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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, who rules the raging of the sea, thank You for the gift of freedom. We are grateful for a nation where we can speak, vote, and worship as we wish. May we never take liberty's blessings for granted but remember our accountability to You to be responsible in our thoughts, words, and actions.

Use our Senators to preserve our freedoms. Let integrity be the hallmark of their characters, individually and corporately. Fill their hearts with Your unalterable, undiminishing, and unending love.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL 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. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 1, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator

from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico 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 resume consideration of the surface transportation bill.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

As I indicated last night, I now ask unanimous consent that there be 90 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled prior to the vote in relation to the Blunt amendment; that all other provisions of the previous order remain in effect; and that the time Senator MCCONNELL and I use prior to the vote not count against the 90 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. The vote will be somewhat after 11:00, but it shouldn't be long after 11:00. We hope that when we get rid of this amendment, we will be able to make an agreement with the Republicans on moving forward on this bill. We have been unsuccessful in doing that to this point.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, too often cooperation is in short supply here in the Senate, so I was pleased when we began consideration of a truly bipartisan jobs bill.

As I have said here a number of times in the past week or so, if there were

ever a bipartisan bill, this is it. Progressive BARBARA BOXER, conservative JIM INHOFE—they have agreed on a way to move forward on a bill that will save 1.8 million jobs and create about 1 million more jobs. So this would put millions of people to work right away.

Although our economy has gained momentum, there are still millions of Americans out of work, so it should be obvious why we can't afford to delay efforts to rebuild our roadways, our railways, and our bridges.

Almost 1,000 organizations, including business groups and labor unions that rarely see eye to eye on anything, support this commonsense measure. More than 30 of those groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Automobile Association, AAA, have asked Senators to refrain from offering unrelated, ideological amendments to this bill. As I said, almost 1,000 organizations want this done.

Here is what the U.S. Chamber and AAA wrote recently:

The organizations that we represent may hold diverse views on social, energy, and fiscal issues, but we are united in our desire to see immediate action on the Senate's bipartisan highway and transit reauthorization measures.

We started on this piece of legislation on February 7. It is the first day of March now. These groups don't agree on much, but they do agree this legislation is too important to be bogged down with political amendments, so they spoke as one.

There was a time when this kind of cooperation was the standard in the Senate. There was a time when two Senators who had little in common could still share common purpose. There was a time when groups of Senators divided by political party could still be united in their desire to pass worthy legislation.

One Senator who has always exemplified that willingness to set aside philosophical and political differences and work together is my friend, the senior

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



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