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Senate

(Legislative day of Friday, October 2, 1998)

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m., on the expiration of the recess, and was called to order by the Honorable MIKE DEWINE, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Dr. William Hawkins, of Graves Memorial Presbyterian Church, Clinton, NC, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, whose compassion fails not and whose mercies are fresh and new every morning, hear our prayer as we look to You in spirit and in truth. We thank You for our Nation's leaders, who in times past found in You their stay in trouble, their strength in conflict, their guide and deep resource. May it please You heavenly Father that today this gathered company will find in You the same.

As the Psalmist has exclaimed, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (33:12), so may Your lordship be affirmed in our Nation and cherished always among the Members of this body. Grant unto these Senators the knowledge that they will serve our Nation best as they serve You first. Make them strong in Your strength, wise in Your wisdom, and compassionate in Your Spirit, that the legislation they propose will accomplish the greater good You would have them seek. Keep them, their families, and all those they love safe from harm, physical and spiritual, so that they can be about the affairs of our Nation with full attention and devotion.

Grant unto each a sense of divine purpose, that they know themselves here not by chance but by design. Fulfill Your intentions for them in this high office, that they will be found working together, doing that which is pleasing in Your sight and in accord with Your holy will. In Your great name we pray. Amen.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read a communication to the Senate.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 8, 1998.

To the Senate: Under the provisions of rule I, section 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MIKE DEWINE, a Senator from the State of Ohio, to perform the duties of the Chair.

STROM THURMOND,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I will yield to the distinguished Senator from North Carolina who will welcome our guest Chaplain for the day.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

WELCOME TO DR. WILLIAM HAWKINS, GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. FAIRCLOTH. Mr. President, I am indeed honored and happy to be here this morning with my home church preacher. Bill Hawkins has been pastor of my church for 10 years now and he has made an outstanding impression and done a great job not only for the church membership but for the city that we live in as well. He has a wife and two daughters and they mean so much to me personally and to the community we live in. He is a Virginian, but we do not intend to allow him to

leave. We plan to keep him in North Carolina and we are honored that he is there. He brings the youth and vigor to our church that we so much need. We are proud to have him there.

Bill, thank you.
I yield the floor.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I add my welcome to the guest Chaplain. He did a beautiful job this morning. I know he is going to be very dedicated to tending to the needs of the Senator from North Carolina, Senator FAIRCLOTH.

We are delighted to have you here.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10 a.m. Following morning business, under a previous order, the Senate will begin 1 hour of final debate on the conference report to accompany the VA-HUD appropriations bill. At the expiration of debate time, at approximately 11 a.m., the Senate will vote on adoption of that conference report. Following that vote, the Senate may resume consideration of the Internet tax bill. I believe we are about ready to complete action on that. We have been saying that for a week, but I think that the opposition really is minimal. When we finally get to a vote, it is going to be overwhelming. I hope those obstructing and delaying the bill will give it up and let us get to the final passage of this important legislation before we leave. I understand there is one outstanding issue remaining on that legislation. Hopefully, it can be resolved by the managers early this afternoon.

In addition to the Internet bill, the Senate may consider the intelligence reauthorization bill, the human services reauthorization bill, under a 30-minute time agreement, and, possibly, the Treasury-Postal Service appropriations bill. The Senate may also begin

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



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consideration of the William Fletcher nomination under the previously agreed to 90-minute time agreement.

At 5 p.m., under a previous order, the Senate is scheduled to resume consideration of H.R. 10, the financial services reform bill, unless another agreement is reached. I hope we can also come to some compromise agreement on that legislation so we can get it completed. It is very important domestically and, as a matter of fact, for our ability to compete in international markets. Members should expect roll-call votes throughout the day and into the evening.

There are a number of meetings going on to resolve issues between the House and the Senate and the administration. I think a lot of good progress has been made in the last 24 hours. I felt like the dam sort of broke yesterday. We have the bankruptcy reform legislation conference report being finished now. The vocational education conference report was completed last night. That was the first time we had a vocational reauthorization in years, and certainly we need to focus on vocational education. That, coupled with the higher education bill that was signed into law 2 days ago, will begin to show that we are committed to working continuously to improve education for our children and for the families of this country in the future.

We are in a position where we are about in final agreement on the WIPO bill, the intellectual property issue, and music licensing.

