



United States  
of America

# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 105<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 143

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, MAY 1, 1997

No. 55

## Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m., and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, on this National Day of Prayer, we join with millions across our land in intercession and supplication to You, the Sovereign Lord of the United States of America. As we sound that sacred word Sovereign, we echo Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Lincoln along with other leaders through the years, in declaring that You are our ultimate ruler. We make a new commitment to be one nation under You, God, and we place our trust in You.

You have promised that if Your people will humble themselves, seek Your face, and pray, You will answer and heal our land. Lord, as believers in You, we are Your people. You have called us to be salt in any bland neglect of our spiritual heritage and light in the darkness of what contradicts Your vision for our Nation. Give us courage to be accountable to You and Your Commandments. We repent for the pride, selfishness, and prejudice that often contradict your justice and righteousness in our society.

Lord of new beginnings, our Nation needs a great spiritual awakening. May this day of prayer be the beginning of that awakening with each of us in this Senate. We urgently ask that our honesty about the needs of our Nation and our humble confession of our spiritual hunger for You may sweep across this Nation. Hear the prayers of Your people and continue to bless America. In Your holy name, Amen.

### RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader, Senator COVERDELL of Georgia, is recognized.

### SCHEDULE

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, this morning the Senate will begin consideration of S. 543, the Volunteer Protection Act. As a reminder, the previously ordered cloture votes for today are vitiated, and the Senate is now able to begin consideration of this important legislation. It is my understanding that amendments are expected to be offered to this bill. Therefore, Senators can anticipate votes throughout today's session of the Senate. It is the majority leader's hope that the Senate will be able to complete action on the Volunteer Protection Act today.

Also, there is the possibility that the Senate could consider items on the Executive Calendar. Therefore, additional votes could occur other than votes on the Volunteer Protection Act during today's session. In addition, the Appropriations Committee has completed action on the supplemental appropriations bill and it is the majority leader's expectation to begin consideration of that bill next week.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANTORUM). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### VOLUNTEER PROTECTION ACT OF 1997

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to consideration of S. 543, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 543) to provide certain protections to volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities in lawsuits based on activities of volunteers.

The Senate proceeded to consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, as the Presiding Officer knows, we have been at this for the better part of the week. I am pleased that the two sides have decided to proceed to the actual legislation and to consider its merits straightforwardly. I was also pleased to be notified this morning that during the summit—and I had not realized this—that occurred, Governors Branstad of Iowa, Whitman of New Jersey, and Wilson of California, issued a public statement in support of the Volunteer Protection Act while in Philadelphia, and called on the President to sign it. I am deeply grateful to these Governors, who have longstanding careers in public service, for stepping forward and calling on the passage of the Volunteer Protection Act.

Mr. President, I thought it would be useful, given the fact that we are now beginning the actual debate, to revisit the general parameters of the Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, which is a bill to provide certain protections to volunteers, nonprofit organizations, and governmental entities in lawsuits based on the activities of volunteers.

First, Mr. President, I will frame the problem. Prior to 1980, there was virtually no issue for us to consider here. Millions upon millions of Americans over the history of our country have continued to step forward, help their neighbors, help in disasters, help that is grandiose, like fighting off the waters in a flood to something as simple as crossing the street with a spare meal or a good wish for a neighbor.

But something happened in 1980. Suddenly there were several very celebrated lawsuit cases that targeted the volunteer. It changed the whole nature of the environment for voluntarism in America. As we moved on through the 1980's we found a situation where, with increasing frequency, for a variety of reasons, it was the volunteer that was singled out by a plaintiff or a claimant. It could have been that the organization that the individual was contributing to did not have any resources, that

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



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