

**SENATE—Monday, June 28, 1999**

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

**PRAYER**

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, Sovereign of this Nation and Lord of our lives, we thank You for outward symbols of inner meaning that remind us of Your blessings. The sight of our flag stirs our patriotism and dedication. It reminds us of Your providential care through the years, of our blessed history as a people, of our role in the unfinished and unfolding drama of the American dream, and of the privilege we share living in this land.

Today, as we pledge allegiance to the flag, we recommit ourselves to the awesome responsibilities You have entrusted to us. May the flag that waves above this Capitol and the flag here in this Chamber remind us that this is Your land.

Our flag also gives us a bracing affirmation of the unique role of the Senate in our democracy. In each age, You have called truly great men and women to serve as Senators. May these contemporary patriots experience fresh strength and vision, as You renew the drumbeat of Your Spirit, calling them to march to the cadence of the rhythm of Your righteousness. In the name of our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. We will now have the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag led by Senator KYL.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL) 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 ACTING MAJORITY LEADER**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

**SCHEDULE**

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I would like to note that the Senate will now be in a period of morning business until 1 p.m. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the agriculture appropriations bill. Under a previous order, the Senate will begin a series of up to four stacked cloture votes at 5:30 p.m. Those votes will

be on invoking cloture on the agriculture appropriations bill, followed by cloture on the motion to proceed to the transportation appropriations bill, cloture on the motion to proceed to the Commerce-State-Justice appropriations bill, and cloture on the motion to proceed to foreign operations appropriations. Therefore, Senators can expect the first vote to begin at 5:30 p.m.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

**RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

**MORNING BUSINESS**

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 1 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. SESSIONS pertaining to the introduction of S. 1289 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. SESSIONS. I yield the floor.

Mr. WYDEN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

**MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE**

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, and colleagues, this is going to be an important week in the debate about the future of the Medicare program. The White House is coming forward with several useful Medicare proposals. Democrats and Republicans on both sides of the Hill are similarly focused.

This morning I have come to the floor to zero in on the issue of prescription drug coverage for older people under Medicare. I believe if the Senate builds on a bipartisan proposal already approved by a majority of Senators, it will be possible to responsibly add prescription drug coverage to the Medicare program in this session of the Congress.

A few weeks ago, 54 Members of this body voted for legislation offered by Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE and myself to finance prescription drug coverage for seniors under Medicare with a tobacco tax. Senator SNOWE and I have now developed a specific proposal that calls for a 55-cent-a-pack tobacco tax that

would be used to cover the prescription drug needs of older people under Medicare. We think that is appropriate because, of course, the Medicare program spends upwards of \$10 billion a year simply paying for tobacco-related illnesses that older people have suffered.

Under the Snowe-Wyden proposal, we would be able to raise \$70 billion in order to cover prescription drug benefits for older people over the next 10 years. That is hard dollars to cover this important benefit. It is not phantom funding. It is not sleight of hand. It is not a kind of wish-and-hope, pie-in-the-sky way to take care of this particular need for older people. It is a concrete, tangible concept.

A majority of the Senate, Senators of both political parties, have voted for it. I am very hopeful that it will be possible now for the Senate to build on this support, with bipartisan approval, to actually get the job done and support older people.

In the legislation that Senator SNOWE and I have put together, we envision this \$70 billion being used to assist older people with the insurance premiums that they now pay for Medicare supplemental policies. As we know, many of our seniors have Medicare supplemental policies. Many of our seniors participate in what is called Medicare Choice, a program that involves Medicare HMOs. It may well be that a number of seniors wish to purchase policies that cover only prescription drugs.

But what Senator SNOWE and I have developed would be voluntary. No senior would be required to do it. The Presiding Officer and I will recall the catastrophic care fiasco of several years ago when older people were concerned about being required to pay for something they did not really need or did not particularly want.

That would not be the case under the legislation developed by Senator SNOWE and I. It would be voluntary if an older person chose to participate in the program; and \$70 billion in real funding would be eligible to assist the older people who desire to have that coverage as part of their Medicare.

Senator SNOWE and I believe the best way to deliver this coverage is to build on a model that Members of Congress know a fair amount about, and that is the Federal employee health plan.

Senator SNOWE and I recognize that program covers different people than we would be covering under Medicare, so our delivery system for this particular benefit would be a kind of senior citizen's version of the Federal employee health plan. We call it the