



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 151

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2005

No. 16

Senate

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the Hon. DAVID VITTER, a Senator from the State of Louisiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Pastor Aubry L. Wallace. Chaplain Wallace is from the Sheriffs's Department of Chilton County, AL.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray: That Almighty God will grant to this body His concurring aid in the governing process of these United States.

Our Eternal Father, He who watches over the affairs of mankind, I humbly pray that Your protection and guidance be with these Senators here assembled as they deliberate. Bless these in whose hands You have allowed the future of our beloved Nation to rest. Guide them by Your Holy Spirit. May every decision be right and in accordance with Your divine wisdom and will.

Keep them safe from any who would do them harm. Let no evil spirit affect their will to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God.

Heavenly Father, make them aware of Your presence as they participate in this grand experiment we call human government. And at the close of this session may they hear from You these words: Well done, good and faithful servant.

In the Name of His Son Jesus I pray. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable DAVID VITTER 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 bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 15, 2005.

To the Senate:

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

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, the Senate will begin today with a period of morning business until 12:30. At 12:30 the Senate will recess until 2:15 for the weekly party luncheons. Following the luncheons, we will resume debate in executive session on the nomination of Michael Chertoff to be Secretary of Homeland Security. Debate is equally divided until 4 this afternoon, with the vote occurring on the confirmation of Mr. Chertoff at 4 p.m. That vote will be the first vote of the day.

Yesterday I mentioned a number of items that are possible over the course of this week. Today we will continue to try to clear those bills for floor action. They include the genetic non-discrimination bill, the high-risk pool legislation, a Nazi war crimes bill, the committee funding resolution, and any

additional nominations that may be reported by the respective committees.

We will, over the course of the day, keep all Members notified of the schedule as we bring these matters forward for floor consideration.

LEGISLATIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND A LOOK AHEAD

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I will take just a few moments at the beginning of today to comment on last week and a brief look ahead.

Last Thursday, the Senate achieved its first legislative victory, a bipartisan victory of the 109th session. By a vote of 72 to 26, the Senate passed the Class Action Fairness Act. The process was that we worked together across the aisle from beginning to end. The bill was introduced with 32 cosponsors, 24 Republicans and 8 Democrats. It came out of the Judiciary Committee on a strong bipartisan vote. Every vote on every amendment was bipartisan, and the vote on final passage was strongly bipartisan as well.

I stress the bipartisanship because in the 109th Congress we have a lot to do, and it is going to demand that we continue to work together in that same spirit. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their fairness and cooperation. We have delivered to the American people a significant victory in the battle for fairness in the courts.

The class action bill does protect plaintiffs' rights while reining in the rampant abuse within the system itself. The consumer bill of rights protects plaintiffs from predatory lawyers and guarantees that they receive just compensation. The legislation restores justice to our court system by ending that practice of forum shopping, where we had nationwide cases that genuinely impact interstate commerce being moved to the Federal courts where they belong.

It took a while to have this success last week. Senator GRASSLEY, who was

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



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