations of partisanship or unfairness from either side that I am aware of, and I followed it every day for 6 weeks.

Even close elections, though, have winners. I can testify to that. After all votes have been fairly counted, Al Franken is certified as the winner by the State Canvassing Board, and he is the Senator-elect from Minnesota. Democrats will not seek to seat Senator-elect Franken today. We understand the sensitivity on both sides to an election this close.

This is a difficult time for former Senator Coleman and his family. I acknowledge that. He is entitled to the opportunity to proceed however he feels appropriate. But for someone who has been in the trenches on a number of these elections, graciously conceding, as his friend JOHN ENSIGN did, would be the right step. This can't drag on forever, and I understand that. I hope former Senator Coleman and all our Republican colleagues will choose to respect the will of the people of Minnesota. They have chosen a new Senator, Al Franken, and his term must begin and will begin soon.

I repeat, I look forward to this year, hoping that next year at this time we will be here talking about many things we have been able to accomplish.

As I have said on this floor, if we accomplish things, there is credit to go around to everyone. If we do not accomplish anything, there is blame to go around to everyone. That is not where I want to be.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following communication:

A communication from the Director of the Federal Register, National Archives, transmitting, pursuant to law, a report relative to the Certificates of Ascertainment of the electors of the President and Vice President of the United States.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.