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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP, a Senator from the State of North Dakota.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Architect of the universe, before the mountains were formed and the hills were born and the Earth received its frame, You are God. You fill the universe with the mysteries of Your power, and we are in awe of Your handiwork.

Inspire our Senators to unite with You in the great cause of bringing healing to our Nation and world. May they sense Your presence continually, think of You consistently, and trust You constantly, receiving Your divine guidance for the path ahead. Lord, inspire them to think imaginatively about how to do Your will on Earth even as it is done in Heaven. We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP 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. LEAHY).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 13, 2013.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable HEIDI HEITKAMP, a Senator from the State of North Dakota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Ms. HEITKAMP 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. Madam President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in morning business. The Republicans will control the first 30 minutes and the majority will control the second 30 minutes.

We will seek an agreement for the consideration of the nomination of Senator Hagel to be Secretary of Defense during today's session.

In addition, sometime this afternoon, we hope to have a vote on the Kayatta nomination to be a circuit court judge for the First Circuit.

VISION OF FAIRNESS

Mr. REID. Madam President, last night the President of the United States laid out an agenda to strengthen the middle class and expand upon our economic progress. He outlined an agenda that will restore the core value that makes this Nation great: fairness.

Senate Democrats stand ready to work with the President to make this vision—a vision in which every American shares the prosperity as well as the responsibility—a reality. President Obama's agenda calls for commonsense investments in our future, investments which will breathe new life into a struggling middle class, investments which will make America a magnet for

jobs and manufacturing once more, investments which have been deferred for too long due to the worst recession since the Great Depression.

The President's plan will give American manufacturers the support they need to thrive, while ending giveaways to companies that ship jobs overseas. His plan will create jobs building world-class roadways, railways, and bridges which our economy may rely upon tomorrow.

The plan will prepare current and future workers to compete in a global economy by making K-12 schools the best in the world again and college affordable for every graduate. His plan will break our addiction to foreign oil and encourage investments in reliable energy, a change which will be good for the environment and for the economy.

As he said last night, it will be done without adding a single penny to the deficit. These investments in a strong middle class are not just right for our country, they are right for our economy as well. Our efforts to restore prosperity will mean little unless Congress acts immediately to deal with arbitrary, across-the-board spending cuts set to take effect.

If the looming sequester strikes, 70,000 young children would be kicked off Head Start and 10,000 teaching jobs would be at risk. The Small Business Administration will be forced to reduce loan guarantees to small businesses by up to \$540 million. Democrats believe we should replace this harsh austerity with a balanced approach that targets wasteful spending, tax loopholes, and asks the wealthiest among us to contribute a little more to reduce the deficit.

The American people know we can't cut our way to prosperity. They agree. We can't ask the middle class to bear the burden of the entire deficit reduction. Later this week Democrats will release a plan to avert the so-called sequester.

Republicans say they agree the deep cuts they voted for will be damaging to

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



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S663