

Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,  
President pro tempore.

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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

#### WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 2013—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 243, S. 1356.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 243, S. 1356, a bill to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to strengthen the United States workforce development system through innovation in, and alignment and improvement of, employment, training, and education programs in the United States, and to promote individual and national economic growth, and for other purposes.

#### SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the nomination of Nina Pillard to be U.S. circuit judge for the DC Circuit, postcloture.

#### MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1797

Mr. President, I am told S. 1797 is due for a second reading. Is that valid?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1797) to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bill will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

#### SENATE AGENDA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I congratulate the budget negotiators on reaching an agreement last night to roll back the painful and arbitrary cuts of sequestration and prevent another dangerous government shutdown in the new year. Their bargain also protects Medicare and Social Security benefits and reduces the deficit. That is a good package.

I commend Budget Chairman MURRAY and her House Republican counterpart Congressman PAUL RYAN for their diligence and cooperative spirit which made this agreement possible.

The process that led to this accord was long and very difficult. The Republican government shutdown—the first in 17 years—took a toll on our economy, on American families, and on our reputation around the world. It was

also costly for the Federal Government in many different ways.

So when Congress reached a temporary settlement that ended the shortsighted shutdown, Democrats were committed to ending the terrible cycle of lurching from crisis to crisis. But understand this: When this measure went to the House of Representatives—it passed here to keep open the government, after 16 days; to stop the government from defaulting on its debt for the first time in history—about 75 percent of the Republicans in the House voted to keep the government closed and to default on the debt. Think about that. So this agreement is really a breath of fresh air—as we have been committed to setting sound fiscal policy through the regular order of the budget process and not through hostage taking or crisis making.

In this new agreement neither side got everything it wanted, but that is how it used to work around here. That is how it worked. Each side would move forward on what they wanted, and they would recognize—sometimes it was soon; sometimes it was not so soon—that the only way to work something out was to work together. That is what happened here.

So this is, I repeat, a breath of fresh air for the country. But I also hope it is a view of the future. I hope it is a view of the future. For example, I believe, as many Democrats do, that an extension of emergency unemployment insurance should be included in this package. I am very disappointed that the bills posted by the House last night do not include that. About 20,000 Nevadans who have been unemployed for more than 6 months—and more than a million people nationwide—will lose their earned unemployment benefits at the end of this year unless Congress acts.

I will stand for those Americans who want to get back to work as soon as possible but face a market where there is only one job opening for every three unemployed workers. That is why we are going to push here, after the first of the year, for an extension of unemployment insurance when the Senate convenes after the New Year, as I will also work very hard to raise the minimum wage.

It was stunning, Mr. President, the reports all over the national media today—radio, television, all the print media—that the vast majority of Americans believe the minimum wage should be raised to \$10 an hour. The American people believe that if someone works for 40 hours, they should not be on the rating as being poor. They should be able to support themselves and their family. But that is not the way it is now. We need to raise the minimum wage, and there will be a sustained effort to do that when we come back.

Democrats, led by Senator MURRAY, stood for our party's priorities—protecting the middle class and growing the economy—but we were also ready

and willing to compromise with our Republican counterparts. I admire Senator MURRAY for having proceeded forward along this line.

But while both sides made concessions and sacrifices, I repeat, that is the nature of negotiation and the point of a conference committee: to work together to work out our differences. So to their credit, members of the conference committee considered every option, no matter how painful to their own political party. They rejected many. They rejected most. They were able to come together on enough revenue and enough cuts to come up with this pact that they have.

Under the leadership of Chairman MURRAY, the committee crafted a 2-year bargain that charts a course for economic growth, maintains fiscal responsibility, and, perhaps most importantly, averts another manufactured crisis that would undercut the economic progress we have made these last 4 years.

So I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and both sides of the Capitol to pass this agreement.

Last night, we also filed—I should not say “we”—last night, the House filed a bill to ensure physicians are fairly compensated so Medicare patients can continue to see their doctors. It would be a shame if Medicare patients did not have the ability to have a doctor. But unless we did this agreement—short term as it is—physicians would receive a 27-percent cut in pay. So again in the new year we are going to work very hard to get rid of this so-called doc fix once and for all. We need to fix it once and for all.

Unfortunately, instead of beginning work on either of these things I have talked about, the two agreements—that is, the fix for doctors for Medicare patients, the budget; and the Defense bill, which I have not talked about, which also was posted last night in the House—Republicans are not facing reality. They are not. You are seeing, the American people are seeing before their eyes the face of obstruction. That is what is going on right now. We are eating up days of time—wasting hours, weeks, and days.

We could be voting on all this stuff now, all these nominations that are appearing before this body now, and move on to the substantive issues. This is why the rules were changed, Mr. President. You can see it right now. We are wasting hour after hour doing nothing.

The filibuster rule was established to get legislation passed. As it relates to nominations, the same thing applied: to get nominations processed. Our predecessors in the Senate set some rules saying that if cloture is invoked, the parties are entitled to some time to make their case before final passage or final vote on the nomination.

So now we have a number of nominations we are processing. To show how shallow the Republicans' obstructionism is, they have no objections to