

Upon the use or yielding back of that time, at approximately 3 p.m., the Senate will have rollcall votes in relation to the defense authorization bill and the Saperstein nomination.

(Mr. KING assumed the Chair.)

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as I have indicated, we are going to take up this important government funding bill today. Senator MIKULSKI, the Chair of the Appropriations Committee, has performed an extraordinary service in negotiating this bill. And I think it is fair to give a nod to Senator SHELBY, of course, who has been involved in this. They get along extremely well and set a good standard for everyone in the Senate.

The bill achieves many of our important priorities. It gives the Affordable Care Act the secure financial footing it deserves, gives our military the tools it needs to combat ISIS, it addresses the rape kit backlog, helping police and prosecutors prevent sexual assault, it increases funding for students' loans, ensures that the President's Executive action in protecting families can move forward, and it provides funding to fight the Ebola epidemic.

There are lots of other things in it. I have just hit a few of the highlights from my perspective.

There are things in this bill that I wouldn't have included—the Democrats wouldn't have included had we written the bill alone. I don't support the weakening of Dodd-Frank and the restrictions on the District of Columbia and other things, but I didn't write this bill. Senate Democrats didn't write this bill alone. It is a compromise. That is what legislation is all about.

The Presiding Officer has been a Governor for the State of Maine. He is now a legislator and has been a legislator, and he knows that legislation is the art of compromise. Any chief executive who has to work with a legislature, as Presidents of the United States do, does not get everything he wants. Legislation is a compromise. And that is what this legislation is.

We are going to consider this legislation to keep our government open and funded, and we are going to do it today—I hope. There are Senators who are unhappy with this legislation, and they will have a chance to make their objections heard. I hope we can complete work on this bill as soon as we finish the Defense bill. That depends on everyone's cooperation here. But there isn't a lot of time. The government funding runs out at 12 o'clock midnight on Saturday.

When we started this Congress, the government was running on autopilot. Since 2011, we have lurched from crisis to crisis, with the country constantly under threat of a shutdown or financial catastrophe. It is a very bad habit, and one the American people are very, very tired of, as they should be.

This bill is, I repeat, far from perfect. But when we pass it, we will be able to

end this Congress knowing we put our country on a more secure financial footing than when this Congress started. We can then go home to our States, tell our constituents we passed legislation that keeps America safe, makes college more affordable, spurs the economy, and keeps our government operating.

Talk about a CR for 3 months should scare everyone. So we are not there. We are going to have a bill that funds this government for the next fiscal year. We can be satisfied that we left our priorities better funded and more secure, and our government on a more sound foundation than when this Congress began.

TRIBUTE TO MARK PRYOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am going to take just a minute, because time is running out, to talk about a couple of Senators.

I rise to honor Senator MARK PRYOR of Arkansas upon his departure from this institution. I have been in the Senate 28 years, and there has been a Pryor here for 22 of those years. I first worked with MARK's dad, David Pryor. David Pryor left this institution because he had quite a significant heart attack. What a fine Senator. I have said before, and I will say again, he was the best legislator I ever served with, whether during my experience in the State legislature of Nevada or here: David Pryor. He was very, very good.

Six years after David left, MARK came. What a good legislator he is. He is just such a fine person. But it is no surprise to me that he followed in his dad's footsteps. After all, the Pryor family has worked as public servants in Arkansas for five generations. MARK's great-great-grandfather was a sheriff. MARK's great-grandfather was a sheriff. MARK's grandfather Edgar was a county sheriff also in Arkansas. In fact, just last year, an Arkansan said to MARK: "I'm for MARK PRYOR not because of his dad David but because of Edgar." That is how deep the Pryor roots run in Arkansas.

On MARK's desk is a plaque that reads: "Arkansas Comes First." This was a plaque that was on his dad's desk and that MARK put on his desk. This has been MARK's mission since he has been here—to put Arkansas first. The Senate and the entire country have benefited from the influence of the Pryors in the United States Senate—David and MARK.

