

SENATE—Wednesday, July 26, 2000

The Senate met at 9:31 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:

Almighty God, take charge of the control centers of our brains. Think Your thoughts through us and send to our nervous systems the pure signals of Your peace, power, and patience. Give us minds responsive to Your guidance.

Take charge of our tongues so that we may speak truth with clarity, without rancor or anger. May our debates be efforts to reach agreement rather than simply to win arguments. Help us to think of each other as fellow Americans seeking Your best for our Nation, rather than enemy parties seeking to defeat each other. Make us channels of Your grace to others. May we respond to Your nudges to communicate affirmation and encouragement.

Help us to catch the drumbeat of Your direction and march to the cadence of Your guidance. Here are our lives. Inspire them with Your calming Spirit, strengthen them with Your powerful presence, and imbue them with Your gift of faith to trust You to bring unity into our diversity. In our Lord's name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable WAYNE ALLARD, a Senator from the State of Colorado, 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 acting majority leader, Senator ALLARD, is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:15 a.m. with Senators DURBIN and COLLINS in control of the time. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the Treasury and general government appropriations bill. If cloture is invoked, the Senate will begin 30 hours of postcloture debate. If cloture is not invoked, the Senate will proceed to a second vote on the motion to proceed to the intelligence authorization bill.

Again, if cloture is invoked on the motion, postcloture debate will begin immediately.

As a reminder, on Thursday the morning hour has been set aside for those Senators who wish to make their final statements in remembrance of the life of our former friend and colleague, Senator Paul Coverdell. At the expiration of that time, a vote on the motion to proceed to the energy and water appropriations bill will occur.

I thank my colleagues for their attention. I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLARD). 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 for debate only, except for a motion to proceed made by the majority leader or his designee and the filing of a cloture motion thereon. Senators will be permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each. Under the previous order, there should be 20 minutes under the control of the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, or his designee, and under the previous order there should be 20 minutes under the control of the Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS, or her designee.

The Senator from Illinois.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am certain those who were observing the Senate Chamber yesterday and perhaps the day before are curious as to why absolutely nothing is happening. It reflects the fact that there is no agreement between the parties as to how to proceed on the business of the Senate, particularly on the appropriations bills.

At this moment in time negotiations are underway, and hopefully they will be completed successfully very soon. At issue is the number of amendments

to be offered, the time for the debate, and some tangential but very important issues such as the consideration of appointments of Federal district court judges across America to fill vacancies. These judgeships have been a source of great controversy in recent times because there is a clear difference of opinion between Democrats and Republicans about how many judges should be appointed this year.

Of course, the Republicans in control of the Senate are hopeful that their candidate for President will prevail in November and that all of the vacancies can then be filled by a Republican President. That is understandable. The Democrats, on the other hand, in the minority in the Senate, have a President who has the authority to appoint these judges and wants to exercise that authority in this closing year. Therein lies the clash in confrontation.

Historically, the last time the tables were turned and there was a Republican President and a Democratic Senate, President Ronald Reagan had 60 Federal district court judges appointed in the election year. In fact, there were hearings on some of them as late as September of that year. This year, we have had about 30 appointed and we have many more vacancies, many more pending. We are hopeful, on the Democratic side, these will be filled. Those on the Republican side are adamant that they do not want to bring them up. I hope they will reconsider that and at least give Democrats the same consideration we offered President Reagan when he faced a Democratic Senate with many Federal district court vacancies.

The other item of business which consumed our attention over the last week or two related to tax relief. It is an interesting issue and one that many Members like to take back home and discuss; certainly most American families, regardless of whether they are rich or poor, desire some reduction in their tax burden.

The difference of opinion between the Democrats and Republicans on this issue is very stark. There is a consideration on the Republican side that tax relief should go to those who pay the most. Of course, those who pay the most taxes are, in fact, the wealthiest in this country. We have a progressive tax system. We have had it for a long time. We believe if one is fortunate enough to be successful, those taxpayers owe something back to this country. Those who are more successful owe more back to this country. You can't take blood from a turnip; you can't put a high tax rate on a person