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## Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JEFF BINGAMAN, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

### PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, our Father, take our Senators this day and make them what they cannot be without Your power. Enlighten their minds so they will know what is best for the good of our land. Break for them the habits they cannot break, calm for them the worries they cannot still, soothe for them the sorrows no human comfort can ease. May they always remember that nothing can separate them from Your great love.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JEFF BINGAMAN 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, December 5, 2011.

To the Senate:

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

DANIEL K. INOUE,  
President pro tempore.

Mr. BINGAMAN 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 assistant 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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, today following leader remarks, the Senate will be in morning business until 4:30 p.m. Following morning business, the Senate will be in executive session to consider four U.S. District judges. At 5:30 p.m., there will be a rollcall vote on confirmation of the Ramos nomination. We hope the rest of the nominations can be confirmed by voice vote.

### PAYROLL TAX CUT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last week, my friend the Republican leader tried to convince us that Republicans realize it would be disastrous to raise taxes on the middle class. Here on the Senate floor, he quoted half a dozen news reports as evidence that the Senate Republicans support an extension of payroll cuts for 160 million American workers. I said at that time I was skeptical the Republicans support this tax cut. It turns out I was right. Last Thursday the Republicans shot down the Democrats' proposal to cut taxes

for middle-class Americans, supposedly on the grounds it raised taxes on the richest of the rich. But a few minutes later the Republicans also shot down their own proposal—one they had placed on the Senate floor—to expand the payroll tax cuts even though it was paid for with their own hand-picked reductions in government spending. Well, they shot that down. They only got 19 votes plus the vote of the cosponsor.

Whatever my friend Senator McCONNELL may say, it is obvious that the Republicans are not interested in preventing a \$1,000 tax increase on nearly every family in the Nation from taking effect on January 1. Democrats will not relent on keeping taxes low for the middle class.

Today Senator CASEY will unveil a modified version of the proposed payroll tax cut that he introduced last week. Like our previous proposal, it will cut back taxes for 160 million American workers. That is 160 million workers, including 1.2 million Nevadans. This proposal will allow the average family to keep \$1,500 to spend on necessities next year. Like our previous proposal, it will be fully paid for with a mixture of spending cuts that Republicans have already agreed to and a tiny surtax on the top .2 percent of Americans. Every spending reduction was agreed to by a bicameral group of Republicans in the supercommittee, so we know they support these cuts—or they should support these cuts. In an effort to make our proposal more palatable to Republicans, we conceded significantly to cut the tax on income above \$1 million and make it temporary.

Democrats know how important extending and expanding the payroll tax cut is to working families. It is also important to our economy. Economists of every political persuasion agree that if Republicans block this proposal—raising taxes on American families by

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



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