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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, who can test our thoughts and examine our hearts, look within our leaders today and remove anything that will hinder Your Providence. Replace destructive criticism with kindness and humility. Give to our Senators a wisdom that will bring unity and respect. Help them to commit the labors of this day to You, knowing they can trust You to provide help when they need it most.

Be merciful and bless each of us. May Your face shine with favor upon those who love You, as You unleash Your saving power in our world.

Help us to do with our might that which lies to our hands so that we may fight the good fight and at the end receive the crown which You will award to those who have been faithful.

This we ask in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 14, 2005.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN E. SUNUNU, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. SUNUNU 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, once again today, the Senate will be in a period for morning business for 60 minutes. Following that time, the Senate will resume debate on the emergency supplemental appropriations bill. We have several amendments pending from yesterday that are currently under review, and Members may want to speak to those amendments.

Much of the day yesterday we spent—both on the floor and off the floor—discussing the immigration issue. The issues surrounding immigration are critically important to our economy, to equity, and to security and fairness. They are all vital to this country. The leadership has encouraged those who want to participate in a comprehensive debate on immigration to postpone consideration of their amendments from this standpoint because this is an emergency supplemental spending bill to support our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and to have appropriate funding for tsunami relief.

There will be a time later, before the end of the year, when we will address immigration in a comprehensive way. In spite of that, we have respected the rights of individual Senators who feel they absolutely must address specific issues, but I continue to encourage those who want to address immigration in a comprehensive way to do so at a more appropriate time.

I know we can work out a process to keep moving forward on the emergency supplemental bill, but we have to address specifically the range of immigration issues that have been brought forth to the managers.

The managers will continue to consider the amendments that are brought forward. Amendments that are brought forward, I encourage they relate to the supplemental emergency spending bill as much as possible. We expect votes over the course of today, and we will have, I expect, a very busy schedule over the course of the day.

Mr. President, I have a few other remarks to make, but I will be happy to turn to the Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I thank the leader. I say through the Chair to the majority leader, we have worked—even started working last week—on the immigration amendments. We have a finite list now. We have 12 amendments. I think that can be whittled down, for lack of a better word, to even less than that, considerably less than that.

What we should do is lock in these amendments as a finite list. Within a very short period of time, we can find out how many really have to be offered.

The pending amendment, the one Senator MIKULSKI offered, will have nearly—in fact, it may have—60 votes. So that will be adopted with ease.

I hope we do not have to file cloture on this bill. I acknowledge this is important legislation. The money for the funding of the troops is absolutely necessary. All one has to do is read the paper every morning to understand how badly our troops need it. I was just there, and they need all the resources they can get. We want to make sure they do not have to wait a second for what they need.

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

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I will work with the leader through the morning and early afternoon, and see if we can get this number whittled down. Also, the majority leader has a few on his side.

I hope we can limit the immigration amendments to very few—I would say, at the most, three on each side, or four at most, and have the others set aside until a time the majority leader has indicated he will give, sometime before we finish work this year, so there can be a full debate on those immigration matters.

As the leader knows, the problem—and he had nothing to do with it—is in this bill. There is immigration material in this bill. They have so-called REAL ID which came about as a result of our trying to get other legislation done last year. An arrangement was made by the House leadership that they would allow, on the first moving vehicle to come along, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee to put his legislation in the bill. It is in this bill. That is the problem we have.

The Republican leader did not want it in this bill, I did not want it in this bill, but it is in the bill. As a result, we do not have the normal objection that is available when we legislate on an appropriations bill.

I will work with the leader. We will get staff working on this, as they have, to see if we can narrow this considerably. The amendments that deal with the subject matter at hand, the funding of this bill, are just a few in number. We dealt with some of the most important ones yesterday.

I hope we can finish this bill in a reasonably good period of time, and maybe, if we are fortunate, we can get something such as the highway bill or something such as that before we finish our work period—maybe the TANF bill, whatever is out there for us to do.

I understand the problems the leader has, and I will be happy to work with him to alleviate his load as much as possible.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I have a few other comments.

H2N2 FLU VIRUS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, there is one issue I talked about initially Monday and want to bring forth once again.

