



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 153

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MARCH 19, 2007

No. 47

Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray:

Lord, You have promised to work for the good of those who love You. Work in the lives of our lawmakers, strengthening them for every problem, trial, and temptation they face. Open their eyes to see Your hand at work even in adversity and keep them faithful to You.

Lord, may their lives become models of godly living as You empower them to live worthy of Your Name. Help them to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. Be their refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Empower them to maintain justice and to constantly do what is right. Teach them Your ways and give them Your peace.

We pray in Your holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK L. PRYOR 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. BYRD].

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 19, 2007.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable MARK L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

FIRING OF U.S. ATTORNEYS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in today's Congressional Weekly, a respected publication we get back there, there is a column on the last page by Craig Crawford which I think is quite illuminating. It is entitled "The Firing Squad Backfires."

The fingerprints of the President's top advisers are all over the prosecutors' firing scandal, which means trouble for Bush.

Here is the first sentence:

Of all the scandals that increasingly be-devil George W. Bush's Presidency, none has more direct ties to the President than the flap over firing Federal prosecutors.

I rise today to express my strong support of S. 214, Senator FEINSTEIN's legislation to strengthen the independence of U.S. attorneys. There is growing evidence that the Bush administration fired Federal prosecutors for improper partisan reasons. This legislation is needed to protect the integrity of the Federal criminal justice system and the autonomy of the chief Federal prosecutors across the country.

The U.S. attorney scandal is another example of the arrogance of power. As Lord Acton said, power tends to corrupt, and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely. For too long, the Bush administration—shielded from oversight by a Republican-dominated Congress—enjoyed absolute power, and they abused it.

After all, this was a President who won two elections by the barest of margins, first by the Supreme Court. Yet after 9/11, instead of uniting the country, he has chosen to push the envelope of his authority. On everything from the runup to the war in Iraq, to the plan to destroy Social Security, to the use of warrantless wiretapping, this administration has governed without compromise.

The political purge of U.S. attorneys is only the latest example of this President's unhealthy disregard for checks and balances. Speedy passage of this bill is only the first step the Senate must take to deal with the administration's dangerous power grab.

We need to get to the bottom of this scandal to find out why these U.S. attorneys were fired. We need to find out whether the Attorney General and his deputies testified truthfully when they first explained the firings to Congress and the American people.

Federal prosecutors are enormously powerful individuals. They are the embodiment of Federal criminal law. They make life-and-death decisions about who to prosecute and who should receive leniency. Their discretion is largely unreviewable. They must be permitted to carry out their solemn duties without any political interference.

No one disputes the authority of the President to name U.S. attorneys at the beginning of his term, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. But it is unprecedented that U.S. attorneys be terminated in the middle of a Presidential term without proper cause. It is unacceptable for U.S. attorneys to be replaced because they were perceived by the White House to be insufficiently partisan or too aggressive in prosecuting public corruption.

It appears that administration officials took advantage of a provision that they insisted be included in the

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



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