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Senate

The Senate met at 9:31 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, in whose keeping are the destinies of people and nations, endure with Your wisdom our fallible minds that we may do Your will. Lord, give our Senators the greatness of soul that they will use the keys of their power to open doors of peace and righteousness for our Nation and world. As they seek to make good decisions, strengthen them with the assurance that in life's supreme tests, You will guide them. Give them the grace of quietness and confidence that in simple trust and deeper reference they may reap a bountiful harvest. May they be found steadfast, abounding in Your work, knowing that because of You their labor is not in vain.

We pray in the Name that is above every name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 19, 2009.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN, a Senator from the State of Delaware, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. KAUFMAN 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 leader remarks the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour. Senators will be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each up to that period of time. The majority will control the first 30 minutes, and Republicans will control the final 30 minutes.

Upon the conclusion of morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 146. We will vote in relation to the remaining three Coburn amendments around 11 a.m. today and on passage of the bill shortly thereafter.

At 2 o'clock this afternoon, the Senate will turn to executive session to consider the nomination of Elena Kagan to be Solicitor General of the United States. The agreement reached last night provides for up to 6 hours for debate prior to a vote on her confirmation. We anticipate the vote could occur in the 4:30 to 6 p.m. range. It is doubtful that all 6 hours will be needed for debate on the Solicitor General.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

AIG

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Americans want answers about how bonuses were handed out at AIG, how it happened, and how to make sure it never happens again.

The President said last night that he wants to make sure we don't find ourselves in this situation again, and I couldn't agree more. He pledged to do everything possible to fix the situation, and certainly we all appreciate that. He has said his administration will ensure that if they provide further assistance, they will renegotiate these types of preexisting contracts. That is good.

I was encouraged to read this morning that some senior executive officers at AIG have agreed to return their bonuses to the taxpayers, including the largest bonus. That is the right thing to do, and it is a clear sign that the taxpayers' voices have been heard. But for now, taxpayers are still looking for an answer to the question of how all of this happened so we can make sure their hard-earned pay isn't wasted in the future.

THE BUDGET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Americans are focused on a number of important issues at the moment relating to the economy and to the administration's response to it, but it would be a mistake in the midst of all of these immediate concerns to take our eye off the administration's long-term economic plan as outlined in its budget. The American people already have an idea that this budget spends too much, it taxes too much, and it borrows too much, particularly in the midst of a severe recession. They are also concerned about the staggering number of things the administration is trying to do. Still, it is important to look closely at the details of the administration's long-term budget plan so people have an idea of what is coming.

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



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