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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 8, 2015, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2015

The Senate met at 11:30 and 5 seconds a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DAVID PERDUE, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

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. HATCH).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, August 6, 2015.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID PERDUE, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

WILDFIRE FUNDING

• Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, Congress needs to find a fiscally-responsible solution to wildfire funding and fire borrowing. While the Forest Service still has half a billion dollars remaining for fire suppression, there are years when firefighting costs exceed predicted funding levels. We need a focused discussion on this issue and I plan to begin the conversation with key offices and States—Wyoming, Oregon, Idaho, Arizona, Alaska, Washington, California, Nevada, Montana, Colorado, and others that would like to join and will be constructive to its resolution. I know there are differences of opinion out there as to how to solve this problem, but the key to solving it is getting everyone in a room to discuss it. As cap adjustments are under the jurisdiction of the Budget Committee, I look forward to working with my colleagues on a durable and long-lasting solution that fits our fiscal priorities and is responsible budgeting.

• Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I agree with the Senator from Wyoming that we need to find a solution to this problem and I have introduced legislation with Senator CRAPO that currently sits in the Budget Committee. Oregon is on fire and the Forest Service tells me that with current fire seasons getting longer and current budgetary constraints, the days of spending over 50 percent of their budget on suppressing fires is here to stay. The time for talking is coming to an end and the time to negotiate a fix to this very serious problem is at hand. I would like to work under the leadership of my friend, the chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, over the summer, on an answer to this chronic problem.

• Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I agree with the Senator from Wyoming. Senator MURKOWSKI and I have been working together to propose a solution to this problem as well, and I am proud to be able to say that we have been working with Senator ENZI, Senator WYDEN, and our other colleagues. We have to enable the Forest Service to have both the resources it needs to deal with wildfires, but also the resources it needs to manage the National forests. The current system of paying for wildfires by, perpetually, taking funding away from the programs that enable the Agency to maintain recreation facilities and complete important restoration projects is simply unacceptable. We can't sit idle and expect this budget issue to fix itself. We all agree a budget cap adjustment of some sort is the solution needed to end the practice of fire borrowing. I appreciate Senator WYDEN's efforts to fix this problem, and I appreciate Senator MURKOWSKI's recent work to fix this problem. Most of these solutions have the common theme of requiring a budget cap adjustment, and we are looking to your leadership, Senator ENZI, to assist us with that. People's homes are burning because of these wildfires. We need to get the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior the money they need to respond to wildfires, but we also need to ensure the money is being well spent. We have a number of ideas to round out the solution. I will be working over the summer with my colleagues to develop comprehensive legislation that solves this budget problem, but also ensures we see fewer large wildfires and fewer houses being lost to them. Our solution—and I want to emphasize our—will be a solution that is easy to explain to the public and that is able to get to the President's desk to be enacted.

• Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I want to thank the chairman of the Budget Committee for his leadership on the important issue of wildfire

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

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