

SENATE—Wednesday, January 24, 2001

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:

Omnipotent God, who hung the stars in their place, put planets in their orbits, and created humankind on this planet in this universe among universes, You are our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. Everything within us rallies to express our praise. You have created us to love You, and when love for You is the motive of all we do, all of life is worshiped. Today we want our work to be our way of telling You how much we love You. What a privilege You have given us to serve You out of love in this Senate of this Nation You love and have blessed so bountifully!

Therefore, we commit this day to glorify You so that even mundane duties will serve as a magnificent praise to You. Help us to love and care for the people with whom we work as if in them we meet You dressed in the manifold variety of human personalities. May our constant goal be to do our work with excellence as devotion to You. "Oh Yahweh, our Adonai, how excellent is Your name in all the earth. For You have created us a little lower than Elohim, Yourself, and crowned us with glory and honor to assume dominion over the works of Your hands."—Psalm 8: 1, 5-6. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JOHN ENSIGN, a Senator from the State of Nevada, 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. ENSIGN. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period for morning business until 11 a.m. with Senators DURBIN, MURKOWSKI, and COLLINS in control of the time. At 11 a.m., the Senate will resume consideration of Governor Thompson's nomination to be Secretary of HHS. There will be up to 30 minutes of debate on the nomination with a vote scheduled to occur at 11:30

a.m. Additional nominations are scheduled for hearings during today's session, and it is hoped that we can expedite those nominations for full Senate action as early as this afternoon. I thank my colleagues for their attention.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. 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 now will be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 11 a.m. with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Under the previous order, the time between 10:30 a.m. and 10:50 a.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Alaska.

The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

NOMINATION OF GALE NORTON

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, for the benefit of all Members, I want to advise them that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources just concluded reporting out favorably the nomination of Gale Norton as the President's nominee for Secretary of the Interior. The committee vote was 18-2. I don't think there is any question that the nominee, in effect, received a mandate from our committee.

It is interesting to note the thoroughness under which the Energy and Natural Resources Committee conducted 2 days of hearings. I particularly thank Senator BINGAMAN, who chaired the committee during the time under which control of the Senate was under the other party, and all those on both sides who worked to expedite the material necessary to determine the inquiries that came in.

There were 224 questions submitted to the nominee for response. All those questions were answered over a matter of a day and a half. Looking at many of the written questions, I did note that

she had answered in the open hearing most of the questions. In any event, it is interesting that in the case of the former Secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, the committee reported him out the same day after concluding its hearings. All the questions, of course, were not in on that particular occasion. I point this out for the benefit of those who are students of history and procedure in the Senate.

I join with all our colleagues in congratulating the nominee, Gale Norton. She will be a fine Secretary of the Interior. She is extraordinarily qualified in public lands and will bring back a balance to the assessment of science and technology, as we look to the development of resources on our public lands.

ENERGY CRISIS IN CALIFORNIA

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I rise today to address the situation in California. I want to make sure there is no misunderstanding. We all have a very legitimate concern for the plight of California from the standpoint of the energy crisis that is underway.

Yesterday the Secretary of Energy extended the order which requires that outside providers of power provide power to the State of California for a period of about 2 weeks. This has serious consequences because there may be some in California who see this as relief, which it is, and believe that relief can continue without any significant correction internally within California.

I do not want to mislead anybody because I am convinced that the administration, in issuing this order of 2 weeks, stands firm in its statement that it will not extend that beyond 2 weeks, which means California is going to have to address a procedure to ensure that payment is made for electricity coming into that State.

I am concerned that the Federal Government has assumed a contingent liability by this order because it has ordered the generators to move that power into California. It did not address how it was going to be paid for. So if the State of California can't pay for it, then there is potentially a cost to the Federal Government. By taking this step, the Government may well have picked up a liability, perhaps a contingent liability. Nevertheless, it is a reality.

This morning at the Energy and Natural Resources Committee business meeting, after discussion with Senator BINGAMAN and other members, we agreed we would hold a hearing next week on the California situation. It would bring in the surrounding