



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2015

No. 49

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Holy God, Superintendent of the universe, thank You that You give us the gift of forgiveness. In spite of our shortcomings, You continue to bury our mistakes in the sea of forgetfulness. Help us to respond with loving gratitude for Your generous mercies.

Today, use our lawmakers to advance Your kingdom. Lord, enable them to contribute to the well-being of our Nation and world. Help them to remember as they labor they are either making a deposit or a withdrawal. May all the deliberations on this high hill of our Nation's life begin, continue, and end with You.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

A BALANCED BUDGET

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, throughout the Obama era, families across the country have had to make a lot of tough decisions. Lost jobs or lower wages meant doing more with less and refocusing on what truly mattered. It wasn't easy, but families

made the best of difficult situations in order to position themselves for greater success in the better days to come.

Meanwhile, in Washington, we saw record levels of overspending, trillion-dollar deficits, and historic levels of debt. Hard-working families made tough choices while the Obama administration and its allies aimed to keep right on overspending. It was more than just wrong; many would say it was unfair.

But, today, Democrats can join together with Republicans to help rectify the inequity. Instead of having Washington play by one set of rules and the middle class by another, we can force Washington to start confronting very big challenges, just as everyone else has to do.

We can force Washington to focus on serving the middle class again instead of the other way around, and we can begin by passing the balanced budget before the Senate today.

This balanced budget pivots on an essential truth—that Washington has a spending problem, not a revenue problem—and strives to make government more accountable, more efficient, and more accessible. It represents a significant step forward when it comes to solving our country's many fiscal challenges.

But that is just one reason this balanced budget is so important. Here is another: It will help promote economic growth right now and promote sustained opportunity well into the future.

It aims to do so in a variety of ways; one is promoting energy advancement as an engine for growth. The energy revolution is truly historic. It is creating thousands of jobs, lowering costs for the middle class, and helping lift many into that middle class. This budget embraces that progress. It aims to remove needless barriers to environmentally responsible energy development. I expect other Members to come to the floor to discuss the energy component in greater detail today.

I also expect Members will come to discuss funding America's national security needs. As we know, there are numerous threats facing our country—terrorism practiced by groups such as ISIL, Al Qaeda and its associates; Iranian efforts to advance its ballistic missile program, pursue a nuclear weapon, and sponsor terror; and Russian and Chinese attempts to expand their spheres of influence, which will require us to modernize our force.

We must eventually give the Defense Department the certainty it needs to modernize the force. Members continue to work toward solutions for funding defense in the most robust and predictable way possible.

I commend Chairman ENZI and Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM for providing us with a path forward in the interim. Their proposal represents a good-faith compromise to begin the legislative process for the Defense authorization bill we will consider later this year—when the additional overseas contingency funds can be prudently allocated against the actual procurement and modernization needs of our military, if only for the coming fiscal year.

Short of revising the BCA, this is the best strategy to keep faith with our armed services, and this is the best option we currently have for leaving President Obama's successor in a better position to face so many global challenges.

Every budget, obviously, is a compromise. This one is surely that, but it is a good compromise. It embraces growth. It reaches for a more prosperous energy future. It positions our Nation for a better outcome than we have seen otherwise on defense. It is bold, yet balanced, and it aims to change Washington's focus away from the needs of big-spending politicians and toward the aspirations of hard-working Americans who are very right to demand a government that is efficient, accountable, and focused on growth.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S1739