MARK was born in Fayetteville, grew up in Little Rock, and attended the University of Arkansas as an undergraduate and later to law school. While working as an attorney in private practice, he began his public service in 1990, when he ran for a seat in the House of Representatives. He was elected and served there for 4 years.

In 1996, MARK was faced with the fight of his life. He had a situation occur near his Achilles tendon on one of his legs. They tried physical ther-

apy, but it didn't seem to get well, and they discovered he had a very rare form of cancer—clear-cell sarcoma—in his left leg. So it is an understatement to say it was a trying experience for MARK. He was faced with the prospect of dying or losing his leg.

MARK was buoyed in this difficult experience that he had by his family, his friends, and the people of Arkansas praying for him. It was quite a spiritual experience for MARK and his family. This experience deepened his compassion for those who suffer physically, financially, and emotionally, and he has translated that into his public service.

In 1998, he was elected attorney general of the State of Arkansas. In his 2002 Senatorial election he bucked the national trend to become the only Democrat to defeat a Republican incumbent. Bucking trends would quickly become one of his hallmarks here on Capitol Hill. As a Senator, he has shown courage in voting according to his conscience.

Key among his legislative accomplishments have been bills to extend tax benefits and improve medical services for men and women to make the products that people buy, especially children, safe. He has also been a strong advocate for honest and transparent business practices in order to preserve our American tradition of responsible free enterprise.

His respect for tradition extends to the Senate itself. I say this for a number of reasons, but once a reporter asked him what he would do if he had absolute power over Congress. In his characteristic fashion, he responded he would instill in his fellow Senators greater respect for each other and for the world's greatest deliberative body. That is what MARK PRYOR said.

While some may have disagreed with MARK, they never ever questioned his sincerity, his integrity. I admire his impeccable dedication to his conscience.

Mark Twain said:

The proper office of a friend is to side with you when you are in the wrong. Nearly anybody will side with you when you are in the right.

With apologies to Mark Twain, if eternal agreement were the price of friendship, we would all have fewer friends. Friendship can transcend policy preferences, as MARK's and mine do. We agree on most everything. There are a few things we don't agree on politically, but that doesn't matter. It doesn't matter because he is my friend.

He is a friend to my wife and me. It is no secret there are many people—the Republican leader and his wife—who reached out to console me and Landra during her terrible accident, and then when the cancer was ravaging her body. But she pulled through that. And one reason she did, I am convinced, is MARK PRYOR. MARK PRYOR, who almost died from cancer, called my wife often—often—texted her often telling her: You are going to be OK; don't be afraid. So my wife loves MARK PRYOR.

We were talking about the elections not long ago, and I said: I have never prayed to win an election, and this election I didn't either. She said: Well, I did. That is how she feels about MARK PRYOR.

I am really honored to have served with MARK PRYOR, who is such a genuine person, so sincere. He has been an invaluable asset, his service here in the Senate. I congratulate MARK on his exemplary service here in the Senate.

MARK will always be my friend. There is a quote that bears directly on my feelings about Senator PRYOR: "A good friend is hard to find, hard to lose, and impossible to forget." I will never ever forget MARK PRYOR. He is a unique, one of a kind, kind, thoughtful, considerate man.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO NANCY ERICKSON

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this morning I would like to wish a fond farewell to a woman we are all going to miss: Nancy Erickson, the Secretary of the Senate.

It is her birthday today. Nancy is the kind of person you would expect to get cards from Democrats and Republicans on a day like this. And it is no secret why. She is fair, she is honest, she has always had a warm smile on her face. And that is no small matter, because Nancy has a really tough job. The title doesn't do it justice. Nancy admits she had to Google "Secretary of the Senate" when the position was offered to her.

Let me tell you a little more about what Nancy does. On the one hand, there is an administrative element to her position. That is true. We would run out of printer paper without her. But she is also the keeper of this institution.

Nancy respects the Senate. In fact, she loves the Senate. Her greatest joy is overseeing preservation of the Senate's storied art and history.

I am particularly grateful to her efforts to secure and repair an important painting of my personal hero, Henry Clay. I understand it was a painstaking process, but it was a credit to the Senate and to our common history as America.

