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Senate

The Senate met at 9 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN WARNER, a Senator from the State of Virginia.

PRAYER

The visiting chaplain, Rev. Bill Jeschke, The Kings Chapel, Vienna, VA, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our strength and our redeemer, please give these, Your servants, the wisdom to know right and the grace to do it. Apart from You, we can do nothing; but by Your empowerment, we can do all things.

Give them strength for this great adventure, the sober service of directing this Senate into Your paths and ways. Help them to be fountains of blessing to our dear people and Your beloved world.

We pray that they will be committed to their sacred duty, and trust that through them You will accomplish Your wise purposes for our country.

We pray this in Your wonderful Name.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN WARNER 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. STEVENS).

The assistant journal clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 2, 2004.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JOHN WARNER, a Senator from the State of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in for a period, briefly, for morning business. As I stated last night in closing, there will be no roll-call votes during today's session.

I also mentioned in closing last night some of the important issues that need to be addressed that will be considered next week. One of those bills is the Pregnancy and Trauma Care Access Protection Act of 2004. I have repeatedly stated my concern about the current liability system and the fact that physicians are having to leave regions and States and even leave the practice of medicine altogether. That has a direct impact on care for women who are about to deliver children, as well as trauma services and specialty physicians.

We absolutely must find a way to achieve appropriate tort reform and bring common sense back into our court system. Having said that, I hope the Senate can begin the debate on this issue.

PREGNANCY AND TRAINING CARE ACCESS PROTECTION ACT OF 2004

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, after consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 462, S. 2207, the Pregnancy and Trauma Care Access Protection Act of 2004.

Mr. REID. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, with that objection, I now move to proceed to the consideration of S. 2207, and I will send a cloture motion to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant journal clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 462, S. 2207, a bill to improve women's access to health care services, and the access of all individuals to emergency and trauma care services, by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the delivery of such service.

Bill Frist, Orrin Hatch, Judd Gregg, John Ensign, Lamar Alexander, Peter Fitzgerald, Larry Craig, John Cornyn, Robert Bennett, Mike Enzi, Mitch McConnell, Ted Stevens, Norm Coleman, James Inhofe, Kay Bailey Hutchison, George Voinovich, Charles Grassley.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President I now ask unanimous consent that the live quorum under rule XXII be waived, and

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



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further that notwithstanding rule XXII the vote on the motion to invoke cloture occur at 2:15 on Wednesday, April 7.

Mr. REID. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I now withdraw my motion.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The motion is withdrawn.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, over the course of the morning, we will be continuing our discussions on how best to proceed with the JOBS bill, the manufacturing tax bill on which we spent part of last week and this week. Those discussions will continue, and we will be addressing that issue, I hope, in the next week. Medical liability we will be addressing next week.

Discussions continue to go on with regard to the budget, which is in conference. Those conferees were mentioned on the floor of the Senate. We passed the budget under Senator NICKLES' leadership. It was the earliest budget ever passed in this particular body. It is now in conference. I look forward to the product of those conferees at some appropriate time.

As my colleagues know, we have, under the regular order, 10 hours of debate on that before we will be voting on the budget itself.

Next week, we will be voting—and I will talk about this later—on Wednesday and Thursday. This will allow appropriate observance for Passover in preparation for the recess, which will be the following week.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant journal clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. 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.

The distinguished Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. I thank the Chair.

STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, earlier this week the OPEC cartel announced it would reduce oil production by 1 million barrels of oil per day starting April 1. This move is designed solely for one purpose: to keep pushing up oil prices in the United States and other oil-consuming countries.

Most energy experts say that given current inventory levels in the United States and elsewhere and current consumption rates, OPEC's cuts mean that gasoline prices will likely stay high, hurting American families; jet fuel prices will stay high, hurting our airlines; and diesel fuel prices will stay high, hurting our truckers, manufacturers, and farmers.

As OPEC was planning this price hike, what was the response of the ad-

ministration? Just a few days before, the Secretary of Energy stated he was not about to go begging for oil.

