

**SENATE—Wednesday, March 24, 1999**

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by a guest Chaplain, Father Robert J. Sweeney, National Chaplain of the American Legion, Greenwood Lake, NY.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Father Robert J. Sweeney, National Chaplain of the American Legion, Greenwood Lake, NY, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray:

God of our fathers; throughout the history of this great and glorious Nation, our leaders have turned to You for guidance. On bended knee, from Bunker Hill to Gettysburg, our leaders have called upon Your consoling presence. Help us to realize that our Nation has been consecrated to Your service. Aware of the obligation that goes hand in hand with this responsibility, may we help all those in need.

We acknowledge that we are "one Nation under God." We seek Your righteousness. Stretch forth Your healing wings that we might follow Your example of healing and stretch forth our hands in a generous spirit, as we have heard: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."—Acts 20:35.

Omnipotent Father, be with the women and men of this Senate. Grant unto them Your grace; open their hearts and minds that they may hear the needs of their constituents and respond for the common good of all.

Send Your Spirit upon us and take away our doubts and fears that we might join together, without regard to political affiliations. Bless our Senators. May they be prudent and wise and ever aware of Your presence. May they always advance the cause of peace with justice throughout the world. Amen.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able senior Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the distinguished President.

SCHEDULE

Mr. DOMENICI. On behalf of the majority leader, I would like to make the following announcement.

This morning, the Senate will begin consideration of S. Con. Res. 20, the budget resolution, with up to 35 hours for debate. Members should expect the next couple of days of session to be longer than usual, with rollcall votes beginning early each morning and continuing late into the evening. The co-

operation of all Senators will be necessary in order for the Senate to complete its work prior to the beginning of the Easter recess. Senators who plan to offer amendments to the budget resolution should contact the managers of the bill in order to facilitate a smooth and orderly process during the consideration of the resolution.

I thank colleagues in advance for their cooperation.

Mr. President, yesterday my good friend, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, asked if he might make a statement this morning that he considers very important, historically. I yield the floor to let him make that statement. I yield him as much time as he desires.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I am grateful to my friend from New Mexico.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "EXXON VALDEZ" OIL SPILL

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, today is the 10th anniversary of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Alaska.

I want to use this opportunity to reflect on the impact that disaster had on the land and people of my State.

I still remember traveling to Alaska to view the damage caused by the *Exxon Valdez* in Prince William Sound.

Believe me, Mr. President, it is a sight I never want to see again.

At that time, I referred to the huge oil slick battering against the shoreline as "the black blanket of the *Exxon Valdez*."

And while that spill caused serious damage to our wildlife, our environment and our people, that black blanket has had somewhat of a silver lining.

I refer to the Oil Pollution Act of 1990—OPA '90.

Congress and the Department of Defense are currently looking at implementing a "national missile defense system" to protect the United States from incoming ballistic missiles.

I consider OPA '90 to be the "National Oil Spill Defense System" that protects the United States from future oil spills.

OPA '90, as many Senators will recall, was signed into law on August 18, 1990.

It is important to note that OPA '90 has not been significantly revised since 1990—and at present, there has not been any push for comprehensive revisions.

It is a testament to the act itself that it has not needed major revisions.

Some of the provisions of OPA '90 were under consideration prior to 1989,

but unfortunately, it took the *Exxon Valdez* spill to bring about a comprehensive approach to our national system of oil spill prevention and response.

Congress enacted OPA '90 only 17 months after the spill—a very short period of time given the scope of the legislation.

That landmark piece of legislation created a new national framework that focuses on both the prevention of spills and the response to spills.

It was written to reduce the chances we will ever have another spill of the magnitude of the *Valdez*—anywhere.

That act, and the actions it mandates, has already vastly improved the response system for lesser spills.

On a national level, OPA '90—

(1) Required the phase-in of double-hull oil tankers—which has begun and will be completed by the year 2015;

(2) Required improvements to vessel traffic systems and to vessel communications and warning equipment;

(3) Brought about stringent background checks and manning standards for tank vessels;

(4) Required the United States to seek better international oil spill prevention and response measures;

(5) Clearly defined the liability of tank vessel owners and operators;

(6) Required the creation of a national contingency plan and response system, as well as area contingency and response plans.

These prevention measures are vitally important if we are to ensure the safe transportation of oil in our waters.

As a result of OPA '90 spill response equipment must be pre-positioned in strategic locations all over the country.

By doing this, we greatly increase the response time for a future oil spill, God forbid it ever happens again.

The national and area contingency plans required by OPA '90 are the primary reason the response to oil spills has become so quick.

Unlike when the *Valdez* disaster occurred, if a spill occurs today, it should be literally a matter of minutes before a response plan is executed.

By requiring contingency plans, OPA '90 forces planning for potential spills in a comprehensive manner.

A large part of the credit for the implementation of the new plans should go to the Coast Guard and I have commended it for the tremendous work it has done in the past 10 years in developing the national and area plans.

In addition to the national measures put in place by OPA '90, it contained a number of measures specific to Alaska and Prince William Sound.