

SENATE—Wednesday, February 16, 2005

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer.

Let us pray.

O God, our protection, who fills the universe with the mysteries of Your power, guide and direct our lawmakers today in their work. Sustain them with the knowledge of Your mercy and supply them with wisdom for life's crossroads. Make them aware of Your presence during critical moments of decision.

In the hour of temptation, help them to exercise self-control. Use their skills for the strengthening of the Nation. Give each of us a faith in You that can be seen in our daily lives.

Thank You, Lord, for the opportunity You have given so many of us to serve You as we labor for our country. Enable us to live quiet and peaceful lives as we honor You.

We pray also for our men and women in harm's way around the world.

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.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 90 minutes with Senators permitted to speak therein, with the first 30 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee, and the next 30 minutes under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today we have a period of morning

business for up to 90 minutes. The first hour of that time is divided with the majority controlling the first 30 minutes, and the minority in control of the second 30 minutes.

At about 11 o'clock, the Senate will begin consideration of S. 384, the Nazi War Crimes Working Group extension bill. Senator DEWINE is the primary sponsor of that legislation, and he will be here to begin the debate.

Last night, we reached an agreement for 90 minutes of debate on the bill to accommodate several Senators who want to speak on the underlying legislation. It does not appear that a roll-call vote will be necessary on passage of S. 384, and we will notify everyone if someone requests a vote.

We are also working on agreements for the genetic nondiscrimination bill and the high-risk pooling bill.

This week, we also hope to consider the committee funding resolution, as well as any additional nominations that become available.

Finally, I remind all of our colleagues of the traditional reading of George Washington's Farewell Address that will occur this Friday. The junior Senator from North Carolina, Mr. RICHARD BURR, has agreed to deliver that address, and we thank him in advance for his contribution to this longstanding Senate tradition.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the final 30 minutes of the allotted morning business time be under the control of Senators CORNYN and LEAHY, or their designees.

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

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, much of the discussion of Social Security has been dominated by the politics of fear, scaring seniors into believing their benefits will be cut or taken away.

Let me be clear. Discussions about Social Security are not about the retirement security of those Americans who are 55 or older; the Social Security system for folks 55 and older is fine. It is not going to be changed. I will be one of those. If you were born before 1950,

you are OK. There is nothing to worry about. In fact, I urge those 55 or older, talk to your kids; Talk to your grandkids; Start thinking a little bit about their future.

Social Security is a sacred trust. Many Minnesotan seniors depend on Social Security each month to buy food and medicine. Those checks are going to continue regardless of what happens in the discussion today.

The reality is we face a challenge, the challenge that the President of the United States talked about in the State of the Union, a challenge to work in a bipartisan way to fix the problems we all know Social Security faces today.

Society is changing. We are living longer. We are healthier, more productive. This places greater pressures on America's retirement system.

When Social Security was started, there were 41 workers for every retiree. By 1960, there were 16 workers per retiree. Today there are 3 workers per retiree. When the baby boomers start to retire in only 3 years, there will be a point where there are 2 workers for every retiree. That is the challenge we face.

As we start to retire, right now we have a surplus. In 13 years, we will be paying more out of Social Security than is coming in as more and more baby boomers retire. Congress will be faced in a little over a decade and beyond with a decision of how to make up the hundreds of billions of dollars going out of a system, than is coming in. That will have an impact on many other things we need to do for the country.

The challenge is, do we sit and wait? Three years comes quickly. In 13 years, the system pays out more than comes in. What do we do before we reach that point? It is not bankrupt but it means it does not have enough money to pay its obligations. Two-thirds of the folks working today every day have 12 percent from their paycheck taken out for Social Security every week. At a certain point they will not have that. That is a reality. It is not political rhetoric. It is a reflection of demographics.

The question is, What do we do? I offer personal experience on an issue like this to my colleagues to reflect upon. When I was elected mayor of St. Paul in 1993, there was a contract settled before I became mayor. My budget director then walked in, and said: Mr. Mayor, we will have \$200 million of unfunded liability retiree health benefits based on their contract unless we do something. The good news is it is 15