

SENATE—Monday, December 10, 2001

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. BYRD].

PRAYER

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

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” saith the Lord.—Zechariah 4:6.

Almighty God, our Adonai, thank You for these salient words reminding us that You are the only reliable source of strength to accomplish anything of lasting value. These words spoken through Zechariah and repeated during the days of Hanukkah have particular significance to us this year. We claim the meaning of the word Hanukkah, “dedication,” as we rededicate our lives to serve You in the struggle to assure religious freedom for all people. We join with Jewish people in the celebration of the Feast of Dedication and remember the victory in 165 B.C. of the Maccabees over the tyrant Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his troops who had occupied Jerusalem, desecrated the temple, and sought to destroy forever the Hebrew religion.

We celebrate this victory that enabled the Jews to rededicate the temple and once again worship You freely. Gratefully, we remember the one remaining flask of pure olive oil left in the temple that You kept burning for 8 days and 8 nights until the supply could be replenished. Now, as Jews light menorahs, we ask You to light up all of our hearts with Your truth so that we all can shine in the spiritual darkness of our time when evil things are done in the name of religion, and where religious freedom is denied people. We dedicate ourselves to battle injustice not by our might or our power, but by the courage of Your Spirit. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore 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.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this afternoon we are going to consider the farm bill. There will be no rollcall votes today. The next rollcall votes will occur on Tuesday morning at 9:30 a.m. on judicial nominations.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1786 and S. 1789

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I understand there are two bills—S. 1786 and S. 1789—at the desk, having been read the first time. Is that true?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. That is correct.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order, en bloc, for these two bills to receive a second reading, but I would then object to any further consideration on the legislation.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the request that the two bills be considered en bloc?

Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.

The two bills are considered, en bloc.

Is there objection to the second reading of the two bills, en bloc?

Hearing no objection, the two bills are read, en bloc.

The majority whip has objected to further reading of the bills. They will, consequently, be placed on the general orders calendar on the next legislative day.

AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION, AND RURAL ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2001

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 1731, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1731) to strengthen the safety net for agricultural producers, to enhance resource conservation and rural development, to provide for farm credit, agricultural research, nutrition, and related programs, to ensure consumers abundant food and fiber, and for other purposes.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The absence of a quorum has been suggested. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, now before the Senate is the farm bill. The farm bill will do a number of things. First of all, it will stimulate the economy. The need to stimulate the economy is something we need to do right away.

Before getting into the intricacies of the farm bill, I refer to a couple of pieces of mail I have received. Unfortunately, we don't get mail the way we used to, but I have some e-mails here.

Dear Senator REID: We wish to thank you for the Thanksgiving meal we received from you via the Culinary Union here in Las Vegas.

During Thanksgiving break, I helped pass out some turkeys and other little boxes until we ran out. People were donating them. They thought they would have enough. They weren't even close to having enough meals. But this is a letter, an e-mail, that says:

My husband has worked here for 29 years plus and is out of work. Never have we not had money for the holiday. We would not have had the turkey dinner if wasn't for you. We have even enjoyed leftovers. We just want you to know how we appreciate it. Thank you very much. The Heller's.

Here is another one:

I was recently changed to part time at the corporation where I work. This was done to reduce my hours and eliminate my health insurance. The result is I am earning one half of my prior income and I am paying \$600 per month for COBRA. I need temporary help in maintaining my health insurance through COBRA. I understand there is legislation regarding a tax credit for people relying on COBRA. Your endorsement of this proposal would be of great help to me and my family. Thank you for your support. Sharon Sharp.

These are two examples of things we need to do in addition to the farm bill to stimulate this economy. No. 1, do something about unemployment compensation so people who, for example, have gone from welfare to work and don't qualify for unemployment benefits can get some unemployment benefits. If you want to stimulate the economy, give money to then people who are most likely to spend it. Then, of course, this letter from Sharon Sharp, who talks about the importance of doing something about COBRA.

Two of the fundamental precepts of our economic recovery plan, our stimulus, should be to do something about unemployment benefits and to do something about COBRA. I hope we will do both.

I was a little bit confused yesterday as Vice President CHENEY blamed the majority leader for the Senate's failure to pass an economic stimulus package. He even went so far as to call Senator DASCHLE an obstructionist. I know