A number of bills are coming to a conclusion. As soon as conference reports are available, particularly appropriations bills, they will be stuck right into the schedule, and hopefully a quick vote. We will then move with other conference reports. We hope to be able to move some Executive Calendar nominations. But that also will take a lot of cooperation.

I thank the Senators for their assistance at this critical hour.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to a period of morning business until 10 a.m. with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, we are in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. That is correct.

THE PRESIDENT DID THE RIGHT THING

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, last evening, President Clinton did the right thing, did the right thing for this country and did the right thing for our farmers and for people who live all across rural America. He did the right thing for farmers who are suffering because of a drastic drop in prices. He did the right thing for farmers who are suffering because of a loss of crop in disaster areas in the South and Upper Midwest. The President did the right thing by vetoing the woefully inadequate farm disaster bill that this Congress passed and sent to him for his signature. Now it is up to us to see what we can do to make that bill better and get it back to the President for his signature.

Rural America needs help. Farmers need assistance. Disaster-hit areas need help. And yet they do not need the woefully inadequate bill that was passed here. I likened the bill that was passed by the Congress as giving a thimbleful of water to a person dying of thirst. It may assuage their thirst momentarily, but it is not going to keep them alive. We need to give those farmers who are dying of thirst out there the adequate water they need to get them through this year and the next to keep them alive.

Mr. President, I was encouraged by what I read in Congress Daily, that the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Congressman LIVINGSTON, has said that they expected a veto and that after the veto comes negotiations. I do not have the exact quote, but that is about what he said. I think that gives us some hope that we can work together here, we can negotiate out some differences, and we can come up with a bill that the President will sign and that will, indeed, benefit our producers.

There are some principles that we must maintain, however. First of all, there must be adequate disaster assistance. There needs to be equitable treatment regionally both within the distribution of the disaster assistance and within the overall package of disaster-related, commodity-based assistance. That means it has to be equitable, and it has to be adequate. It does not necessarily mean the dollars have to be spread around evenly. Equitable treatment is the key for farmers who have suffered from natural disasters.

A second principle is that assistance must go to producers who need it. Assistance based on low commodity prices should be delivered to producers suffering from low commodity prices. That is the advantage of the marketing loan proposal that those on our side have advocated. The proposal just to add on some money to this so-called AMTA payment has no relationship to the level of commodity prices. And not all commodity prices are depressed equally or substantially, particularly in cotton and rice. So assistance must have some relation to market conditions.

I always wonder what it is about some of my friends on the other side. They always talk about the market, the market, the market, yet the direct payment that goes out to farmers has no relationship to the market.

Removing the loan rate caps, as we want to do, does have a relationship to the market. If the market price goes up, the exposure to the Government is less and farmers will get their money from the market and not from the Government. Just giving out a direct payment has no relationship to the market whatsoever.

I think a third principle that we must have in any negotiated settlement is assistance to actual producers. Lump cash payments in a fixed amount are less likely to remain in the hands of the actual farmer than is assistance provided in a way that is contingent on market conditions. The additional AMTA payment that is in the vetoed bill is readily identified by landlords who are in a strong position to capture the payment in land rental rates. That is why raising the marketing loans, raising those caps will get to the producers.

Another principle. We must restore the safety net. Farmers are in their current predicament in large measure because the safety net feature of previous farm bills was abandoned in the 1996 farm bill. A set cash payment does nothing to restore the safety net because it is not responsive to market conditions. By contrast, removing loan rate caps would help restore a safety net responsive to market conditions.

Two last and final principles. Some linkage to actual production. The marketing assistance loan is tied directly to actual production. The Republican plan in the vetoed bill would have provided an additional money windfall even though no crop had been produced on the land. Why would we want to do that? Let's have assistance out to farmers who actually produced a crop.

And last, let's have a major measure of fiscal responsibility. This idea of just throwing out another payment to farmers is not fiscally responsible. If commodity prices should rise next year, which we all hope will happen, our plan would cost less than expected. But if the commodity prices rise next year, after the Republican plan payment went out, we would not recapture any of that money. It would be gone. That is why raising the marketing loan caps is, indeed, more fiscally responsible than just giving out a payment.

Mr. President, I believe within those principles there is room for negotiation. I look forward to the negotiations. I hope we can very rapidly come up with a bill that will meet these principles and that the President will sign into law, because our farmers need the assistance, and the disaster areas also need that assistance.

I will yield the floor.