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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.

Gracious God, You are worthy of our praise. Let Your Name be honored on Earth as it is in Heaven. Fill our lawmakers with a spirit of reverence for You and Your purposes. As they seek Your wisdom, direct their steps through the unfolding of Your Divine providence. May no weapon formed against them be able to prosper. Lord, continue to do great things for and through them, causing justice to roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Thank You that we can come to You in weakness and find strength.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

FISCAL AGREEMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I said that the Senate would take up the fiscal agreement after the House acted, and we are. This agreement isn't perfect. I share some concerns other colleagues have raised. But here is the bottom line. This is a fully offset agreement that rejects tax hikes, secures long-term savings through entitlement reforms, and provides increased support for our military. All this is at a time when we confront threats in multiple theaters.

Each of these items was a Republican goal heading into the negotiation. Each of these items was achieved in the agreement before us. I am encouraged that it would enact the most significant reform to Social Security since 1983, resulting in \$168 billion in long-term savings. I am encouraged that it would repeal more of ObamaCare. I am encouraged that it would help provide resources our troops so desperately need in an era of diverse and very challenging global threats—when we see ISIL consolidating gains in Iraq and Syria; when we see the forces of Assad marching alongside Iranian soldiers and Hezbollah militias, supported by Russian aircraft overhead.

Colleagues know that I will respect whatever choice they ultimately make when this agreement comes up for a vote. There are valid differences of opinion, and that is OK. But I ask every colleague to also consider what this fully offset agreement would mean for the men and women who voluntarily put themselves in harm's way so that we may live free.

Commanders tell us that additional resources are required—required to ensure their safety and preparedness. This fully offset agreement would help provide them—along with enacting the most significant Social Security reform in over three decades, along with repealing another piece of ObamaCare, and along with refusing to raise taxes

by a penny. I hope Senators will join me in voting for it.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN BOEHNER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, allow me to say a few words about the Speaker of the House. There is a lot you can say about JOHN BOEHNER. He loves his breakfast every morning at Pete's Diner. He is a fan of the tie dimple. He is one of the most genuine guys you will ever, ever meet. I know because we have fought many battles together in the trenches. He never breaks his word. He never buckles in a storm.

What is amazing is how we have had such a frictionless relationship, especially when you consider that old House saying: The other party—that is just the opposition. But the Senate—that is the enemy.

That may have been true of past House and Senate leaders, but it wasn't true for us. Though you might not expect it, I am a little more Bourbon and JOHN is a little more Merlot. I lecture on Henry Clay. John sings "Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah." But I have always considered JOHN an ally. I have always considered JOHN a friend. It is hard not to like him, and it is hard not to admire what John has accomplished in his career.

As a concerned Ohioan, he took on a scandal-plagued incumbent in a primary and won. As a freshman Congressman, he took on money laundering schemes and banking scandals involving powerful Members and prevailed. As an engineer of the Contract with America, he took on Democrats' decades-long power lock and triumphed.

As an ex-member of leadership once considered politically dead, he knew he had more to offer and convinced his colleagues that he did. As the inheritor of a diminished and dispirited House minority, he dared to believe conservatives could rise again and help grow the largest Republican majority since

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



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bob-haired flappers were dancing the Charleston back in the 1920s.

JOHN BOEHNER has wandered the valley. JOHN BOEHNER has also been to the mountaintop. JOHN BOEHNER has slid right back into the valley, and then ascended to great heights yet again. He does it all with hard work. He does it with an earnestness and an honesty I have always admired.

When JOHN talks about struggling to make it, it is not some platitude. When JOHN gets choked up about Americans reaching for their dreams, it is not some act. This is a guy who had to share a bathroom with 11 brothers and sisters. Imagine that. This is a guy whose parents slept on the pullout sofa. This is a guy who worked hard behind the bar and eventually found his way atop the rostrum. Maybe that is why he is so humble. Maybe that is why when he orders breakfast at Pete's, they don't call him Mr. Speaker; they call him "John-John."

Here is what I know about Speaker JOHN BOEHNER. He says the code he lives by is a simple one: Do the right thing for the right reasons, and the right things will happen. I have always found that to be true. I found it to be true in our battles fighting side by side for conservative reform, sometimes from a position deep in the minority. We had our share of Maalox moments. That is for sure. But he always strived to push forward.

As I said about JOHN BOEHNER the day he announced his retirement, grace under pressure, country and institution before self—these are the things that come to mind when I think of him. I wish Speaker BOEHNER the very best in retirement. I thank him for always working hard to do the right thing—for his family, for his district, for his party, and for his country. Farewell, my friend.

