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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Dr. Russell F. Blowers, senior minister emeritus, East Ninth Street Christian Church, Indianapolis, IN.

We are pleased to have you with us.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Dr. Russell F. Blowers, offered the following prayer:

Let's pray together.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, apart from Whom there is no authority or power or wisdom, we bow before You in worship and praise as the Senate begins this new day.

We are not here to brief You on world affairs or to ask for Your leading and then do it our own way as if You do not exist. You are not a weak and absent deity out in deep space but a Sovereign God who is here to monitor what is said and done in this room today. You are the audience. Give these honorable men and women the ability to perform with integrity as they advise, consent and dissent for the good of the country. Let them be encouraged by some humbling victory or exalting defeat.

We repent of our personal and national transgressions, for we have all sinned and fallen short of Your glory. Forgive us and heal us for "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."

Thank you for Your loving kindness and for Your extravagant blessings upon our beloved land.

Today, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our rock and our Redeemer. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able majority leader, Senator LOTT, of Mississippi, is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Thank you, Mr. President.

THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, on behalf of the Senate, I thank Dr. Russell Blowers, of Indiana, for being here with us this morning. We thank you for that beautiful prayer. We are glad to have you visiting with us.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, this morning the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11:30. Under the order, the first hour will be under the control of the other side of the aisle and the second hour under the control of Senator COVERDELL or his designee.

At 11:30 the Senate will proceed to executive session for 30 minutes to debate and then to consider two judicial nominations: Carlos Moreno, of California, to be U.S. District Judge and Christine Miller, of the District of Columbia, to be a judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

Following that debate, at approximately 12 noon, two back-to-back votes will occur on the confirmation of those nominees. And then after the first two votes at 12, at 12:30, by consent, the Senate will recess until 2:15 in order for the weekly party conferences to meet.

It is my hope we will be able to consider and complete action on the Ronald Reagan airport naming bill. I will be consulting with the manager of that bill, Senator COVERDELL, and others who have ideas of how it should be handled. I hope to be able to discuss it with Senator DASCHLE so we can work something out on that and then be able to complete it and move on to other bills or nominations that we had hoped to be able to take up. There is a possi-

bility there could be another vote today, and I had expected that there would be a vote early on Wednesday morning, but we will not be able to determine that until we get something worked out on the Ronald Reagan airport bill.

I do want to mention also as a reminder to all Senators that at 5 o'clock this afternoon, from approximately 5 until 6, in room S. 407 of the Capitol, there will be a briefing with regard to Iraq by Secretary Cohen and Sandy Berger, the National Security Council Adviser, and other military officials to bring us up to date on what is the situation in Iraq.

We had hoped that Secretary Albright would be back and could attend that briefing, but she will not be present. I think it is important we go ahead with that briefing and then once she returns, maybe Thursday or early next week, we will ask her to come and brief us on what is happening and what happened during her trip to the Middle East and Europe. I think it is important we have close communication with the administration on what is happening, what they are finding from our allies and what their plans are so we can have input. So I invite Senators who possibly can be in room S. 407 at 5 o'clock this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUTCHINSON). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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



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RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 11:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes each. Under the previous order, the time between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from North Dakota, Mr. DORGAN, or his designee.

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, there will be an opportunity this morning for Members of the Senate to discuss the President's submission of his budget to the Congress yesterday.

The way the process works in our country is the President proposes a budget that contains his recommendations for spending priorities. And then the Congress deals with these recommendations in that way that Congress deems appropriate. The budget that the President proposes, and the budget that the Congress finalizes, reflect what we think the priorities are for our country.

It is certain that 100 years from now none of us will be here; 100 years from now we will be gone from this Earth. But if historians want to learn 100 years from now about who we were, and what we were, and what we felt was important to us, and what our priorities were, they could look at the Federal budget document and evaluate our spending priorities. What did we think was important? What did we invest in, in order to achieve a better future for ourselves or our country? And they could determine by our decisions about investment and spending what we held dear as a country.

This President has proposed a budget that is vastly changed from the budgets we have seen in recent years. When I came to the Congress in 1981, in the House of Representatives, a new President was assuming office here in town, President Ronald Reagan. He had a completely different vision of fiscal policy.

He was supported by an economic theory that suggested if you had very large tax cuts, you would still achieve larger amounts of revenue and you could actually balance the budget with large tax cuts. And so he proposed with his Office of Management and Budget guru, Mr. David Stockman, a series of budgets that proposed very significant tax cuts and a doubling of the defense budget.

