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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Father John Ryan, St. Brendan Catholic Church, Ormond Beach, FL.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Gracious and Creating God, before time began, You loved us. Before we were born, You knew us. You imagined us, then created us in Your holy image. From the beginning of time we were Your people, and through time You have been our Loving Father.

Blessed are You, Lord, Father of the universe and blessed is Your holy Name. Bless the work we do this day and the work yet to be done in these Chambers.

Gracious Father, without You nothing is worthwhile, nothing is of value. Grant to us and to our endeavors Your gracious and holy blessing. Keep us one Nation under Your loving gaze. Make us mindful of those who find life difficult and move us to be their voice, their advocates. May we always labor toward liberty and justice, dignity and goodness.

Blessed be God. Blessed be the nation whose God is the Lord both now and forever. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU 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. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE.
Washington, DC, March 9, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maine is recognized.

SCHEDULE

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, this morning the Senate will be in a period of morning business. I ask unanimous consent that the period be extended until 12 noon with the time equally divided in the usual form.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the majority leader be recognized at the conclusion of morning business.

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, last night the majority leader filed cloture on the lobbying reform bill. Under the rule, that vote would occur on Friday although it is hoped that the vote could be expedited and occur sometime today.

As a reminder, the majority leader has announced that it is also possible—

and indeed we hope—to consider the lobbying reform-related amendments throughout the day today if an agreement can be reached.

Also, Senators should be aware that all first-degree amendments to the lobbying reform bill must be filed at the desk by 1 o'clock today as provided for under rule XXII.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

LOBBYING REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, prior to the distinguished Senator from Maine leaving the floor, I want to express my appreciation to her, Senator LIEBERMAN, Senator DODD, and Senator LOTT for their work on lobbying reform. We are going to complete this legislation; it is just a question of when we complete the legislation. It is something we need to do, and the American people want us to do it. Even though I am sure everyone's patience was tested yesterday—I have managed bills and I know how difficult it is when you can see the light at the end of the tunnel and somebody throws up a light and you can no longer see the end—we will complete the legislation. I am hopeful and I am confident we can do it on a bipartisan basis.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I thank the Democratic leader for his comments. This is an important piece of legislation. It has been completely bipartisan. The legislation reported by the Homeland Security Committee was reported with only one dissenting vote. The bill that was reported by the Rules and Administration Committee was reported unanimously. We have worked very closely with our ranking members, and I appreciate the assurances of the Democratic leader that his side of

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



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the aisle recognizes the importance of enacting this bipartisan legislation. There is no reason why with a good effort we can't complete the bill today.

I thank the Democratic leader for his comments.

I thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

PORT SECURITY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am going to suggest to Democratic Senators to oppose cloture today. I will say to all assembled that the vote under the rules is to occur tomorrow. If the majority leader decides he wants to do it today, we would not oppose even having that vote today. We are going to oppose cloture. The reason being, if you read newspapers today, you will see the House of Representatives, by a 99-percent margin in the supplemental appropriations bill, put a provision in that basically bans the Dubai Ports situation. I agree with that.

I suggested to the majority leader that we could have a vote on that matter right now after a very short time period to debate it. That would take it off of this bill. The majority leader said he doesn't want that. He suggested voting on it tomorrow.

To make a long story short, the majority leader at this point has not agreed to do that. As a result of that, any other thing we come up with takes the second-degree amendment away. It doesn't allow that to be the matter before the Senate.

I had a conversation with Senator DODD last night, and he was telling me how disappointed he was that we weren't going to complete this bill today. But this is where the American people find the Senate today and that is where we as Senators find ourselves today.

As I said yesterday—I say again today—I don't know if there is a change of heart because of Congressman BOEHNER now having a leadership position in the House or whether it is a matter of mere coincidence, but I appreciate the House of Representatives being a legislative body, a separate and equal branch of government.

We do not have to take orders from the White House. We don't have to do what they tell us we should do, wheth-

er this is a Democratic Senate or Republican Senate. There has been no better spokesperson of that than Senator BYRD. Senator BYRD for years has said—and he has a portfolio to substantiate what he said—that we serve separately from the President. Whether it is Democrat or Republican down there, we have our responsibilities.