PAUL RYAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Though we bid farewell to one Speaker today, we know we will soon be saying hello to a new one. The House will vote later this morning on the nomination of Congressman PAUL RYAN. I think it is appropriate to wait for that vote to occur before making full comments. But I also think it goes without saying that PAUL RYAN is one of the most respected guys around here. Everyone knows he is smart. Everyone knows he is serious. I look forward to working closely with him in pursuit of conservative solutions for our country.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 597

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand that there is a bill at the desk due a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 597) to reauthorize the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

BUDGET AGREEMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last night the House of Representatives passed the bipartisan budget agreement that will keep our Government open, funded, and free from default. Now, 100 percent of the Democrats in the House of Representatives voted for this, and 68 percent of Republicans voted against it. Let's pause just a minute and understand what I said: 68 percent of the Republicans in the House of Representatives voted to default on the full faith and credit of our great country. So 68 percent of the Republicans voted to close our government.

This legislation is now before the Senate. I urge all of my colleagues to support this responsible agreement. It is not perfect, as my friend the Republican leader said. No legislation is. But this budget agreement accomplishes two major priorities the Democrats have long supported. It promotes economic growth by providing relief from sequestration's damaging cuts for 2 years, and it ensures that we invest equally in the middle class and the Pentagon. The budget agreement is good for the middle class, good for the economy, and good for the country.

I thank the people who worked so hard to make this agreement what it is today. The agreement was among President Obama, Speaker BOEHNER, MITCH MCCONNELL, Leader PELOSI, and I helped. I applaud and commend the President of the United States. He was firm, he was resolute, and he was—as usual—very smart. I appreciate the good work that he did to help us get to the point where we are now.

To reach these negotiations, each of us had discussions with each other. We also know that a lot of the work was done by our staffs—our respective staffs. My chief of staff, Drew Wilson, represented the Senate Democrats in these negotiations. The Senate Democratic caucus is aware of Drew's expertise, hard work, fairness, and openness. Drew was ably assisted by Gary Myrick—indispensable Gary Myrick, who is the Democratic Secretary, as well as a number of people on my team of senior policy analysts who helped a great deal. Kate Leone—I don't think there is anyone in the Senate who doesn't know who Kate Leone is. She is the expert on health care. Bruce King,

Ellen Doneski, Ayesha Khanna, Trey Reffett, Tyler Moran, George Holman, Gavin Parke, Alex McDonough, and utility man Bill Dauster all worked literally night and day to get this to the point where we were able to be here on the floor today, seeking support for it.

I am so grateful for the wonderful staff that I have, but there were others involved. Senator MCCONNELL's negotiator in this was Hazen Marshall. Hazen Marshall is a good person. He was resolute. He carried forward what the Republican leader wanted, but, like my staff, you never get exactly what you want. Everybody enjoyed working with him.

Dave Stewart was Speaker BOEHNER's negotiator on this. I care a great deal about Dave Stewart. David is a good man, and we all admire the work that he has done. I hope the new Speaker to be, PAUL RYAN, will use his good offices. He is very good. He is a talented man.

Dick Meltzer was Leader PELOSI's able negotiator. I have to commend NANCY PELOSI. I so admire this good woman. She is a stalwart in the House of Representatives. She will go down in history as one of the great leaders of that body. I admire her, appreciate her friendship, and extend to anyone within the sound of my voice my appreciation for the work that she did on this bill.

As to the White House, I have already indicated the President did a wonderful job on this, but he also assigned two really terrific, good, outstanding people. I can't say enough about them. Brian Deese was one of the White House negotiators, along with Katie Fallon. Katie is a woman whom we all know in the Senate. She worked for Senator SCHUMER for a number of years, and she worked for the Democratic Policy Committee. She was on the committee for a number of years. We admire her very much. She was so helpful with everything we did in this legislation. She was always easy to get ahold of. She was easy to reach.

It is now time for this important legislation to pass the U.S. Senate.

I have to say a few words about Speaker BOEHNER. I have to admit that I was skeptical when he said that he wanted to clean out the barn before he left, but he found a way to clean out the barn by passing a clean debt limit and a 2-year budget agreement, which should go a long way to returning the appropriations process to the way it should work.

I will always consider him my friend, and I will miss him. I wish him the very best in everything he does in the future. I listened to his final remarks on the House floor, which were very moving. It wasn't only JOHN BOEHNER who shed a tear over there today, but many Members of the House of Representatives and a number of us who watched his final speech shed a tear or two.

There has been a lot of talk about the appropriations process. I have been