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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, who has made of one blood all the nations of the Earth, hallowed be Your Name. Give Your grace to our lawmakers so that their lives will give a witness to Your providential power and love. May the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts be acceptable to You. Give them courage in danger, steadfastness in trial, and perseverance in difficulty.

Lord, we also ask You to touch Senator MARK KIRK with Your healing hands, restoring him to robust health.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS 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, January 24, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, a Senator from the State of Delaware, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COONS 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 be in a period of morning business until 4 p.m. today. During that period of time, each Senator will be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes. The majority will control the first 30 minutes and the Republicans will control the second 30 minutes. The Senate is going to recess from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. today to allow for our weekly caucus meetings. The State of the Union is at 9 p.m. tonight. Senators will gather at 8:30 p.m. to proceed to the House of Representatives.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for generations this was the American promise: If you worked hard and played by the rules, success would be within your reach. We call that success the American dream—to earn a decent wage, buy a home, put your children through school, and retire comfortably. For many people in this country, that dream has drifted further and further from reality. The recession cost many Americans their jobs, homes, savings, and basic economic security. Many are still struggling. Although the economy has made slow progress toward recovery, there is still much more work to be done before every American who wants to work can find a job.

But the terrible recession is only part of the problem. The same Wall Street greed that caused the financial collapse is fueling the greatest income

disparity since the Great Depression. In the last few decades, the average CEO's income has multiplied 250 times. Meanwhile, CEO's employees have watched their incomes creep up barely at all.

So America is at a crossroads. As President Lyndon Johnson said in 1965—and it is time to ask that now—and I quote:

... not only how to create wealth but how to use it; not only how fast we are going, but where we are headed.

That is what he said. And the path we choose will determine what kind of a country we will be. We can choose to be the kind of nation where the hard work of many pays off only for the richest few or we can be the kind of nation where every man and woman shoulders a fair share of the burden and reaps a fair share of the reward. We can be the kind of country where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer or we can be the kind of country where middle-class families share in the opportunity and the prosperity.

President Obama has called this choice a "make or break moment" for the middle class, and tonight he will lay out a roadmap that sets us on the path to fairness instead of inequality. I look forward to hearing President Obama's vision this evening. It begins with an economy that works for every American—regardless of the size of his or her checkbook. I expect the President to lay out commonsense ideas to spur American manufacturing, create jobs, and help small businesses compete and grow. His vision is fueled by homegrown, renewable energy. It is time to stop spending American dollars on foreign oil. It is time to hire American workers to build wind turbines and next-generation vehicles. The President will propose a new plan to make sure that today's students are ready for tomorrow's jobs and that today's workers remain competitive in our global economy.

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



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