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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, we are reminded of Your mercies that have been of old; You have been our dwelling place in all generations, before the mountains were brought forth or ever You had formed the Earth and sea. From everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Guard and guide our Senators. Provide them with a sense of purposeful direction. Give Your enabling grace to our legislative leaders that they may unite their best efforts for the health and strength of the Nation and for peace and justice in our world. Cleanse anything in them that would block the flow of Your joy. May love for You be the motive for their work, as they strive to live worthy of Your grace.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK R. WARNER 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, May 18, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNER 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. Mr. President, following remarks of the leaders, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. There will be no rollcall votes today. The next vote will be tomorrow morning at about 10 a.m. That vote will be on the motion to invoke cloture on the substitute amendment to H.R. 627, the credit card bill.

FINAL WEEK OF APRIL/MAY WORK PERIOD

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in these past few weeks, we have seen the good that can happen when we look out for Main Street, not just Wall Street. We have accomplished a lot. This work period has been tremendously productive, but we have a lot to finish this week before we can adjourn for Memorial Day. We have to finish an important bill that puts fairness and common sense back into credit cards—those credit cards we use every day. It stops companies from taking advantage of their customers with hidden charges and misleading terms. We need to finish a bill we passed a couple weeks ago that will crack down on corporate fraud and mortgage scams. We need to finish a bill that will help millions of families keep their homes. We need to finish a bill that reins in out-of-control

Government contractors who waste taxpayer money, the so-called procurement bill. We need to confirm President Obama's nominee to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior—a man who is supremely qualified and held the same position in President Clinton's Cabinet. Finally, we have to pass a supplemental appropriations bill to give our troops the tools they need to succeed as they fight in two wars. This funding will strengthen our military, rebuild our standing in the world, and reduce our key security threats.

So I hope this week we can cap off a productive and successful work period with another fruitful week, but it will take the cooperation of both Democrats and Republicans to do this. I have had a brief conversation with the floor staff, and it is something we should be able to do fairly quickly. I hope that, in fact, is the case. I look forward to visiting, sometime today, with my counterpart, the Republican leader, to see what we can do to work toward this common goal of finishing our work as quickly as we can. We all have scheduled a lot of things for the Memorial Day recess. It is one of those rare times when we can be home during the week. We look forward to that. We want to make that time as lengthy as possible, and we will do what we can on this side to see if we can move through these very important pieces of legislation.

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

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

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



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RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY
LEADER

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

GUANTANAMO AND THE
SUPPLEMENTAL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, 2 years ago, our Nation was in the midst of a global battle against terrorism, and much of our time and energy in the Senate was devoted to that fight, from updating laws for monitoring terrorists overseas, to fighting an insurgency in Iraq, to combating the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Two years later, we are still engaged in the same battle and in many of the same debates. On most of these issues, the Senate has had an opportunity to express itself very clearly. Yet rarely has it done so with as much unity as on the question of whether to send terrorists at Guantanamo to U.S. soil. On that important question, the vote was 94 to 3 against.

But something has changed. Now a number of Democrats who voted against sending detainees from Guantanamo to the United States are expressing a willingness to do so, in contradiction of their earlier vote. What has changed? America is still at war against terror networks around the world. The detainees held at Guantanamo are still some of the most dangerous terrorists alive. Indeed, over the past 2 years, the inmates there have been winnowed down to an even higher percentage of committed killers than were there before. Americans still do not want these men in their neighborhoods. They saw what the residents of Alexandria, VA, endured a few years ago when just one terrorist was held there, and they do not want armed agents patrolling their streets, ID checks, bomb-sniffing dogs, or millions of their tax dollars diverted to secure terrorists.

When we voted on this question 2 years ago, the prospect of shipping terrorists to U.S. soil was not imminent, even though the previous administration had expressed a desire to close the facility at some point. The new administration, on the other hand, set an arbitrary date for closure before it even had a chance to review the intelligence and the evidence of the 240 men who are down at Guantanamo now.

So I think it is perfectly appropriate, as we look to ensure the safety of the American people, to have another vote on this issue. Later this week, we will have an opportunity to do just that as the Senate takes up the supplemental war spending bill. The administration has requested funds within this bill to close Guantanamo, and Senators should take this opportunity to clarify their positions. So we will have a number of amendments this week on the supplemental that will allow the Senate to express itself once again on this most important issue.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to briefly discuss a troubling situation a world away in Burma. The situation involves Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who, this very morning, stood trial—stood trial this very morning—for permitting a misguided soul to enter her house.

With some regularity, we in the West are reminded of the tyranny that exists in this troubled land.

In 2007, Buddhist monks and other peaceful Burmese protesters were brutally put down by Government authorities. Scores were slain, hundreds more were imprisoned or had to flee the country simply to survive.

In 2008, Burma was lashed by a terrible cyclone. This natural disaster was exacerbated by a manmade disaster: the dismal relief and response effort of the governing State Peace and Development Council, which refused outside aid in the immediate aftermath, resulting in untold numbers of Burmese citizens dying. At the same time, the regime devoted its energies to its referendum of its new Constitution, a document clearly intended to permanently entrench military rule.

In 2009, this familiar pattern of governmental malfeasance has continued. First, the Government refused to permit Suu Kyi's doctor to see her, despite her very poor health. Then the Government took the flimsiest of pretexts to drag Suu Kyi into this trial.

It was in this context that the Obama administration last week issued an Executive order extending for another year sanctions against the Burmese regime. I applaud the administration for taking this step, and I look forward to working with the administration once it has concluded its review of Burma policy, which I have discussed on several occasions with Secretary Clinton.

The Government of Burma should be aware that its actions are highly troubling to democracies the world over. This is reflected not only in the administration's new Executive order but also in the strong support the Burmese people enjoy in the Senate. My colleagues and I on both sides of the aisle will continue to follow Suu Kyi's trial with great interest and deep concern.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to address the subject of health care reform. I support President Obama's call for health care reform legislation this year. It has long been obvious that there is a need for health care reform in the United States. There are some 47 million people, perhaps more—the precise figure is not known—who do not have health insurance or who are underinsured.

I have prepared an extensive statement outlining some of the issues which I think ought to be addressed, and I have sought recognition this afternoon to summarize those comments briefly. I ask unanimous consent that, at the conclusion of my statement, the full text of my statement be included in the RECORD as if read in full.

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

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, the question of health care coverage has long been debated in the Congress. There is a general consensus that we need to cover all Americans who, as I say, either have no insurance or are underinsured.

In my capacity as ranking member or chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Human Services, and Education for more than a decade, I have taken the lead, along with Senator TOM HARKIN—then on a bipartisan basis, where we, as we have said frequently, have shifted the gavel seamlessly—to provide for a great deal of health care coverage. During that time, the issue of funding for the National Institutes of Health has received special attention, where that figure has been raised from some \$12 billion to \$30 billion; and with the recent stimulus package, an additional \$10 billion has been added. In addition to extensive coverage and increased funding for the National Institutes of Health, which resulted in very substantial improvements in the health of Americans on items such as stroke and cancer and heart disease, that subcommittee has taken the lead on many other health care issues, which I will not take time now to enumerate.

I have cosponsored the legislation proposed on a bipartisan basis by Senator WYDEN, Democrat of Oregon, and Senator BENNETT, Republican of Utah. I have had a series of discussions with Senator BAUCUS, chairman of the Finance Committee, and discussed the issue with Senator ENZI, ranking member on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee, and have directed my staff to work with the staffs of all the other Senators. I have noted the comment made by Senator GRASSLEY when he came from a meeting at the White House of the interest in a bipartisan approach, and noted Senator