One step we should take immediately to counteract high prices and OPEC's action is to stop filling our Strategic Petroleum Reserve. This month, the administration is going to put about 200,000 barrels per day of oil into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. If OPEC's cuts are distributed equally among its customers, this is about how much the OPEC cut will reduce U.S. supplies. Since the U.S. imports about 20 percent of OPEC's output and OPEC plans to cut production by about 1 million barrels per day, about 200,000 barrels per day will be the reduction in the supply to the United States.

Holding off additional deposits into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve would keep about as much oil on the U.S. oil market as OPEC is taking off our market. One way to fight back is to cancel these additional deposits which will otherwise go into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which is already 93-percent filled.

Mr. President, 200,000 barrels per day is a lot of oil. It is as much oil as is produced in several of our major oil-producing States. For instance, Oklahoma produces about 180,000 barrels a day. It is about as much as we import from Kuwait. Last year we imported about 205,000 barrels per day from Kuwait.

Over time, 100,000 to 200,000 barrels per day adds up to a significant amount of oil. Over the course of the next year or so, these daily fills will add up to about 50 million barrels of oil. In other words, over the next year or so, the Department of Energy, if it sticks to its plan to continue to fill the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to 100 percent, the DOE will take about 50 million barrels of oil off the market and put them into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

If we keep that oil in the market, in the private sector, we would get both short-term and long-term benefits. The day after the Senate passed the amendment which I offered with Senator COLLINS to cancel the planned delivery of 50 million barrels of oil into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, prices on the New York and London crude oil exchanges fell by more than \$1, just on the news that the Senate had acted, even before anyone knew whether the House would follow suit. Prices rose back to their previous levels when the Department of Energy and some key Members of Congress said that the DOE should keep putting that oil into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

The market's reaction to the news that the Strategic Petroleum Reserve deliveries might be canceled is good evidence of how the market will react to the cancellation of those deliveries. We should listen to what the market is telling us. Keeping 50 million barrels of oil on the market rather than putting them into the reserve will enable our private sector inventories to build back

to normal levels. They have not been at normal levels for some time now. They have been well-below normal and recently fell to historic lows.

If we restore those private sector inventories, this will reduce prices substantially, and most experts agree that absent some type of additional supplies in the market, oil and gas prices are going to stay very high.

I want to make it clear that we are not proposing removing oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve at this time. What we are talking about is simply to stop putting even more oil into the reserve which is already 93 percent of capacity.

The administration says the daily addition is too small to make a difference in the price of oil. This is wrong for two reasons.

First, the amount the DOE is putting into the reserve each day is a lot of oil. Second, the administration's position ignores the long-term effect of putting these barrels of oil into the Strategic Petroleum Reserve—and this is the DOE's own staff I am going to quote. This is what DOE's own staff said:

Essentially, if the reserve inventory grows, and OPEC does not accommodate that growth by exporting more oil, the increase comes at the expense of commercial inventories. Most analysts agree that oil prices are directly correlated with inventories, and a drop of 20 million barrels over a 6-month period can substantially increase prices.

In fact, commercial inventories did fall on average by 20 million barrels in each of the three successive 6-month periods following the DOE staff's warning.

The Department of Energy's own staff who operates the Strategic Petroleum Reserve recommended against buying more oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in tight markets.

In the spring of 2002, as prices were rising and inventories in the private sector were falling, this is what the Department of Energy staff warned:

Commercial petroleum inventories are low, retail product prices are high and economic growth is slow.

This is DOE staff's bottom line:

The Government should avoid acquiring oil for the Reserve under these circumstances.

Commercial petroleum inventories are low,—

They are still at an all-time low.

retail product prices are high—

They are at an all-time high now.

and economic growth is slow.

And it does continue to be sluggish. This is what their bottom line is:

The Government should avoid acquiring oil for the Reserve under these circumstances.

The administration chose to ignore those warnings. The reserve deliveries proceeded, and just as the DOE staff predicted, supplies tightened and prices climbed.

The administration continues to ignore the advice of these experts at the reserve, and American consumers are paying the price.

A wide variety of experts outside the Department of Energy has stated that