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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, a Senator from the State of Maryland.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

“O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come. Our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home. Before the years in order stood, or Earth received her frame, from everlasting, You are God, to endless years the same.” Isaac Watts, 1719.

Lord, today we praise You for Your justice and the impartiality of Your love and mercy.

Shower our lawmakers with Your matchless favor as You enfold and sustain them with Your gracious love. Lord, quicken their minds to seek Your wisdom and infuse them with the desire to do Your will. Give them decisive guidance in the relationships and responsibilities ahead of us. Speak so clearly to them that their utterances will reflect the tenor and tone of Your truth.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, September 17, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, section 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable BENJAMIN L. CARDIN, a Senator from the State of Maryland, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. CARDIN 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, the scheduled termination date of this Congress is a week this coming Friday—a week after the day after tomorrow. We have a lot to do. We are going to finish, sometime today, the Defense authorization bill. I am in conference with Senator LEVIN to see if there is something we can work out. If not, this matter will be completed, no matter what anyone does, at 9:30 tonight. The vote tonight is on passage of the bill. It is not 60 votes. We just have to get a simple majority.

I will file cloture on the Coburn package, which has scores of bills in it that have been held up. I had a very good conversation with him yesterday. I will meet with him later today to see if we can work something out and move forward on that without a cloture vote. I hope that can be done. Senator COBURN said he thought it could be. I hope that is, in fact, the case. I will be as reasonable as I can be, and I am hopeful and confident that he will be.

After that—whatever is determined on that—we are going to move to the tax extenders. We need a vehicle to do

that. Any of the 99 Senators can object to having a vehicle to do that. We, of course, procedurally, could move to something, but it could take a couple extra days. Of course, everyone should understand that we may have to be working the next week or so with no time off. If we have people who are trying to slow things up, stall things, then we are going to have to use the time that we have to use, procedurally, to get to an instrument. Once we get to that, Senator MCCONNELL and I have an agreement that we are going to try to effectuate where we would vote on paying for all the tax extenders as it relates to renewables. Then we would have a vote on whether we are going to pay for AMT, and then a vote on the package and send that to the House.

Of course, after that, there are other things we need to do. We have an economic recovery package. The House will be sending us that. We have a CR that we have to complete to fund the Government. There is one thing I didn't mention by oversight.

When we finish the tax extenders, we have to do the rest of our energy legislation. That is the bill the House passed last night. We can use that for a vehicle. Everybody is expecting—rightfully so—that there would be a vote on Senator BINGAMAN's alternative, there would be a vote on the Republican alternative, and there would be a vote—if, in fact, they decide to move forward on it—on the Gang of 10's so-called bipartisan legislation. So there is the House-passed bill, the Bingaman bill, the Republican alternative, and the bipartisan bill. All of them include drilling. So people can vote their hearts out on drilling. Someone could actually vote for all four of those.

As I indicated, we have the CR. There are a lot of other things the CR may take care of that we have not finished, including MilCon, VA, and Homeland Security appropriations; and there are people out there who are concerned about things we should do before we

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



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