Here is the point: Nancy may be a "Secretary," but only in the way you would think of John Kerry or Condoleezza Rice being a "Secretary." In other words, Nancy is pretty important.

She presides over the Chamber. She signs the bills we pass. And, importantly to the Senate staff, she signs the checks they receive. So, you see, Nancy is actually a minor celebrity around here on payday.

But she is something else entirely on game day. Nancy is one of the biggest

Packers fans you will ever meet. There is no interrupting her when the green and gold take the field. Fortunately for Nancy, her home-State Senator JOHN THUNE feels the same way. So you often see the two South Dakotans—one a Democrat, the other a Republican—debating the finer points of last night's game.

There is a reason I say this. Nancy goes out of her way to build trust across the aisle, even in unconventional ways. The folks in my office who work closest with Nancy have nothing but kind words to say about her. Some call her a personal friend. In fact, the remarkable woman I nominated to replace Nancy, Julie Adams, is just such a person. I know Nancy couldn't be happier for Julie, and neither could I.

And while Nancy is going to miss the Senate, I know she is also looking forward to seeing more of her family. I know how important Nancy's parents are to her in particular. We are glad Nancy will be able to see more of them, even though we are going to miss her.

TRIBUTE TO SHEILA DWYER

The Senate is also going to miss Nancy's deputy. Sheila Dwyer is another Democrat my staff can't speak highly enough of. Sheila has had a long run here in the Senate. She has seen it from a lot of different angles. She has been a page, a scheduler, and now Assistant Secretary of the Senate. Along the way, she has worked for members such as Moynihan, Hollings, and Robb. It is an impressive career. It makes you understand why, as Leader REID mentioned earlier, Sheila is known around here as the "Mayor of Capitol Hill."

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT PAXTON AND MARK TRATOS

We also can't forget to wish a fond farewell to Robert Paxton and Mark Tratos.

Robert, Nancy's chief of staff, is a fellow Kentuckian who has worked in the Senate for more than a quarter century. And we understand that Mark, Robert's No. 2, is expecting his first child soon.

So we wish both Robert and Mark all the best, just as we offer Sheila well-deserved recognition for a job well done, just as we bid the fondest of farewells to Nancy—and a very happy birthday as well.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the message to accompany H.R. 3979, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3979, an act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

Reid motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill.

Reid motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill, with Reid amendment No. 3984 (to the amendment of the House to the amendment of the Senate to the bill), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3985 (to amendment No. 3984), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

FAREWELL TO THE SENATE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, after 36 years as a Member of the United States Senate, this is likely my last opportunity to address its Members as colleagues, and to address the people of my State as constituents, and to thank them for placing their trust in me.

The highest honor any citizen of a democracy can receive is to be elected to represent his or her fellow Americans to be their fiduciary.

To the Senate staff, including the floor staff, the Capitol Police, and those throughout the Capitol complex who work so hard to keep things here moving, thank you for your service and support for us through the long days and nights.

To my staff, thank you for your strong loyalty to the people of Michigan, to our Nation, and to me. And thank you for believing in public service. I am immensely proud of what the men and women who have worked on my staff for the last 36 years have helped to accomplish.

My staff back in Michigan has helped make communities across our State safer and more prosperous. Countless times they have helped individual constituents resolve an issue, making a real difference in thousands of lives.

The Armed Services Committee and Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations—PSI—staffs have worked tirelessly through long hours and complex issues, sacrificing nights and weekends and vacations to help address the pressing issues of our Nation.

My personal office staff has been instrumental in addressing a breath-taking range of issues—from preserving our American auto industry, to making our tax system fairer, to protecting our irreplaceable Great Lakes, to making medicine available to fight addiction, and much, much more.

As to my mentor, my big brother Sandy, Congress is keeping the better half of "Team Levin," as I retire to Michigan while Sandy remains in Congress.

To Barbara, my wife of 53 years, to our three daughters Kate, Laura, and Erica; to their husbands Howard, Daniel, and Rick; and to our six grandchildren, Bess and Samantha, Mark,