I admire what the House did. They said we know this President feels strongly about this. We know he said he is going to veto it, but we are going to do it because we think we have an obligation to our constituents. I am glad they did that. No rubberstamp. I think it is about time. The issue is of critical importance to our national security. Whether it is Iraq, Katrina, or protecting Americans from terrorist threats, we have seen this administration choose, I believe, the wrong course.

We have had amendments here on the floor where we wanted to increase the security at our ports, checking our cargo containers, our chemical plants, our nuclear plants. We could go down a long list. The White House said they don't want them. So we don't get them. By a straight party-line vote we lose over here. I hope this is coming to an end.

That is why it has been so difficult to work on a bipartisan basis most of the time. There have been no vetoes. There has been nothing to veto. Whatever the President wants, he has gotten. The losers have been the American people, in my opinion.

That is where we found ourselves yesterday.

My friend from New York—no one can question his having been out front on this issue from the very beginning. I appreciate his working on a bipartisan basis to move this matter along. I told Senator FRIST this. I went to our special caucus yesterday, and we had Democratic Senators coming from every side of the room saying I am going to move to do what the House has done. As a result of that, Senator SCHUMER came to the floor and offered an amendment which was going to be offered. His having been out in front—I am glad he proposed it. He is the face of this amendment. He deserves it. He was the first one who noticed this issue in the press or anywhere else. I admire the work he has done on this issue.

We can't turn over control of these ports to a foreign country. That is what this is about. This isn't a foreign company, it is a foreign country.

I received a 1½-page memo from the Commissioner of Ports of New Jersey and New York. He said in his memo that whoever got this contract was going to be all powerful. They would control the perimeters of the ports. They would control who worked in the port. They would do background checks of the people who work there. The American people could sense this.

I think we overuse certain terms, but we want an up-or-down vote.

On the "Lou Dobbs" show last night when he was questioning one of the

guests—Lou Dobbs is on CNN—he said they are the same Republicans who were demanding an up-or-down vote on judges such as Alito and they won't give you a vote on this port thing. The only answer is, yes, it is true.

My friend, the distinguished majority leader, has decided it is not appropriate at this time to address this issue. That is a decision he can make.

We stand ready to vote on this port matter after a very short debate. I am sure Senator SCHUMER would agree to a couple hours, evenly divided, maybe even a shorter time than that, but at least a couple of hours would be appropriate at any time and move on.

I say through the Chair to anyone within the sound of my voice, lobbying reform will be completed, and it will be completed, I hope, sooner rather than later. This lobbying reform is important. We need to do everything we can to help restore integrity to what we do in Washington.

Having said that, it was absolutely wrong for the Senate not to take action yesterday on the most important issue the American people see today, and that is port security. I listened to Public Radio this morning. They had part of the debate that took place in the House of Representatives. I do not recall exactly what the vote was. I think it was 62 to 2 or something like that. MARCY KAPTUR, whom I came to the House of Representatives with, a Congresswoman from Ohio, said never in her long career in the House of Representatives has she received as many phone calls and other communications from constituents about an issue as the port security issue. And she speaks for the entire Congress. That is the way it has been. My phones in my office in the Hart Building of the Capitol area and in my Nevada offices are overwhelmed with people concerned about this issue.

I support what my friend from New York did. I hope in the near future the Senate will be able to vote on this matter.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I express my disappointment at the words of the Democratic leader urging our colleagues to vote against cloture on the lobbying reform measure. This is important legislation. This legislation matters. This legislation is bipartisan legislation. It is in response to declining public confidence in the integrity of the decisions made by Government officials.

It is extremely unfortunate and unfair for this much needed legislation to be slowed down by an important but completely unrelated issue, regardless of one's views on the Dubai transaction. The Presiding Officer knows I have been outspoken in calling for a full investigation of the national security implications of this transaction, but regardless of one's views on it, this issue should not be tangled up in the debate on whether or not to strengthen our lobbying disclosure laws.