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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Senator from the State of Hawaii.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Hear our voice, O God, and listen to our prayer. You know our inward thoughts even before we think them. As we place our trust in You, enable us to experience Your joy. Breathe upon our Senators the fresh Spirit of Your love that old things will become new and the darkness will turn to dawn. Amid the dangers and destruction in our world, give us the miracle of Your peace. Make us good stewards of the gifts You have given us.

And, Lord, we ask You to comfort the victims and families affected by the explosions in West, TX.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ 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. LEAHY).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 18, 2013.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BRIAN SCHATZ, a Sen-

ator from the State of Hawaii, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SCHATZ 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 leader remarks the Senate will resume consideration of the gun safety legislation. The time until noon will be equally divided and controlled for debate on the Barrasso and Harkin amendments.

At noon there will be two votes in relation to those amendments.

Following the votes the Senate will recess until 2 p.m. to allow for some important caucus meetings.

At 2 p.m. the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the Torres and Watson nominations.

At about 2:15 p.m., then, there will be a rollcall vote on confirmation of the Torres nomination and an expected voice vote on confirmation of the Watson nomination.

EXPLOSION IN WEST, TEXAS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there was a new tragedy during the night, and our thoughts are with the people of West, TX. Our thoughts are with all of Texas in the wake of a terrible explosion of a fertilizer factory in the town, as I have indicated, of West, just outside of Waco. The extent is being estimated at this time—5 to 15 dead, a couple hundred who were injured.

But I am troubled and feel so badly about those who were hurt. They were working. They were sleeping. They were having dinner. I offer my con-

lences to those who lost loved ones and those who have people who were injured.

We will continue to follow the news from Texas as it develops today. I am going to do everything I can with my colleagues to ensure that this terrible tragedy has the resources of the Federal Government available to help the people of that city as they recover from this tragedy.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this Nation has simply dealt with too much—too much—loss during these last few months. Once again I offer my condolences to the families who joined us here yesterday to honor the loved ones they lost to gun violence and to lobby for stronger background checks. The mothers and fathers of the murdered children from Newtown were here, family and friends of those who were injured and killed in Aurora, CO, were here. We had people here from the tragedy where 32, 33 people were killed in Blacksburg, VA, at Virginia Tech. They were here yesterday.

We knew the effort to keep America's streets safe from gun violence would not be easy. I commend Senator MANCHIN and others for setting aside partisanship to negotiate this compromise. Unfortunately, even though we got a strong, strong majority vote—well over 50—55 Senators voted in favor of this. And FRANK LAUTENBERG came. He had not been here for a while. He has been ill. He voted. We voted with a strong majority to change things here in America so that people who have serious mental illness would have to have a background check before they can buy a gun or that criminals would have to have a background check before they can buy a gun.

Even people who are selling the guns think there should be some background check. The man who sold the gun to the man who walked into the courthouse in Las Vegas and blasted away—

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



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