Nothing is more important than the safety of the American people, and we have a lot of work to do in a particular area. Yesterday we learned that samples of the deadly H2N2 flu virus were accidentally shipped to 5,000 laboratories all over the world. Thankfully, nearly all of the samples have been destroyed.

The H2N2 virus is lethal. It is fatal. Back in 1957, it killed over 70,000 people just here in the United States and as many as 1 million to 4 million people around the world.

This latest news underscores, once again, just how vulnerable we are as an American people, as a world people, because viruses know no borders, they know no geography. There are no barriers.

On Monday, 3 days ago, I spoke of the need to bolster State preparedness and Federal preparedness in this arena. I mentioned that exotic and deadly viruses, such as the Marburg virus that at this very moment is racking all of northern Angola—the Marburg virus being a virus which is an Ebola-like virus, a hemorrhagic-fever-type virus—those viruses that are racking that country which we do not understand, for which we have no cure, for which we have no vaccine, are literally just a plane ride away from this room or from whoever is listening to me now through the media around the country. It is just a plane ride away.

Avian flu has already killed 50 people. Some say, 50 people, that is not thousands of people. But it is 50 people from a virus that not too long ago we did not know anything about, that began to be harbored in birds, and now is being harbored in other animals and now has killed and jumped to kill 50 people; with just a tiny drift and ultimately a shift in a mutation, it becomes transmissible.

Once again, we have no vaccine for avian flu. It is something for which we have no cure. We only have to look back to 1917, another type of avian flu, but very similar, which killed a half a million Americans, 50 million people around the world.

Meanwhile, as all this goes on, there are only five major vaccine manufacturers worldwide that have production facilities in the United States. That is for all vaccines. Only two of those are actually United States companies. Our manufacturing base for vaccines is woefully inadequate for any of the threats I have just mentioned.

Over the past 2 decades, the number of manufacturers who make vaccines for children has dwindled from 12 down to now just 4, and only 2 of the 4 manufacturers that make lifesaving vaccines for children are here in the United States.

I spoke, as I mentioned, on this topic on Monday. I spoke on Monday because it was the 50th anniversary of the polio vaccine. Yesterday's news about the H2N2 virus is just one more reason why we need to take action. It is imperative we strengthen our domestic vaccine supply, we offer appropriate legal protections, and we encourage and incentivize collaboration between public and private sectors. We need to advance research and development. We need to put all these initiatives together to protect us from a deadly viral outbreak that scientific experts warn could come to our shores any day.

America has been the engine of countless lifesaving discoveries and global health efforts. Once again, we are called upon to lead for the safety of our fellow citizens and, indeed, citizens around the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from North Dakota.

IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE FACED

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I wish to make a couple of comments today on some very important issues we will face in the days ahead.

We have the supplemental appropriations bill on the floor of the Senate asking for just over $80 billion for the cost of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most of it is to replenish military accounts. A number of amendments have been offered. Immigration amendments are now pending. I intend to offer a couple of amendments as well.

I will describe one of those amendments this morning. It deals with the establishment of a special committee of the Senate, modeled after the Truman Commission, to investigate the waste, fraud, and abuse that is happening with respect to contracting in Iraq.

I also wish to address another amendment I will offer, that would shut down the investigation that has been going on now 10 years by Mr. Barrett, an independent counsel. He started in 1995 to investigate allegations against Henry Cisneros, who was a Cabinet Secretary, allegations that he had given payments to a former mistress and then lied about it.

That independent counsel investigation started in 1995 and has been going on ever since. But Mr. Cisneros pled guilty in 1999. And he was pardoned in 2001 by a Presidential pardon. Yet here it is 2005 and the independent counsel is still spending money, $1.3 million, I believe, for the previous 6 months. I believe it is time for this Congress to say stop, enough is enough. Stop wasting the taxpayers money. What on Earth could you be thinking about? Four years after the person was pardoned and 7 years after the person pled guilty, the independent counsel is still spending money? If ever there were an example of Government waste and lack of common sense, this is it.

I also wish to mention briefly this country's trade deficit. I wanted to come to the floor the day before yesterday, but I was not able to do that.

There was a small announcement the day before yesterday that in February our trade deficit was $61 billion in 1