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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, our souls long for You, for we find strength and joy in Your presence. Guide our lawmakers to trust You, seeking in every undertaking to know and do Your will. When they go through difficult seasons, may they remember that a bountiful harvest is certain if they persevere with integrity. Lord, give them a faith that will trust You even when the darkness is blacker than a thousand midnights. May they always find strength in Your providential leading.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U. S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 27, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of Rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, a Senator from the State of Connecticut, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. MURPHY thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

HOMEOWNER FLOOD INSURANCE AFFORDABILITY ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 294.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 294, S. 1926, a bill to delay the implementation of certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 and to reform the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at 5:30 p.m. there will be a rollcall vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to the flood insurance bill.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1950

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am told that S. 1950 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1950) to improve the provision of medical services and benefits to veterans, and for other purposes.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as I announced earlier, today the Senate will

vote at 5:30 to advance legislation which will protect millions of homeowners and small businesses from drastic increases in flood insurance premiums. This bipartisan measure will save many homeowners thousands of dollars a year and protect America's recovering housing market.

Since higher premiums would kick in whenever a home is sold, still struggling housing markets across the country could stumble if Congress allows flood insurance rates to skyrocket. That will happen if we don't move this legislation.

The bill before the Senate will preserve current rates until the Federal Emergency Management Agency submits a plan to keep premiums reasonable and provide stability to home and business owners.

I wish to thank Senators MENENDEZ and LANDRIEU, as well as Senator ISAKSON, for their leadership on this issue. Their bill will cut through the red tape and give consumers better, cheaper options when they shop for insurance.

So I hope the Senate can wrap up work quickly on this measure. We have tried for weeks to get agreement to move forward on it, but we are never quite there. Always there are requests to give a little more time. That time has run out. Homeowners deserve certainty, and the Senate faces a substantial workload over the next 3 weeks.

Tomorrow, President Obama will address Congress and the Nation in his annual State of the Union address. I, like the American people, look forward to hearing the President's vision to create an economy in which the middle class grows and prospers, because every individual should have a fair shot at success.

The Senate must also consider a number of critical national security and judicial nominations in the coming weeks. With the help of my Republican colleagues, we could process these nominations swiftly and painlessly—without late night or weekend votes.

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



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