The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Presiding Officer, the Honorable Judd Gregg, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire.

PRAYER

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

Yaveh our Adonai, how excellent is Your name in all the Earth. Today, as we return from recess and at the beginning of Jewish Heritage Week, we praise You for the immense contribution Jews have made to America. We remember the first Jewish community in Newport, Rhode Island comprised of Sephardim, persecuted Spanish and Portuguese Jews who arrived in the spring of 1658. This group of refugees began to worship together in private homes or rented buildings until a synagogue building, the Touro Hebrew Congregation, was constructed. On the wall of this synagogue is a letter from George Washington expressing his belief in religious freedom as the standard for civil liberty: “To bigotry give no sanction, to persecution no assistance.” We also echo the words of Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island: “All men may walk as their consciences persuade them, everyone in the name of his God.”

On this day we thank You for the ten Jewish Senators and their strong moral and social consciences. May Your shalom rest upon us all. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable Harry Reid, 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.

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. Thurmond). The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
President pro tempore,

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable Judd Gregg, a Senator from the State of New Hampshire, to perform the duties of the Chair.

Strom Thurmond,
President pro tempore.

Mr. Gregg thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore: Under the 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 not to exceed beyond the hour of 2 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 5 minutes each.

Under the previous order, the time until 1 p.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Illinois, Mr. Durbin, or his designee.

The Senator from Nevada.

BROWNFIELDS

Mr. Reid. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss an important piece of legislation that I believe we should be working on today, certainly tomorrow. This legislation, the bipartisan brownfields bill, S. 350, was reported from the Environment and Public Works Committee on February 27 by a vote of 15–3. This legislation now has 66 cosponsors. It is ready for floor action and has been for more than a month. There were a couple of people in committee who voiced concerns about specific bill language, particularly Senator Voinovich. I indicated at that time that we would work with him prior to the bill being ready for floor action to satisfy any problems he might have, and we did that. We worked with him, and I think Senator Voinovich is satisfied. Actually we worked day and night to reconcile these differences.

The bill is very important. The bill would produce almost 600,000 jobs around our country. It would increase annual tax revenues up to $2.4 billion. This is important environmental legislation. We need to move forward immediately. There has been a lot of controversy over what President Bush has done and what he has not done, but the one thing that he campaigned on was this legislation. He campaigned on the importance of this legislation. This is a bill the administration endorses. This is a bill the Clinton administration endorsed. This is legislation that we should move forward. I see no reason we cannot. We are ready on this side to move forward. We hope that our friends on the other side of the aisle are ready to move forward. We have worked on this legislation for years. It is just not one that is good for the environment. It is good for jobs. We should not delay its consideration any longer. It is supported by the last administration, supposedly by this administration, and I hope the leadership in the Senate, the majority leader, will allow this matter to be brought before the Senate.

This legislation has been worked on very closely by Senators Voinovich, Inhofe, Bond, and Crafo, as well as Senators Clinton, Boxer, Corzine, and Graham to accommodate all their interests. Senator Smith and I have worked hard to have this bill reported out of committee. I hope we can have action on the Senate floor at an early date—maybe this afternoon, maybe tomorrow. But I think we should move forward quickly.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.