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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O merciful Lord, enlighten our lawmakers with a clear and shining inward light and remove the shadows from their hearts. Control their wandering thoughts and prepare them to face the inevitable temptations that come. Lord, give them the peace of knowing that their times are in Your hands and that You are willing to fight the battles of all who trust in the power of Your Name. Fill their hearts with Thanksgiving, and may they take time throughout this day to praise You for Your goodness. Help them to maintain a pure conscience as the light of Your truth illumines their path. Join them to You with cords of love, and may they rejoice as they remember Your direct involvement in all the details of their lives.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL 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 18, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico 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 leader remarks this morning, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for up to 1 hour. Senators will be recognized for up to 10 minutes each. Republicans will control the first half; the majority will control the second half. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to executive session to debate the nomination of Ronald Kirk to be U.S. Trade Representative. There will be up to 90 minutes for debate on that nomination, with the majority controlling 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling 60 minutes. Upon conclusion of the debate, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 146, the lands bill. We expect to lock in the vote on confirmation on the Kirk nomination for 2 p.m. today. We also hope to be able to line up three votes on amendments that Senator COBURN has offered following the confirmation vote. Therefore, Senators should expect a series of up to four votes at 2 o'clock this afternoon.

MIDDLE-CLASS TAX RELIEF

Mr. REID. Mr. President, President John Kennedy famously said that "a rising tide lifts all boats."

The economic policies of the past 8 years may have lifted the privileged few to greater wealth, but they left the rest of our country to drown in shallow waters. With this new President, with this new budget, we begin to turn the page. President Obama's 2010 budget honors the middle class. It honors the middle-class values of hard work, responsibility, and opportunity.

After years of falling incomes and rising costs across the board for health care, education, groceries, gas, and retirement, this budget finally begins to bring the American dream back within the grasp of middle-class families once again. We are cutting taxes for 95 percent of working families and ending the irresponsible tax giveaways the Bush administration doled out to the superwealthy. Ninety-five percent of American households will get to keep more of each paycheck to save or spend on a mortgage payment, a doctor bill, a new car, or maybe a used car. We will expand the child tax credit for all families and increase credits available for larger families, who are more likely to live in poverty. We will help families afford the rising cost of college by making a \$2,500 tuition tax credit permanent. We will help to encourage a new generation of savers by providing automatic enrollment in retirement accounts and expanding tax credits to reward the choice to save for retirement. Also, because we understand that every dollar the Federal Government invests comes from American taxpayers, we will ensure that high-level transparency and accountability exist. The taxpayers deserve this, and certainly taxpayer money deserves to be transparent and accounted for.

After 8 years of misplaced priorities, corporate greed, and failed oversight, we are facing a severe economic crisis. And that is an understatement. Senior

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



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