

SENATE—Thursday, December 6, 2001

The Senate met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable DEBBIE STABENOW, a Senator from the State of Michigan.

PRAYER

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

Almighty God, together we salute You as Lord of our lives, the one to whom we all must report, the only one we ultimately need to please, and the one who is the final judge of our leadership. We pray that our shared loyalty to You as our sovereign Lord will draw us closer to one another in the bond of service to our Nation. It is in fellowship with You that we find one another. Whenever we are divided in our differences over secondary issues, remind us of our oneness on essential issues: our accountability to You, our commitment to Your Commandments, our dedication to Your justice and mercy, our patriotism for our Nation, and our prayer that, through our efforts, You will provide Your best for our Nation. And there is something else, Lord: We all admit our total dependence on Your presence to give us strength and courage. So with one mind and a shared commitment, we humbly fall on the knees of our hearts and ask that You bless us and keep us, make Your face shine upon us, lift up Your countenance before us, and grant us Your peace. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable DEBBIE STABENOW 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, December 6, 2001.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable DEBBIE STABENOW, a Senator from the State of Michigan, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Ms. STABENOW thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, this morning the Senate will be in a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The majority leader has asked me to announce that he hopes to have as many as three rollcall votes on judicial nominations beginning at around 11 o'clock this morning. At noon, under the order previously entered, the Senate will begin consideration of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act. There will be rollcall votes on amendments to the Defense appropriations bill throughout the day.

As I announced last night for the majority leader, if there is any hope of getting out of here next Friday—and I think there is—we must complete our work on the Department of Defense appropriations bill this week. This week could be tonight, Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. But if there is any hope of getting us out of here, we have to get this bill to conference as quickly as we can so that the House and Senate conferees can report a conference report to both the House and Senate. If we do not finish the bill this week, our ability to leave here a week from tomorrow is very limited.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1766

Mr. REID. Madam President, I understand S. 1766 is at the desk and is due for its second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask that S. 1766 be read for a second time, and then I would object at this time to any further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bill for the second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1766) to provide for the energy security of the Nation, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Wyoming.

SENIORS MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2001

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I rise today to make a few comments on a bill introduced earlier this week and about which I have not had a chance to talk. I introduced it along with Senator LINCOLN of Arkansas. It is called the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2001.

I am very happy to have had an opportunity to introduce this bill. It is important legislation, particularly for seniors living in rural areas. The bill is designed to provide more opportunities for seniors under Medicare to have professional assistance in areas where often there are shortages of providers, and this is designed to help that situation.

It permits mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists to bill Medicare for their services, and it pays them at the rate of clinical social workers.

It is particularly important in rural States, such as my State of Wyoming, where often there is a shortage of mental health providers, and so it requires a good deal of travel. On the other hand, there are trained social workers who are prepared to provide these services if they have an opportunity to do it under the Medicare Program. That is what this bill does.

Currently, there are Medicare limitations on the types of mental health providers. Rural seniors are often forced to travel a good distance to take advantage of those services. Mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists are often the only mental health providers in a community. They have the same training and