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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.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 Master, You are too good to be true. Repeatedly throughout our history, You have been our anchor. Continue to bring stability and unity to our lawmakers as they strive to do Your will on Earth, even as it is done in Heaven.

May they trust Your promises, remembering that You are that rock-solid mountain on which they can always depend. Lord, encircle them with the shield of Your favor, doing for them more than they can ask or imagine. Renew their commitment to You as their guide and guardian and enable them to successfully meet the challenges of our time.

We pray in Your majestic 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.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5:30 p.m.

At 5:30 p.m., the Senate will proceed to two cloture votes on two Amba-

sador nominations to two very important countries, Argentina and Hungary; Noah Mamet to be Ambassador to the Argentine Republic and Colleen Bell to be our Ambassador to Hungary.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. REID. I, of course, welcome all Senators and our staff back from the Thanksgiving recess. I am sure that, like me, people spent time with their loved ones, some here and some at their homes around the country.

For many families across America, this Thanksgiving was particularly unique and special. Because of President Obama's recent Executive actions, many immigrant families celebrated their holiday together for the first time without the threat of someone knocking on their door in a police uniform.

These people now, instead of staying in the shadows, are having a good time. Their holiday is not threatened to be ruined. All over America they are openly giving thanks or blessings with family that they haven't been able to enjoy in the past. Instead of looking over their shoulder, they joyously revel in the time they spent with their loved ones.

What President Obama did needed to be done.

The chairman of the Judiciary Committee, the presiding President pro tempore, spent days and weeks coming up with a very difficult piece of legislation, comprehensive immigration reform. Amendments by the scores were heard and debated. Republican amendments were adopted, Democratic amendments were adopted, and that matter was brought to the Senate floor where there was a good, genuine, long debate. On the floor, amendments were offered, debated, and voted upon. We created a very good bill based upon the work of the Judiciary Committee. It was bipartisan, and it was one that had an overwhelming vote on the Senate floor.

This had to be done. It had to be done because we have all seen firsthand our Nation's failing immigration system was tearing families apart. Each day Senate offices all over America would receive pleas—I did in Nevada—from loved ones who have fallen victim to our Nation's flawed immigration system.

I met with these people personally. I have talked with them on the telephone, I have read their letters, I have seen their emails, and it is heart-breaking to listen and hear some of their stories, their experiences. So I always try to do everything within the law to help, and sometimes we can help. Other times they cannot be helped within the confines of the law, so they wind up very unhappy.

Early this year I was able to—for example, the experience that we have all had—unite Edith Fawkes, a mother from Las Vegas, with her 12-year-old son Brahym. That was a festive occasion, it was touching, but it is all too rare. For every one family who is reunited, thousands and thousands of others have been decimated by deportations.

That is why the Executive action taken by the President is so very important. It helps mend our Nation's broken immigration system, gets criminals off the streets, strengthens our border security, and spurs our economy. It spurs our economy. Underline and underscore that.

President Obama's action keeps families together. That is the most important thing. It allows parents with children who are U.S. citizens or green card holders to temporarily stay in our country, this country they call their home. By acting, the President said mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters are no longer relegated to the shadows of American society.

The American community now knows there is a path forward. There really is a way. President Obama took the first step. It is a good first step, but it is only a temporary solution.

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



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