



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 109th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 152

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2006

No. 15

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 14, 2006, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2006

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord God, our eternal Father whose majesty fills the universe, we give thanks for Your enduring mercy and steadfast love. We are mindful that every sunrise is a gift and every day an opportunity to honor You in book, word, and deed.

Gracious Lord, we ask this morning for Your special blessing on our Nation's Senators, and those who so skillfully serve them here in our Nation's Capitol and in home districts. Grant them the wisdom, courage, discernment, and grace needed to nobly discharge their crucial duties.

Lord, may the radiant warmth of Your eternal providence shine upon this great Republic. May all citizens of this noble land know the width, length, and depth of Your life-transforming presence.

We pray this in Your holy Name.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, a little later this morning, after we conclude our 30 minutes of morning business, we will return to the consideration of S. 852, the asbestos legislation. When that bill is laid before us this morning, amendments will be in order. Chairman SPECTER will be ready to consider those amendments related to the underlying asbestos issue, and we expect rollcall votes during today's session.

We have had good debate up to this point, but it is finally time to begin working on the underlying issues of the asbestos bill. Therefore, we will be here ready and available into the evening to debate and vote on the amendments.

I remind everybody that last night I filed a cloture motion in relation to a Defense Department nomination on the Executive Calendar that has been held up. That vote will be tomorrow morning, and we hope we can get cloture and vote on the nomination early Friday. We have 2 days remaining this week, and Senators should have ample time to offer and debate amendments on the asbestos legislation.

RECOGNITION OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ASBESTOS LEGISLATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is not often that you see a legislative plan with such bipartisan opposition. The asbestos bill before the Senate is an example of how you should not proceed on a piece of legislation. I have explained throughout the week, as have others, that the so-called FAIR Act is not fair. I have explained how this legislation will harm victims by trapping them in an administrative claims system that is irreparably defective and doomed to fail. It is a bill that is not only unfair to victims but to businesses, except for a few large corporations. Major industries oppose this, such as the insurance industry. It is terribly unfair to the American taxpayer, terribly unfair to the veterans.

The trust fund set up under this bill to pay for victims' claims is woefully underfunded. Expert after expert has opined that \$140 billion will not be sufficient to satisfy expected claims, and it doesn't properly account for expected borrowing and administrative costs. Adding insult to injury, the mechanics of the trust fund claims system unacceptably abridge the rights of victims with unworkable startup and sunset provisions.

It is no surprise that the asbestos bill that has reached the Senate floor is in such poor shape when it is the product of such an unusual legislative process. Ordinarily, Senate deliberation on a bill is open and transparent. But consider all the ways this bill is shrouded in mystery.

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



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