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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the fountain of every blessing, tune our hearts to pray with power. Bless today the work of our lawmakers, empowering them to accomplish Your purposes on Earth, guided by Your wisdom and courage. Lord, inspire them to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You as You give them the gifts of increasing awareness and openness of heart. Teach them to bring harmony from discord and hope from despair.

We pray in Your eternal Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

AUTHORIZING THE LIMITED AND SPECIFIED USE OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES AGAINST SYRIA—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 166, S.J. Res. 21.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 21 to authorize the limited and specified use of the United States Armed Forces against Syria.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my and Senator McCONNELL's remarks,

there will be a period of morning business until 11 a.m. this morning. At 11 a.m. we will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to the Syria resolution. The time until noon will be divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees. The Senate will recess from noon until 2:15 p.m. to allow for our caucus meetings.

The leader and I have talked this morning—and prior to this morning—with regard to the energy efficiency bill. We automatically go to that bill at 11 a.m. We are trying to work out a way we can go to that bill. Senators SHAHEEN and PORTMAN have worked for more than a year to come up with a bill. We have not done an energy bill in a long time, so there is a desire on both sides to move forward on this.

Senator SHAHEEN and Senator PORTMAN have bipartisan amendments they want to offer to their bill, and I have expressed to the Republican leader that we need to move to that when we finish the Syria issue. I would like permission to move to that bill at the appropriate time. Once we get on the bill and we get the CR from the House, for example, I told the Republican leader—and everyone who wants to hear—that we don't have to finish the energy efficiency bill all at one time. We want to have an amendment process, and we will do that. I don't want to file cloture on the motion to proceed again, so we have instructed our staffs to try to come up with something before 11 a.m. that we can agree on.

I repeat. There will be amendments offered, and we will have adequate time to work on this. We may not be able to do it all at one time, but we will do it and finish this legislation.

SYRIA

Mr. President, we are engaged in a very important debate. The Syria debate is one that cannot be taken lightly, and I don't believe anyone has taken it lightly. The discussion and bipartisan resolution under consideration is simply too important to be

rushed through the Senate or given short shrift. So it is right and proper that the President be given an opportunity to meet with Senators from both parties, as he will today. He will meet with us at 12:30 p.m. When he finishes with us, it is my understanding he will report to Senator McCONNELL's conference.

In addition to that, he is going to address the Nation tonight. He is going to speak directly to the American people about the potential for limited military action to Syria. He will do that at 9 p.m. tonight.

As I said last night, it is appropriate to allow other conversations to go on. We now have—as a result of some work done by other countries—France, Russia, and we understand Syria is involved in this as well. This is aimed at avoiding military action. We will have to see if this works out.

It is very important to understand that the only reason Russia is seeking an alternative to military action is that President Obama has made it plain and clear that the United States will act, if we must. Our credible threat of force has made these diplomatic discussions with Syria possible, and the United States should not withdraw from the direction we are taking as a country.

If there is a realistic chance—and I certainly hope there is—to secure Syria's chemical weapons without further atrocities of the Asad regime, we should not turn our backs on that chance. But for such a solution to be plausible, the Asad regime must act quickly and prove that their offer is real and not merely a ploy to delay military action or action by the body of the Senate.

Any agreement must also assure that chemical weapons in the hands of Syria can be secured and done in an open process, even in the midst of this ongoing war we have in Syria. Any agreement must ensure that Syria is unable to transfer its dangerous chemical

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



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