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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BILL NELSON, a Senator from the State of Florida.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, our Father, You are our light and our salvation. Whom then shall we fear? We thank You for all of life's positive things. Help us to see them and to count them and to remember them, that our lives may flow in ceaseless praise.

Use our lawmakers. Control their minds that all of their thoughts will be guided by You. Shine Your light upon their path and strengthen them to walk according to Your will. Give them a sense of duty that they may leave nothing that they ought to do undone. Teach them to follow You, and lead them on the right path.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable BILL NELSON 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, April 22, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BILL NELSON, a Sen-

ator from the State of Florida, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. NELSON of Florida 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. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of Senator MCCONNELL, we will be in a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 1 hour, with the time controlled by the leaders or their designees and Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The Republicans will control the first half, and the majority will control the final half.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1315, the veterans' benefits bill. We are going to have that vote at noon today.

Today, the Senate will recess from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m., as we do every Tuesday, for our weekly caucus luncheons, and we will also recess from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. for the unveiling of former Majority Leader Daschle's portrait.

Tomorrow, the Senate will be in recess from 11 a.m. to 12 noon for a Gold Medal ceremony in the Rotunda honoring Dr. DeBakey and from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. tomorrow for a Senators-only briefing by Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. That will take place in S-407.

VETERANS' BENEFITS ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday I spoke on the floor indicating that I

thought it was really too bad that the Republicans held up another bill, this one dealing with veterans health benefits. We have hundreds of thousands of veterans returning from Iraq. Twenty percent of them have severe problems as a result of post-traumatic stress syndrome, many of them caused by those terrifying explosions over there that occur all the time, around them and to them. We have 150,000 men and women now in Iraq serving our country bravely.

The veterans' benefits legislation was reported out of the committee 9 months ago, and we have been trying to get permission from the Republicans to bring it to the floor, and they have refused. It expands eligibility for traumatic injury insurance; extends eligibility for adapted housing for those who have been severely burned; it increases benefits for veterans pursuing apprenticeships or on-job training programs; and 80 other provisions that are very important. But we learned yesterday from the ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee that the reason they have held this bill up and intend to continue holding it up is because this legislation restores veteran status to Filipino veterans who served under U.S. command during World War II.

This legislation is important. While our Republican friends are stalling for time, trying to maintain the status quo, our veterans—men and women, young and old—who served with distinction continue to wait for the support, care, and services they have earned. They are waiting for Congress to act.

As I have indicated, the Republicans have followed the lead of the ranking member of the committee and opposed the provision in the bill that provides pensions to Filipino veterans who fought by our side in World War II.

I say what I said yesterday: If you know nothing else about World War II, watch Tom Hanks' documentary of

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



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