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Senate

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord of all, Your blessings to our Nation astound us. You have given us this rich land to produce an oasis of freedom in a barren world.

Bless our lawmakers as they seek to fulfill Your purposes. Give them great wisdom to choose what is best. As they grapple with complex issues, infuse them with confidence that Your providence will prevail. Renew their strength as they trust Your guidance, so that they will run and not be weary. In due season, bring them a bountiful harvest. We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JON TESTER 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, December 9, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 7005, H.R. 7006, H.R. 7060

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading; is that correct?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent for their second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bills by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 7005) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide alternative minimum tax relief for individuals for 2008.

A bill (H.R. 7006) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide disaster assistance relief.

A bill (H.R. 7060) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide incentives for energy production and conservation, to extend certain expiring provisions, to provide individual income tax relief, and for other purposes.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following the remarks of the two leaders, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business until noon today, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Those three bills that were reported are three tax bills. I have been in touch with the distinguished Republican leader. Those are placeholders for purposes of our having the opportunity to

get to the Detroit bailout, recovery plan, whatever we wish to call it.

I talked to my staff; they were up virtually most of the night working with the Banking Committee from the House and the Senate, and there are two remaining issues that have been discussed with the White House. I am confident those matters can be resolved within the next hour or so. They are both important issues, but I think they can be resolved. That having been done, we will confer, Senator McCONNELL and I, and decide how we are going to proceed. I think it would be to everyone's advantage that we move first, but we will have to wait and see how. The House can do that if they choose to.

We would hope they can complete work on this Detroit situation tonight or tomorrow. Then we have to wait for the White House to determine what, if anything, they are going to do with requesting the other money from the TARP money; that is, the bank bailout. That decision has not been made yet.

Members, I have received calls, as I am sure my distinguished counterpart has, that people have obligations at home, there are a number of important foreign meetings people wish to be involved in that they have set on their calendars for longstanding periods of time. These are not pleasure trips, they are business trips representing the Senate. We hope to be able to complete work here as soon as possible. The problem is we have to wait and see how we move through this. The Senate, being the unique legislative body it is, and it has been, one or two people can slow things down quite a bit. We hope that is not the case. We know what we have to try to do. We need to do it as quickly as possible.

So I hope that, in fact, can be done; that is, the legislation can be put before us and a vote taken.

On the reading of bills, the second reading, I would object to any further

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



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