

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Thereupon, at 5:27 p.m., the Senate recessed until 6:30 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BROWN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

RECESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess until 7 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 6:31 p.m., recessed until 7 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mrs. SHAHEEN).

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009—Continued

Mr. REID. Madam President, earlier today, the Labor Department announced that the unemployment rate had gone up very high. We now find the housing crisis is worse, with lending freezes still upon us, and small businesses are shutting down as we speak. Job losses are significant this month alone; that is, the month of January, with 600,000 jobs lost, and the month of February is starting to be even worse than January as far as layoffs. In Nevada, the unemployment rate has gone well over 9 percent.

Leading economists are now comparing today's crisis to the early days of the Great Depression. We are doing everything we can to make sure this severe recession we are in does not become another Great Depression, and we are a long ways from a Great Depression. The Great Depression saw the stock market drop 89 percent, and 25 percent of all Americans were unemployed, with millions of others underemployed. But we do not want this recession we are in to march into a depression, and that is why we have worked all week to come up with a solution to these problems, to try to help jump-start this economy.

President Obama himself acknowledged that his plan wasn't perfect. I have to be very candid with everyone here. I have learned a lot in the last few days by people coming in good faith and saying what is in here should not be in here and, on a few occasions, listening to what was propounded by those who have come up with this bipartisan agreement, we had to swallow real hard, but it was all done in good faith. This is a very critical juncture in time for our great country. It is an important time for the Congress. Faced

with this grave and growing economic crisis, we are now close—closer—to joining President Obama in helping turn the economy around.

I think the process here has been very good. We have had a large number of amendments debated and voted upon. The managers have worked very hard. Senators BAUCUS and INOUE, with their counterparts, have moved through a lot of amendments. It has been an open process. Some of the votes have been difficult votes to take. But now we are at a point where people of good will are going to move forward and complete this work. The question of when we do it is certainly something we are concerned about, but we are going to do it—if not tonight, in the next day or so.

I express my appreciation to a Senator on our side of the aisle—Senator BEN NELSON—who took this difficult assignment on our side to come up with something we could pass, is the best way to say it. There were a number of Senators who worked with him on this side of the aisle, a number of Senators who worked with Senator COLLINS on the other side of the aisle. I am not going to run through all the people who worked on this, but from my perspective Senator NELSON and Senator COLLINS are the two people who got us to where we are now, with great work by others. I hope I don't offend anyone by not mentioning them, but from my perspective tonight there are four people who need to talk about this. But for them, we would not be in a position where we could move forward to try to help the American people: That is Senators BEN NELSON, SUSAN COLLINS, ARLEN SPECTER, and JOE LIEBERMAN.

So, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent—and certainly if the Republican leader cares to say anything, but I wish to get this consent request entered first. If he wants to say something before the time begins on these other individuals, he certainly has that right. He can do it beforehand, if he wants, but I want to get this out of the way.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator BEN NELSON be recognized for 10 minutes; that Senator SUSAN COLLINS be recognized for 10 minutes; Senator ARLEN SPECTER be recognized for 15 minutes; Senator LIEBERMAN be recognized for 10 minutes; and that the Republicans, following these statements by these four Senators, have equal time—that is 45 minutes—to be divided any way they feel appropriate.

I ask unanimous consent that be approved; and I preface it by saying if Senator MCCONNELL has anything to say before the time starts running on these four individuals and the other individuals, which is going to be about 90 minutes, and I am sure he does, I ask unanimous consent that following the statement of the Republican leader that this consent be granted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, reserving the right to object, and I may not object, but I wish to ask the distinguished majority leader if we could alternate the speakers over that same period of an hour and a half.

Mr. REID. I would say that we are alternating. We have four people who have put this arrangement together. I think it would be appropriate for the whole body to listen to what the arrangement is. I think it would certainly be more understandable to do it that way, and we have two Republicans and two Democrats. So I think that would be fair. If my friend would allow us to do that, I think it would be good for the body.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. That is certainly not alternating speakers in terms of position on the amendment, and I would again suggest we do what we virtually always do and alternate speakers with regard to the pending issue, which is this new amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I ask my friend, through the Chair, wouldn't it be better if people who responded to these four Senators had some idea what the agreement was? That would seem to be so much more logical, and I hope my friend would allow us to proceed in that manner.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. I also note that I see my friend stood to be recognized, Madam President, but we have gone out of our way to protect everybody's right. We haven't tried to blindside anyone. We have listened to all the amendments. We have been fair with all the time. I can't imagine why my friend would want to do this. My Senators need to know what this agreement is.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I will not object. I wish to respond to the majority leader through the Chair and say I am very eager to understand all of the details of this proposal, and I will be doing that by getting a copy of the proposal and digesting it over a reasonable period of time over the weekend, since it is a trillion dollar proposal. But I will not object to that specific request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Nebraska is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Madam President, I rise this evening to speak about the need for Congress to support substantial and swift-acting help for our Nation. These days, all too often when tuning into the news, we cringe—layoffs, job losses, poor earnings, business closings, State fiscal problems, foreclosures, global financial troubles, and the worried faces of so many Americans.