

SENATE—Thursday, July 20, 2006

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

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by the Reverend Ed Sears, Grace Baptist Temple, Winston-Salem, NC.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray together.

Our Father and our God, as we assemble today in the Senate Chamber, we do so with a keen sense of awareness of our special need of You. Our Nation has a rich history of Your many blessings, and we ask for those blessings to continue upon us. May Your presence be felt, and may Your hand of divine provision be realized.

In this awesome assembly today, give to each person wisdom and understanding for the times that are at hand. With the rich bounty of our history and the awesome opportunities of this present hour, may we move into this day with a special sense of Your call.

With our confidence in You and our responsibility to each other, we invite Your guidance and direction in the affairs of state this day. In times of debate and difference, may we remember that at the end of the day we are, indeed, "one nation under God."

Protect those who serve the cause of freedom around our world, especially those serving in our Armed Forces.

May the love of God the Father, the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus, and the communion of Thy spirit rest upon the Members of this Senate as they gather to conduct our Nation's business. In Jesus's Name. 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.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina.

REVEREND ED SEARS

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, it is my honor and pleasure to welcome our guest Chaplain this morning, the Reverend Ed Sears of Winston-Salem, NC. Reverend Sears is from my hometown, and it is an honor to have him in Washington today blessing the Senate.

Reverend Sears is the senior pastor at Grace Baptist Temple in Winston-

Salem. He has faithfully served Grace Baptist's congregation of over 1,000 members for the past 25 years. Reverend Sears first heard his call to serve in 1971 and has since used his faith to minister and lead. In addition to his service to his church and his community, Reverend Sears holds the distinction of blessing both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In 2003, Reverend Sears was the guest Chaplain in the House and now honors us this morning in the Senate. Grace Baptist Temple, the city of Winston-Salem, and I appreciate his faith and fellowship.

Reverend Sears has been happily married for 39 years. His wife's name is Linda, and they have three daughters, Kelly, Millicent, and Heather. I would also like to congratulate Reverend Sears on the newest addition to his family, his youngest granddaughter, Anna Claire Walker.

Mr. President, it is our privilege to have Reverend Ed Sears lead the Senate in its opening prayer.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

FANNIE LOU HAMER, ROSA PARKS, AND CORETTA SCOTT KING VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AND AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2006

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 9, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows: A bill (H.R. 9) to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning we are proceeding directly to H.R. 9, the voting rights reauthorization bill. We have a unanimous consent order that provides for up to 8 hours of debate today, although I do not expect all that time will be necessary. We will proceed to a vote on passage of H.R. 9 whenever that time is used or yielded back, and therefore that vote will occur sometime this afternoon, and I expect passage of that voting rights reauthorization bill.

There are several circuit and district court judges that will require some debate and votes today. We will have a

unanimous consent agreement on those debate times shortly, and we will likely consider those judicial nominations following the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

We have been working on an agreement on the child predator legislation for a short debate and vote, which will occur today, and we hope to have that agreement as well.

Finally, we have an order to proceed to the child custody protection bill today, and we have Senators who would like to speak on this issue later today as well.

Having said that, the schedule will require votes over the course of the day—possibly into the evening—in order to finish. Although there is a lot to do and people have requested time to be set aside, I think a lot of that time can be yielded back over the course of the day and we will be able to complete the schedule as I have laid out.

In a few moments, after the chairman makes his opening statements on the Voting Rights Act reauthorization, I will return with an opening statement as well. It has been a process we have expedited in many ways because the importance and significance of this legislation is very clear. So I am delighted that we are moving to it this morning and that we will be passing it later this afternoon.

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

Mr. SPECTER. Are we prepared to proceed at this time with the consideration of the Voting Rights Act?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. That is correct.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, this is a historic day for the Senate and really a historic day for America as we move forward with Senate action to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. This action, coming from the Judiciary Committee in our executive session yesterday afternoon, passed unanimously—18 to 0—moves the Senate toward completion of this reauthorization today and for submission to the President and for the formal signing next week.

In an era where many have challenged the ability of the Congress to function in the public interests and in an era where there is so much partisan disagreement, it is good to see the two parties in the House and the Senate coming together to reauthorize this very important legislation.

I thank and congratulate the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee for pulling together and moving ahead at this time, with a prodigious