

**SENATE—Wednesday, April 5, 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:

As we pray today, we remember Booker T. Washington, born on this day. Once a slave, he became an outstanding American reformer, educator, and writer. His life emulated one of his most significant statements: "I am determined to permit no man to narrow or degrade my soul by making me hate him."

Let us pray.

Almighty God, Lord of history, You call great leaders and anoint them with supernatural power to lead in times of social distress when Your righteousness and justice must be reestablished. We praise You, O God, for the life and leadership of Booker T. Washington in the cause of racial justice. You gave him a dream of equality and opportunity for all people which You empowered him to declare as a clarion call to all America. As we honor the memory of this truly great man and courageous American, we ask You to cleanse any prejudice from our hearts and help us to press on in the battle to assure the equality of education, housing, job opportunities, advancement, and social status for all people regardless of race or creed. May this Senate be distinguished by its leadership in this ongoing challenge to assure the rights of all people in this free land. 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 is recognized.

**SCHEDULE**

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, today the Senate will resume consideration of Senate Concurrent Resolution 101, the budget resolution.

By previous order, there will be 90 minutes of debate on the Hutchison-Robb amendment equally divided between the two managers. Following the debate, there will be two back-to-back

votes at 11 a.m. The Robb second-degree amendment regarding prescription drugs will be the first vote, to be followed by the vote on the Hutchison amendment regarding the marriage tax penalty.

Other amendments will be offered throughout the day, and therefore Senators may expect rollcall votes during today's session. There are approximately 20 hours of debate remaining on the resolution.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to make sure we have 45 minutes on each side. The vote will not occur right at 11 o'clock.

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

**FISCAL YEAR 2001 BUDGET—  
Resumed****Pending:**

Hutchison/Ashcroft amendment No. 2914, to express the sense of the Senate to provide for relief from the marriage penalty tax.

Robb amendment No. 2915 (to amendment No. 2914), to condition Senate consideration of any tax cut reconciliation legislation on previous enactment of legislation to provide an outpatient prescription drug benefit under the Medicare program that is consistent with Medicare reform.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Who yields time?

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Minnesota.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from New Jersey.

Let me first of all commend Senator ROBB of Virginia. I think what he has done out here on the floor of the Senate is very important for our country, and not just for senior citizens. He submitted an amendment that would make it out of order for the Senate to consider a reconciliation bill that spends on-budget surplus on tax cuts unless Congress has already enacted legislation establishing an outpatient Medicare prescription drug benefit.

I come here to the floor of the Senate to congratulate Senator ROBB and to speak for senior citizens in Minnesota.

If we are about legislation that is important to people's lives, if we want to be here to represent the people in our States, there is no more important amendment for us to pass. This isn't where the rubber meets the road, but it is all about the general direction for the Senate, and the direction Senator

ROBB's amendment calls is to make sure we make a commitment to funding prescription drug coverage for senior citizens in this country.

In the State of Minnesota, on the basis of hearings I have attended, on the basis of conversations and meetings—some of them incredibly heartfelt and incredibly painful—with elderly citizens in my State, there is no more important thing we can do than to pass this amendment and to once and for all cover prescription drug benefits for senior citizens.

First of all, in the State of Minnesota, because of a very unfair and, I argue, even discriminatory Medicare reimbursement to our managed-care plans and to our seniors, we have in our State only one-third of senior citizens receiving any kind of prescription drug coverage at all. Two-thirds of the senior citizens in Minnesota don't have any coverage whatsoever. I think in the country it is about one-third. But in our State it is an acute problem; it is a problem of crisis proportion.

Second of all, as a result of that, it is not uncommon to meet seniors who, even when the doctor gives them a prescription, can't fill the prescription because they don't have the money, or they cut the pills into thirds or into halves, all of which is dangerous. I have met all of those senior citizens. I have been in these conversations with senior citizens about this. It is not uncommon to meet people who spend \$300 or \$400 a month to meet their prescription drug costs and at the same time their total monthly income is \$1,000—all the while, in the pharmaceutical industry, the costs have gone up 17 percent a year over the past couple of years, and they are projected to go up again. The pharmaceutical industry rakes in record—I argue exorbitant, I argue obscene—profits.

But for today, what is so important about the Robb amendment is that if we want to do something to really make a difference in the lives of people we represent, we must expand Medicare and provide this coverage.

My colleagues on the Republican side want to go forward with tax cuts, many of which go to higher income people least in need. They seem to believe it is not an appropriate role for Government or the Senate to provide prescription drug coverage as a part of what Medicare is all about.

I think the vast majority of people in the country believe that when it comes to certain pressing issues of their lives, there is a positive role Government can play. This is a perfect example to make sure people do not go without the very