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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 5, 2012, at 12 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, MARCH 2, 2012

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DANIEL K. AKAKA, a Senator from the State of Hawaii.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, sustain America with Your providential protection as You inspire us to cultivate faith, hope, and love. Bless our lawmakers, using them to make a positive difference in the lives of those in need. Touch our Senators with Your love and peace, as Your will is done in the Senate and in all the offices and homes represented here. Purge our hearts of anything that doesn't honor You.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable DANIEL K. AKAKA 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. INOUE).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 2, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DANIEL K. AKAKA, a Senator from the State of Hawaii, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The leader of the Senate is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am very happy to see you here this morning. It is not often that we get our senior Members to preside, and we appreciate it very much.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Following any leader remarks, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1813, the surface transportation bill. Today we will continue to work with Republicans and hopefully find a path forward. There will be no rollcall votes today. The next vote will occur Tuesday morning.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this is a new year, and thankfully it has brought new signs of economic recovery—not as vibrant as we would like

but some recovery—but it will never be good enough while we have millions of Americans unemployed in this country. As we say in the Senate, those on this side of the aisle, Democrats, we are not going to take our eye off the target; that is, a healthy economy. The bipartisan Transportation bill before the Senate is an important step in that direction. This bill will save or create almost 3 million jobs. Yet my Republican colleagues have caused the waste of about a month of precious time here on the Senate floor in obstructing this very important piece of legislation. So it is with disappointment that I am going to file cloture on this Transportation bill.

It seems 85 votes to begin debate on a measure no longer indicates a smooth legislative path forward. We would think that with 85 votes, we would have timely approval of the bill, but that has not taken place. That is because my Republican colleagues want to waste time on unrelated, ideological, nongermane, nonrelevant amendments instead of talking about the Nation's failing infrastructure.

There is no one, no one thinks—and I say that—no one believes that our roads, our highways, our bridges are up to snuff. They are not. We need significant work to bring them to a better condition. Tens of thousands of bridges are in a state of disrepair. So Republicans, instead of working on this valuable infrastructure bill, have been causing us to waste time on unrelated issues.

We have spent the last several weeks on women's access to health care, and,

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



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of course, amendments they are talking about doing in addition to that would weaken our environmental protection, make our water less pure, our air dirtier—this instead of rebuilding, as I indicated we need to do, our roads and our bridges, even against their better judgment. One Republican leader said yesterday: We have spent enough time this year on trying to repeal the health care bill. But they have had to retract that because the tea party rose and said: Oh, we have to have more votes.

They are meaningless votes. Everyone knows there is going to be no repeal of the health care bill this year. So the Republican leader, who talked about this yesterday, was talking about maybe doing what Senator ALEXANDER and Senator PRYOR think we should do: spend our time on things that are constructive, such as getting our appropriations bills done. But, no, the tea party stepped in, and now there are going to be efforts made to repeal the health care bill. In fact, I read in the paper today a complete flip-flop from yesterday. Instead of not dealing with trying to repeal the health care bill the rest of this legislative year, now the word is that the entire month of March is going to be spent dealing with health care.

It is time to move forward on this bill. Hopefully, seven—that is all we need. There are 47 Republicans, and we need 7 of them to invoke cloture on this bill. That vote will occur Tuesday morning. All the nongermane, nonrelevant amendments, let them do them on a piece of legislation that is not so vital to the economy of this country. We are going to move forward on this bill. I certainly hope we can get seven Republicans to join with us. There are 53 of us, seven of them.

I have always said I would be happy to come up with an agreement. If they want to offer amendments that are relevant to what we are doing, that is fine. But that hasn't been forthcoming. I hope the weekend will give my Republican colleagues a chance to reflect on whether they are willing to put ideology ahead of the economy. Three million jobs and what do we spend our time on? An ideological issue to take health care away from women.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MOVING AHEAD FOR PROGRESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1813, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1813) to reauthorize Federal aid highway and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid amendment No. 1761, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 1762 (to amendment No. 1761), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Environment and Public Works, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 1763, to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 1764 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 1763), of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 1765 (to amendment No. 1764), of a perfecting nature.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to make sure the record is very clear what the vote will be on Tuesday morning.

Before the day is out, I am going to file cloture on a work product. It is a bill that has the approval of BARBARA BOXER, a progressive Senator from California, and JIM INHOFE, a conservative Senator from Oklahoma. We have now added to that something that came out of the Finance Committee, something that came out of the Banking Committee, and something that came out of the Commerce Committee. All these measures have been relatively without any challenge. I can't understand why people wouldn't approve this. And what we added to this is 37 approved amendments. The staffs, with their respective Senators, have been working for days to come up with agreement on amendments that have been filed but not offered, and these amendments have been approved by the respective chair and ranking members of the committees, 37 of them. So we will be voting on Tuesday on that product—all of it bipartisan, all of it noncontroversial—so that we can complete work on this bill.

If we did nothing else, nothing else on this highway bill, then what we are going to vote cloture on, on Tuesday, would be really a good, strong legislative day for this body. Then we could have conference with the House. The House has already announced they can't do their senseless piece of legislation. Even tea party-driven Republicans in the House recognized that was something that was a figment of someone's imagination that they could get done. Now they are going to do a 2-year bill, like us. It will be easy to conference something like that. They may have some difference in some of the policy efforts, but that is why we have conferences.

This legislation is critical. At the end of this month, the end of March, the highway bill is no more. Projects that are being worked on in Hawaii and Nevada and around the other 48 States will come to a stop. There will be no money. New projects won't be able to go forward. This is a very important bill involving billions of dollars of badly needed construction.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROCKEFELLER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENIOR MEMBERS PRESIDING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as I indicated to the Acting President pro tempore this morning, the junior Senator from Hawaii, how fortunate I was to have one of the senior Members of the Senate preside, that doesn't happen often, and here it is again with the Senator from West Virginia.

I was commenting to my friends on the staff who don't know the Senator from West Virginia very well—and they don't know a lot of us because we just whip through here. In a brief synopsis I was telling them what a wonderful man the Senator is and what he has done to contribute to a better society. I have such gratitude to know the Presiding Officer, to know his background and the sacrifices he has made for his country. He has done so much for his State. When the history books are written, there will be a big chapter on what has taken place in West Virginia during the Presiding Officer's service there.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Reid amendment No. 1761 to S. 1813, a bill to reauthorize Federal-aid highway and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara Boxer, Christopher A. Coons, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tom Harkin, Mark Udall, Richard Blumenthal, Debbie Stabenow, Patrick J. Leahy, Herb Kohl, Frank R. Lautenberg, Max Baucus, Tom Udall, Kent Conrad, Robert Menendez, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Jeff Bingaman.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a second cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 1813, a bill to reauthorize Federal-aid highway and highway safety construction programs, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Barbara Boxer, Christopher A. Coons, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Tom Harkin, Mark Udall, Richard Blumenthal, Debbie Stabenow, Patrick J. Leahy, Herb Kohl, Frank R. Lautenberg, Max Baucus, Tom Udall, Kent Conrad, Robert Menendez, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Jeff Bingaman.