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Senate

(Legislative day of Sunday, December 30, 2012)

The Senate met at 11 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the President pro tempore (PATRICK J. LEAHY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, we praise Your Name. You are high over all the nations and Your glory is greater than the Heaven. Let Your spirit move our lawmakers to do Your will. Teach them valuable lessons from Your hardships and adversities, as they work to be worthy of the sacrifices of those who have already given so much for freedom. Lift them from the darkness of hopelessness so that they may take steps toward Your light. May Your presence and grace bring comfort as You inspire them to choose what is right and just. May they take the tide that leads to fortune rather than risk a national voyage bound in shackles and in miseries.

We pray in your powerful Name.
Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable PATRICK J. LEAHY 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, we will be in a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each.

THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. REID. Mr. President, discussions continue on a plan to protect middle-class families from a tax increase tomorrow. There are a number of issues on which the two sides are still apart, but negotiations are continuing as I speak.

We are running out of time. Americans are still threatened with the tax hike in just a few hours. I hope we can keep in mind—and I know we will—that our single most important goal is to protect the middle-class families. Whether or not we reach an agreement in the short time we have left, we will need cooperation on both sides to prevent taxes from going up tomorrow for every family in America.

I repeat, there are still some issues we need to resolve before we can bring legislation to the floor.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business until 12 noon for debate only, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I understand we are in a period of morning business.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

THE FISCAL CLIFF

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I was disturbed to read in the Washington

Post this morning that some agreements were being made, that Democrats have agreed to raise the level from \$250,000 to \$450,000 and we would keep the estate taxes at the \$5 million level at 35 percent.

All I can say is this is one Democrat who does not agree with that at all. What it looks like is all the taxes are going to be made permanent, but those items that the middle-class in America truly depend on are extended for 1 year—maybe 2 years at the most. I think that is grossly unfair.

We are going to lock in forever the idea that \$450,000 a year is middle class in America? Need I remind people that those making \$250,000 are the top 2 percent income earners in America? I know the President keeps saying he wants to protect tax cuts for the middle class, which is fine. I am all for that. If we go up to \$250,000, that is a pill we can swallow because that covers everyone except the top 2 percent. Those who make \$250,000 a year are not middle class. They are the top 2 percent of income earners in America.

What have we forgotten? Have we forgotten that the average income earners in America are making \$25,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000 a year? That is the real middle class in America, and they are the ones who are getting hammered right now. They are getting hammered with housing and rental costs, heating bills, kids going to school, and they have no retirement. Now there is talk about raising the retirement age on people who work hard every day. There are women who have been standing on their feet every day for 30 or 40 years. Are they going to raise the retirement age on them again?

If we are going to have some kind of deal, the deal must be one that truly does favor the real middle class. Those who are making \$30,000, \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 a year are the real middle

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



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