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Senate

The Senate met at 11:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who reads our hearts and knows our motives, You are the source of our being and the goal of our striving, hallowed be Your Name. Inspire our Senators to keep within the grasp of Your firm hands the threads of this day's words and deeds. May they seek Your will throughout this day and permit You to transfigure and redeem even their disappointments and setbacks. As they face perplexing issues of state, may the strength of each be as the strength of 10 because of pure motives. May all that our lawmakers do and are today be so obviously an expression of Your truth that they can be confident of receiving the smile of Your approval.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND 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, September 29, 2009.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND 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. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in morning business until 1:30 today. Senators are permitted to speak during that period of time for up to 10 minutes each. Following that morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the Defense appropriations bill.

At 4:30 today, the Senate will turn to executive session to debate the nomination of Jeffrey Viken to be U.S. district judge for the District of South Dakota. At 5:30 today, we will vote on the confirmation of that nomination.

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REID. Madam President, this afternoon we will begin work on the Defense appropriations bill, as I announced. The bill provides \$636 billion in new discretionary authority for the Department of Defense, including more than \$128 billion in funding for overseas contingency operations.

This is a good bill. It provides funding to grow the Army by 22,000 soldiers, provides \$108 billion for procurement of new equipment that our men and women in the military badly need as a result of the equipment having been damaged, destroyed, and worn out in Iraq and other places. It also provides for a modification of tactical vehicles to better protect our forces in battle.

In Nevada, there are significant contributions being made, as we speak, to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with more than 700 Nevada Guard men and women in combat today. Because the desert terrain in Nevada is similar to that in Iraq and Afghanistan, many of our Nation's warriors prepare for their deployment in Nevada. The Naval Air Station in Fallon, in northern Nevada, is the home to the Navy's preeminent strike and air warfare center, which includes the Navy Fighter Weapons School, better known as Top Gun. Naval Air Station Fallon also houses the Strike Warfare Center and the Carrier Airborne Early Warning Weapons School.

If you are a Navy fighter pilot, the only training that allows you to have, in effect, a Ph.D. in flying the Navy's top fighter planes is going to Fallon. Hawthorne Ammunition Depot has been in existence since the late 1920s as a result of a huge explosion of an ammunition facility in New Jersey. Since the late 1920s, this base—in very arid, dry, north-central Nevada—serves as the staging area for conventional bombs, rockets, and ammunition, a role it has filled since World War II.

Creech Air Force Base, located about 35 miles north of Las Vegas, employs the combat-ready Unmanned Aircraft System or what we call the drones. It is known as the Joint Unmanned Aircraft System Center of Excellence. It is from that facility that the strikes take place in Iraq and Afghanistan; that is where the people on the ground actually do the work that allows these vehicles to do their damage, wherever they are designated to go.

Finally, Nellis Air Force Base, outside Las Vegas, home of the first dedicated air warfare and later air-ground training facility, continues to provide advanced air combat training for U.S. and allied forces. This is the home of the Thunderbirds.

The fiscal year ends tomorrow. We need to pass this Defense bill to ensure

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



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