And President Reagan's economist and others, particularly an economist

named Arthur Laffer, who developed a Laffer curve, said this would all work out OK. They said you can provide significant tax cuts, double defense spending, and it would all come out just fine.

In fact, that fiscal policy created a mountain of debt that began to choke this country. The President and Congress in combination embarked on a fiscal policy that was reckless. In fact, David Stockman, the chief strategist of it, said so in his book.

It took a long while to get through all of that, and even through the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s the Federal budget deficit was climbing and climbing at an alarming rate.

President Clinton came to office in 1993 and said we are going to change that. And he presented the Congress in 1993 with a proposal to reduce the Federal budget deficit. As fiscal policy his proposal was tough, tough medicine.

And by one vote in the Senate and one vote in the House it passed. Some of my colleagues who voted for that are not here any longer because it was tough and controversial. But it put this country on the right road. Over a period of 5 years the budget deficit has come down, down, way down.

And some of my colleagues are unwilling to accept the fact that there is a cause-effect relationship between the actions you take to reduce this budget deficit and the results you get. But it is inevitable, if you look at the facts, to conclude that what this President and what this Congress did in 1993 to set this country on the right track has put us in the position today where we have a budget submitted to the Congress that wrestles that budget deficit to the ground and then says, as far as the eye can see in the years ahead, there is good news.

And the good news is that this economy is working. It's working better for the American people. I do not want to attribute it all to one person or one party. That is not the case. Last year we had a bipartisan budget agreement between Republicans and Democrats and that helps as well, and both parties ought to be credited for that.

But my point is I watched yesterday some people react to the President's budget submission, and it was the same cranky old tune you have heard from them every single year. It sounds like they have a permanent toothache. Nothing on Earth can make them satisfied or happy.

Let me see if I can help them out. Let me try to explain why the American people feel differently. Here is what makes the American people feel good about the direction we are heading.

The Federal budget deficit, as I said, has been down, down, way down now for 5 years in a row. And the deficit is almost nonexistent—not quite yet, but it will be.

Inflation is almost nonexistent. Inflation has come down, down, down. It is the lowest it's been since 1986. Housing starts are up substantially. In 1996

they totaled 1.47 million housing starts. That is the largest number of housing starts in this country since 1988. And what we know so far about 1997 tells us that the figures for all of last year will be even higher.

Mr. President, 14 million people are working now that were not working in 1993. Unemployment is down. I can recall when the Federal Reserve Board, that friend of mine, that institutional friend of mine, said if unemployment ever goes below 6 percent are we in for trouble; we are in for a huge wave of inflation. The Federal Reserve Board has been wrong, it has been consistently wrong about that. Unemployment is now at 4.7 percent, and inflation has not gone up, it has gone down.

Crime? The crime rate has gone down at the same time. This President said let's put 100,000 new police officers on the street. Let's put new cops on the street, on the beat. Guess what is happening. As our economy strengthens, and as more people are working, we have a lower crime rate. Since 1993, violent crime has dropped 16 percent. Robberies are down, assaults are down, the murder rate is down by over 20 percent, burglary is down. That is good news.

Welfare? In the last 4 years we have seen the largest decline in the welfare rolls in the history of this country. There are 2 million fewer people on welfare today than there were in August 1996, when we enacted welfare reform. I might say that this was a bipartisan accomplishment: Republicans and Democrats in the Congress joined to pass a welfare reform bill. I supported it as did many of my colleagues on both sides of the political aisle. A good economy plays a major role in this, but the welfare reform bill also set us on the right track.

Child support collections are up 50 percent after this Congress passed legislation cracking down on deadbeat dads who decide their children are not their responsibility and that the taxpayers should pay for them. The increase in collections is good news. Child support payments are up 50 percent.

Access to health care for millions of Americans? Because of last year's action, 5 million American children without health care will get health care.

Medicare? In the work that we have done to provide long-term stability for Medicare much, much more needs to be done, but we have done a great deal already.

I have more to say and I will in a bit, but I notice the minority leader, Senator DASCHLE, is on the floor. Let me yield whatever time Senator DASCHLE might use of the hour.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. DASCHLE. I thank my colleague for his leadership and his usual eloquence. I want to associate myself with his remarks this morning. I appreciate very much his calling attention to the