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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, eternal and unchangeable, shine Your light upon our path as we work today. Lord, You have led America through troubled times in the past. Be now to our lawmakers a source of life, light, and wisdom. Give them the wisdom to follow Your light and to trust You, finding their strength in Your presence. Teach them what they should think and do, so they will not stumble along the way. Replace fear with faith in You and one another, as You remove from their lives the things that thwart the doing of Your will.

And, Lord, bless today our military men and women in harm's way. Protect them from danger and sustain their loved ones.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEANNE SHAHEEN 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. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 10, 2009.

To the Senate:

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

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. SHAHEEN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1105, the appropriations bill. The Senate will recess from 12:30 until 2:15 to allow for the weekly caucus luncheons. All the amendments are before the Senate. We have seven of them. It is expected that probably five of them will require votes. So I hope Senators would come and debate their amendments. We have a number of Democrats who are wanting to speak in opposition to the amendments.

I will be discussing a time to begin voting with the distinguished Republican leader. What we are going to do is have stacked votes, and finish the votes once we start them. I hope we can do that sometime late afternoon. I do not think there are any events going on off the Hill that would prevent us from doing that. But I will be working with Senator MCCONNELL to see what we can do in arranging an appropriate time to start the votes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the bill the Senate will vote on later today represents a missed opportunity. In the midst of a serious economic downturn, the Senate had a chance to show it could impose the same kind of restraint on itself that millions of Americans are being forced to impose on themselves at the moment. The bill costs far too much for a government that should be watching every dime. If the President is looking for a first bill to veto, this is it.

The original version of the bill showed no recognition whatsoever of the current economic climate. With the stock market plunging, unemployment at a 25-year high, and millions struggling to pay their mortgages, the bill sent over from the House included an across-the-board 8-percent increase in spending over last year. That is twice the rate of inflation.

Republicans in the Senate tried to cut the bill's cost. Our ideas would have saved billions of taxpayer dollars. Unfortunately, every single effort was turned aside.

The senior Senator from Arizona proposed an amendment that would have held spending in the omnibus at last year's level. The senior Senator from Texas offered an amendment that would have cut spending on the 122 programs that were already funded in the stimulus bill—the so-called double dipping that many of us warned would take place if Congress moved the stimulus before the omnibus. Remarkably, even that was too much for some. The junior Senator from Oklahoma proposed an amendment that would have cut projects that benefited a lobbying firm under Federal investigation. That too was rejected.

These Republican ideas were sensible, commonsense ways to cut spending. Unfortunately, the majority did not like any of them. This would have been irresponsible in good economic times.

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

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