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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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.

Almighty God, eternal and unchangeable, You have ordained that day follows night and that in trials we find our triumph. Keep our lawmakers aware of Your goodness and mercies, which never fail. Lift them above contention and disappointment to an optimism that trusts the unfolding of Your loving providence. May they also live with the awareness that our times are in Your hands. Lord, give our Senators the wisdom to rededicate themselves to the doing of Your will, so that this Nation may yet shine with the beauty of righteousness and justice, as a citadel of healing, wisdom, and strength.

We pray in Your merciful 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. INOUE).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 3, 2011.

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.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following any leader remarks, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each. The Republicans will control the first half, and the majority will control the final half.

At 11 a.m., the Senate will resume consideration of S. 23, the America Invents Act. I would hope if people have amendments they want to offer to this legislation they would do so. I would hope they would be germane, but there are no restrictions. People can offer whatever amendments they want on this matter. But I would hope we can do that.

PATENT REFORM

We had an important amendment offered by Senator FEINSTEIN yesterday. It is an extremely important measure.

I am supportive of that. It is an issue where I think we should not try to fix something in that area of patent reform that is not broken. But the patent reform bill is important. We have 750,000 patents that have been applied for, and there has been no response from the Patent Office.

One of the big issues we had was how we are going to pay for this, the work they have to do. We had a novel idea. Senator COBURN, it is my understanding, came up with the idea first: have the Patent Office pay for it with the applications people file. That money would go to the Patent Office to get rid of that backlog.

In the past, as I understand it, those moneys have gone to the general fund. So that issue was going to be a big debatable issue on this bill. But there was a bipartisan agreement that we should take care of that. That is in the managers' package. So that is good.

So the other issue is on the first-to-file. Senator FEINSTEIN offered that amendment. We will have a vote on that as soon as we can. I would hope if there are other amendments, we can get to them quickly.

There will be a period of morning business from 2 to 4 p.m. today. The majority will control the first hour, and the Republicans will control the next hour.

Senators should expect rollcall votes in relation to amendments on the America Invents Act to occur throughout the day.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, for 2 years now Washington Democrats have taken fiscal recklessness to new

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



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