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## Senate

The Senate met at 11 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CARL LEVIN, a Senator from the State of Michigan.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, the fountain of wisdom, today help our lawmakers to be wise enough to ask for Your guidance and humble enough to receive it. Give them the ability to hear Your voice and follow Your leading. Lord, lead them to be as kind to others as they want people to be to them. As they faithfully work for freedom, remind them that they are living in Your sacred presence. Give them the wisdom to avoid the paths that bring regret, remorse, and shame. At all times, keep their thoughts pure, their words true, and their actions honorable. Cultivate within them the grace of gratitude, integrity, discipline, and kindness.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CARL LEVIN 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 30, 2009.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable CARL LEVIN, a Senator from the State of Michigan, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. LEVIN 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, the Senate will proceed to the budget resolution. Under the statute that governs this legislation, we have 50 hours of debate. There will be no rollcall votes today. There should be a lot of votes in the next few days after today.

### THE ECONOMY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 8 years ago, President Bush inherited from President Clinton a prosperous and a very strong nation with a tremendously powerful, growing economy. Our unemployment rate was at an exceptionally low rate of just over 4 percent. We had a budget surplus of about \$130 billion. We were actually paying down the debt. For 3 years, we paid down the debt by about half a trillion dollars.

President Bush and congressional Republicans inherited an economy that was growing and lifting all Americans along with the growing economy. Then Bush, Cheney, and the congressional Republicans set about dismantling the foundation of prosperity that built up over the years. They slashed taxes for the super-rich based on the long-discredited theory that these dollars would trickle down to the middle class and poor. They repealed or ignored oversight laws meant to protect our fi-

nancial markets from manipulation and excess. They borrowed hundreds of billions of dollars to fight a war in Iraq marred by waste, fraud, and abuse. It took all of their 8 years in power, but George Bush, Dick Cheney, and Republican allies here not only reversed the prosperity they inherited but set us on the course of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

This January, President Obama inherited from President Bush an unemployment rate above 7 percent, and climbing, a Republican deficit of nearly \$500 billion, and a national debt twice the level it was when he took office. In the first weeks of his term, President Obama has shown exactly why our country entrusted him with the Presidency during this hour of crisis. We inherited a Republican deficit of half a trillion dollars. But with calm and determined leadership, President Obama proposed an economic recovery plan that is now beginning to stem the tide of job loss—especially jobs—and create new opportunity for workers and small businesses in every corner of our country. He proposed a budget that focuses on long-term prosperity, in addition to near-term recovery, by lowering taxes for working people, laying the groundwork for cutting the Republican deficit in half, and investing in renewable energy, health care, and education.

Over the past weeks, Members of Congress have taken a close look at the President's budget and considered their own proposals to strengthen it further. As usual, Chairman CONRAD has done an outstanding job. He has brought Democrats and Republicans into the budget process and considered all proposals with equal weight. That is how we will approach this week ahead.

A piece of legislation this important to America's future requires us to move forward in a serious, productive, and inclusive manner. Democrats have maintained all year that the best solutions to the challenges we face come

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



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