

SENATE—Wednesday, February 23, 2000

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

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

Dear Father, we thank You for Your loving kindness. We are amazed by Your infinite patience with humankind. Each of us has known that patience. You are merciful and gracious with us. Help us to be as patient with ourselves. We find it difficult to be up for others when we get down on ourselves. Give us patience with others. Forgive us when we are irritated or annoyed and lose patience with them. Grant us patience with the political process, with ideological adversaries, and with those who refuse to march to our drumbeat. Remove the chips from our shoulders and replace them with Your all-powerful, upholding hands.

Gracious God, give us hope based on the assurance of Your timely interventions and courage rooted in Your strength. Slow us down when we run ahead of You. We want to walk with You at Your pace and in Your direction, neither running ahead nor lagging behind. We give up the assumption that we are in charge of everything, and we trust our challenges and our opportunities to Your control. You are our Lord and Savior. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MIKE CRAPO, a Senator from the State of Idaho, 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 PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able Senator from Idaho is recognized.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period of morning business be extended until the hour of 12:30 p.m. and between 11:30 and 12:30 Senators be limited to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SCHEDULE

Mr. CRAPO. Following morning business, Mr. President, the Senate is ex-

pected to begin consideration of S. 1134, the education savings account legislation. However, the Senate may also begin consideration of any other Legislative or Executive Calendar items available for action.

As a reminder, the vote on the Iran nonproliferation bill has been scheduled to occur on Thursday morning at 11:30, and, as previously announced, there will be no votes on Friday.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

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 12:30 p.m. The time until 10:45 a.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, or his designee.

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I yield myself such time of Senator DURBIN's as I might use.

THE NEED FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, this will be a session in Congress in which we will have plenty of challenges and opportunities to discuss issues. We live in a country where we are blessed with an economy that is growing, and with unemployment that is about as low as it has been in my adult lifetime. Inflation is down. We have had the blessings of a rising stock market; we recently had some adjustments there. But home ownership is up. Personal income is up. We have a lot of things that exist in our economy that represent good news for our country.

I come from a farm State, and there is not such good news for family farmers. They are suffering through a very

severe crisis with collapsed grain prices and other difficulties. But, generally speaking, our country has been doing quite well. Our economy is stronger than almost any other economy in the world. Economists now predict that we will have budget surpluses as far out as the eye can see. Of course, that is not very far; economists who can't remember their home address try to tell us what is going to happen with the economy three, five, and ten years from now.

It is interesting to note, if you go back to the early 1990s, virtually all leading economists in America predicted that the 1990s would be a decade of slow, anemic economic growth. Of course, they were almost all wrong. So as we confront our challenges and opportunities in the future, I think it is wise for us in this Chamber not to be seduced by some who would say that if we are going to have continued budget surpluses, let's have a \$1.3 trillion tax cut over 10 years. I think it is much wiser to provide some targeted tax cuts with some of the surplus, if it materializes, and use a fair amount of the expected surplus to reduce Federal indebtedness.

Why? Because during tough economic times you need to use increased debt to help you through those tough times, and during good economic times it seems to me you would want to reduce indebtedness. So I hope that is what we do.

However, even as we discuss all of those fiscal policy changes and challenges, it is important for us to evaluate what else is necessary to be done, and what investments should be made. One is education. Clearly, our future is our children, and clearly we all, Republicans and Democrats, want the same thing for our children. We want every single young child in our country to walk through a classroom door and believe, as parents and as Americans and as legislators, that that classroom is one of which we are proud.

That is a classroom in which that young child can learn, in which that young child may grow up to be a nuclear physicist, or to be a doctor, or a lawyer, or the best plumber, mathematician, carpenter—whatever it is the talents of that young child allow it to be. That is what we want for our children in education.

There are a range of other education challenges that we will debate and discuss this year. In the area of health care, there are challenges as well.

I came to the floor to talk about one specific area which, it seems to me, we must work together to address, and