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Senate

The Senate met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, today let Your favor rest upon the Members of our government's legislative branch. Establish the works of their hands and strengthen them to honor You by serving others. Let Your lifegiving spirit move them to feel greater compassion for those in need. Lord, use them to remove barriers that divide us. May they strive to be agents of healing and hope, as they help us all live in greater justice and peace.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL 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, November 15, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 419, S. 3254.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the bill (S. 3254) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2013 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the filing deadline for all second-degree amendments to S. 3255, the Sportsmen's Act, is 9:10 a.m. today. At 9:15 a.m., there will be a cloture vote on S. 3255.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, with the new year fast approaching, all eyes are on Washington and whether the two parties can come together and

agree on a plan to avoid a massive year-end tax hike. I truly believe we can. I believe the two parties can avoid the so-called fiscal cliff, and in the process I even believe we can agree on a framework for a bipartisan plan to address the even bigger problem of our Nation's fiscal solvency.

But there are clear obstacles to success. If we are going to succeed, if we want to avoid a job-killing tax hike and put the country on a path to solvency, we need to be clear about what the obstacles are.

The first obstacle is a very vocal and very determined group of extremists on the left who are rooting for us to go off the fiscal cliff. They want this to happen. These are the folks the President invited to the White House earlier this week and who seem to have gotten a number of Democrats in the Senate to embrace this reckless idea themselves.

Make no mistake, the goal of these folks is not to do what is best for the middle class. It is not to create jobs. It is not even to balance the books, since the taxes they would hike would not even come close to covering current spending.

What they want is to sock it to those whom they define as rich, regardless of the impact on jobs or the broader economy. That is what motivates this crowd. They are not serious about tackling the Nation's fiscal problems. If we are serious about helping middle-class Americans and helping this economy grow, their radical approach, frankly, should be ignored.

The other obstacle to success is a mindset that says the President of the United States is somehow a bit player in this whole thing, that he is just a bystander sitting around waiting on other people to act. This is a mindset that thinks leadership consists of telling other people to "work it out," while they continue to run a campaign to make sure they cannot.

This is ludicrous. The only way—I repeat—the only way we are going to

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



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