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Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable WAYNE ALLARD, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Dr. Richard Foth.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Shall we pray.

Almighty God, creator of heaven and Earth, creator of each of us, we thank You for this day. This is the day You have made, and we "will rejoice and be glad in it."

As our Senators conduct the business of the Nation, pressing to determine critical issues before year's end, we pray for them a baptism of patience and clear seeing. Give them the strength to press on the issues and the capacity to give and receive personal grace in the heat of battle.

In the confluence of political pressures and seasonal celebrations of good will, we pause to recognize our need of You, Lord. We are grateful for Your sovereignty in the world and Your designed place in our lives. You are indeed, Immanuel, "God with us."

In Your Holy Name we pray. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable WAYNE ALLARD 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, December 13, 2005.

To the Senate:

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

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today, after a period of morning business, the Senate will debate the Bahrain Free Trade Agreement under a 60-minute time agreement reached last night. Later today, we will also begin debate on the motions to instruct conferees with respect to the deficit reduction bill. We hope to have a unanimous consent agreement ready which will lock in those motions for debate and votes. We are still trying to determine exactly when those stacked votes will occur, and I will announce that shortly as we get closer to an agreement. Members should adjust their schedules to

accommodate a lengthy week and possible weekend session so that we may complete our business and then go home for the holidays.

IRAQI DEMOCRACY

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I wish to comment just very briefly on what is going on over the course of this week in Iraq, as it focuses on Iraqi democracy and the process that has begun in this country today and will continue through Thursday when the elections are carried out in Iraq.

Earlier this morning, I had the opportunity to talk at the White House in a meeting by teleconference with our Ambassador to Iraq, in Iraq, and General George Casey about the remarkable progress going on in that country today as they updated us with the plans for the elections, what is underway, and looking back to the tremendous progress that has been made over the last several months and the truly remarkable progress that has been made in the elections in January and October and now the preparations made for the elections this week.

On Thursday, the Iraqi people began what is a historic process for choosing their first fully constitutional parliament since the fall of Saddam, culminating in this nationwide vote on Thursday, December 15. In our briefings this morning, it was pointed out that the elections are Thursday and many of us will be watching to see how large a turnout there will be, recognizing that 10 million people turned out for the last elections in October.

Our briefers also pointed out the fact that we have to moderate our expectations a little bit in terms of the overall timing because of the sequence of the events with the elections on Thursday and then a preliminary certification of the elections about a week later and then a final certification in early January, around January 6 or 7. The government itself becomes a product of that

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



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