

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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The majority leader is recognized.

APPROPRIATIONS AND TAX RELIEF AGREEMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I said yesterday that committees and Members from both sides were making important progress in the appropriations and tax relief negotiations.

As colleagues now know, last night the committees and Members reached agreement and filed legislation over in the House. I just participated in a productive meeting where the committees walked our conference through details of this legislation. I know our colleagues across the aisle are discussing the matter as well. I will have more to say on this soon. Now is the time for Members to review the legislation for themselves. I would encourage them to do so. I would also encourage Members to debate it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

OMNIBUS AND TAX EXTENDERS AGREEMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as the Republican leader mentioned, last night the Senate and House leaders finalized a bipartisan compromise that keeps our government open and funded and extends important tax policies for American families and businesses.

I said last night—define “last night.” The last email I got was 2:45 this morning from my chief of staff, who was one of the negotiators. Sometime in the darkness, the bill was finalized. When I say “the bill,” it is really two bills—a bipartisan compromise keeps our doors opened and funded and extends important tax policies for American businesses.

This was not an easy process. Members and our staffs worked intensely for weeks to craft this agreement. As I mentioned yesterday and I say again today, I appreciate the cooperation, expertise, and all the good work done by Speaker RYAN, Leader PELOSI, Senator MCCONNELL, and their staffs. They were, I am told—and in all my dealings with them, I underscore and underline what my chief of staff Drew Willison, chief negotiator, said of the staff. They were a pleasure to work with. They

were professional and did exceptional work on the agreement that we reached.

It is a good compromise. The Presiding Officer, not being a longtime Member of Congress but a longtime legislator, knows that no legislation is perfect, but this is good legislation. This is truly a fine definition of legislation—the art of compromise. When we say “compromise,” it doesn’t mean anyone is doing away with their principles; what it simply means is that people can’t be bullheaded and unreasonable in what they are doing to accomplish their goals.

In spite of Republican majorities in the Senate and the House, we Democrats were able to ensure that this legislation creates and saves middle-class jobs, protects the environment, and invests in renewable energy sources. For example, by extending tax incentives for wind, solar, geothermal, and other technologies, the omnibus spending bill will create and protect over 100,000 jobs in the clean energy sector. A 5-year extension of wind and solar credits will promote growth and help curb carbon emission by roughly 25 percent by the year 2020. And to those who will argue that lifting the oil export ban will counteract these important steps to limit pollution, that is simply not the case. It is not true. Extending the wind and solar tax incentives will eliminate over 10 times more carbon emissions than lifting the oil export ban will create.

The omnibus spending bill is good for jobs, and good for clean energy and the environment. It also helps American families by including a provision that will lower health insurance premiums.

To fully appreciate the compromise, we can’t simply tick off the many beneficial policies the agreement includes. We must also consider that many troublesome provisions the Democrats fought to exclude didn’t wind up in the legislation. When this matter came from the House, there were more than 200 so-called riders, and they didn’t wind up in the bill. Many of these riders represented the worst of legislative priorities: weaken Dodd-Frank banking regulations; undermine the Department of Labor’s fiduciary rule; roll back the National Labor Relations Board’s joint employer standard; eliminate protections for clean air, water, land, and climate; weaken the consumer protection bureau’s ability to protect consumers; curb the President’s powers under the Antiquities Act to create national monuments; and destroy the candidate contribution limits. These are only a few of the many special riders that were sent to us from the House, and we did not allow 99 percent of these to be included because they are harmful policies.

I say again, this compromise isn’t perfect, but it is good. It is good for the American people. And if it weren’t for Democratic efforts, it would have been a lot worse.

I also extend my appreciation to the great staff of the White House—first of

all, the President’s Chief of Staff, Denis McDonough. He is a former college football player, he is a strong man emotionally and physically, and he is very forthright, which I appreciate in the positions that he takes with everybody. He helped guide this legislation through.

We have a number of people who work at the White House with whom we worked intensely. All the Cabinet officers—we had a very good relationship with Brian Deese, who is a jack-of-all-trades at the White House and does so much in many different areas. I appreciate very much his involvement in many different ways.

Longtime Senate employee Katie Beirne Fallon has been available anytime we needed her, and this has been very difficult for her because she is a new mom to two little twins. She was always available. We were disappointed when she went to the White House from the Senate, but her knowledge of the Senate has been helpful in our being able to move this bill as far as it has been.

A longtime staffer who operated on the floor here for many, many years was Marty Paone, who was available whenever we needed him. He is a fine man. We still miss him here in the Senate. He does such a great job for the country and the Senate.

We must pass the legislation, as the Republican leader said, as quickly as we can. Christmas is fast approaching. I hope Republicans in the House and the Senate will move quickly to move this legislation to the floor so we can vote on it and give the American people every confidence their government will remain open.

Would the Presiding Officer state what the Senate will be doing the rest of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 6 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE BUDGET AND TAX EXTENDERS

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I rise today to call attention to the significant contributions public servants