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Senate

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM DEMINT, a Senator from the State of South Carolina.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, a nation turns its heart and mind to You. Give hope to those who are underpaid and overworked. Sustain the lonely and empty, particularly those who have lost loved ones in the defense of freedom. Fill the vacuum created by such sadness with Your presence, lest loneliness shackle their faith.

Today, bless our Senators. You know their needs. Supply them from Your celestial bounty. Show them duties left undone. Strengthen them to resist temptation in all of its enticements and to walk the narrow way of discipline that leads to life. Enrich them with Your powerful presence and keep them faithful.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

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, D.C., September 19, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JIM DEMINT, a Senator from the State of South Carolina, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Mr. DEMINT 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. Today, following the opening remarks of the two leaders, we will have a 30-minute period of morning business. Following that time, we will return to the United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement for closing remarks. The agreement provides for a vote on passage at 12 noon today, and that will be the first vote of the day. The Senate will then recess from 12:30 to 2:15 to allow the weekly policy meetings to occur.

When the Senate resumes business at 2:15, we will proceed to executive session for the consideration of the Alice Fisher nomination. We have an order for 5½ hours of debate on the Fisher nomination prior to the vote on confirmation. We expect some of that time to be yielded back, and we will vote on that nomination this evening before adjourning.

Last night, I filed a cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6061, the Secure Fence Act of 2006. That cloture vote will occur on Wednesday morning, and we hope we can invoke cloture and dispose of this bill quickly.

OMAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I wish to take a few moments to comment on the bill we will be voting on later this morning, the Oman Free Trade Agreement.

On June 29, the Senate passed the Oman Free Trade Agreement by a vote of 60 to 34. Today, we will bring the Oman Free Trade Agreement to the floor again for final passage of the House bill.

We have a long history with Oman. Our relationship has extended for near-

ly 200 years. It dates back to 1833, when a treaty of friendship and navigation was signed with Muscat. Oman was the first Arab country to send an ambassador to the United States.

Over the years, Oman has offered us valuable support. When we needed a local airbase for an attempt to rescue U.S. Embassy hostages in Iran during the Carter administration, Oman volunteered. When we needed a safe ground for our troops during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Oman volunteered.

Today, Oman cooperates closely with us and other allies on counterterrorism and has publicly supported the democratic transition in Iraq. Although not a formal member of the coalition, Oman has been a committed, dependent ally in the global war on terror.

In Oman, we have found a solid partner on terrorist finance issues. Oman partners with its neighbors on transborder terror threats, and Oman's Government and religious leaders consistently and courageously denounce acts of terror and religious intolerance.

It is clear that through nearly 200 years of formal relations, we have enjoyed a close and cooperative partnership that continues to expand.

The free-trade agreement before us builds on the progress already made. It strengthens our relationship with a key friend and ally in the region, and it is a model for free trade in the entire Persian Gulf region.

It is not our first bilateral agreement in the region. We struck similar deals with Jordan in 2000, with Morocco in 2004, and with Bahrain in 2005. Like these earlier deals, the Oman agreement will open and expand opportunities for exports of many American products. America's workers, manufacturers, consumers, farmers, ranchers, and service providers will all benefit.

As soon as the agreement takes effect, Oman and the United States will provide each other immediate duty-

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



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