

SENATE—Tuesday, September 9, 2008

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JON TESTER, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Father, give us this day love and reverence for Your Name. May we trust You so completely that no challenge will intimidate us. Remind us that You will never forsake us and will sustain us through life's storms.

Lord, continue to empower the Members of this body. Help them to grow in their respect and esteem for each other as they become more like You. Strengthen them to live expectantly, knowing that You will supply them with serendipities, wonderful surprises of Your grace. Let Your peace, which passes all understanding, keep their hearts and minds in the knowledge of Your love.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JON TESTER 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, September 9, 2008.

To the Senate:

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

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the distinguished Republican leader and I are

going to shortly have a conversation that will hopefully help us as a body to determine which direction we are going to go over the next few days. We have before us the Defense authorization bill; 30 hours postcloture is running now. We have our regular caucuses this afternoon, as we always do, and hopefully this afternoon we will start legislating.

Following the statement I just completed, there will be a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for 10 minutes each, with the Republicans controlling the first half and Democrats controlling the second half. Following that, we will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 3001, the Defense authorization bill. The Senate will recess, as I have indicated before, from 12:30 until 2:15 today to allow for the weekly caucus luncheons to occur.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the 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 for up to 1 hour, with the time equally divided and controlled and with the Republicans controlling the first half of the time and the majority controlling the second half of the time.

The Senator from Texas is recognized.

TAKING ACTION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as we return from the August recess, we return to the same problems Congress left unresolved when we left in July.

As I traveled around the State of Texas, I continued to hear people express concerns not only about high energy prices but high food prices. They are concerned that Congress is not doing enough to deal with this crisis. Frankly, I have to say that as I talked to Republicans and Democrats and Independents in my State, it was hard to find anybody who felt as though Congress is doing its job. That is right. I don't care whether they were Republican or Democrat or Independent, there is a reason Congress has a historically low congressional approval rating, according to most public opinion polls, and that is because people look at Congress and they see not a

genuine attempt to roll up our sleeves and try to solve problems but too much partisanship, too much point-scoring, too much posturing for the upcoming election.

I don't know any Member of this Senate who actually ran for election and hoped to serve in this distinguished body who anticipated coming up here and being stuck in the same old replay day after day, month after month, where Congress has essentially become dysfunctional in dealing with the concerns of the American people. Rather, I think most of us hope to come up here and actually make a difference, actually get something done. I know there is concern that if something gets done, somebody is actually going to get credit for having solved a problem. I think that is a risk we ought to take because if Democrats and Republicans were actually working together to try to solve problems, I think both sides would get credit and the American people would feel better about their elected officials and feel as though maybe Congress and Washington are somehow a little less disconnected from the rest of the country.

For example, we know that when we left here in August, one of the things we had hoped to do was to get a vote on more domestic drilling to be able to produce American energy rather than depend, as we do—\$700 billion worth—on importing that energy from other sources. I am glad there have been some continuing discussions, and I am hopeful that ultimately we will be able to actually do something—do something relevant, do something responsive, do something significant to deal with these high prices. We know there are several things we can do—yes, conservation is part of it, using less, but also producing more American energy so we are less dependent on importing oil from dangerous and unfriendly regions of the world.

Now, it is interesting, because I think the majority of the American people look at Congress and they don't necessarily distinguish between Republicans and Democrats and who is in charge and who is not in charge. I have to say congratulations to our Democratic friends who won the majority in the Senate and in the House in the 2006 election. That is the good news. The bad news is the Democrats are actually in charge of setting the agenda. When Congress is stalemated over something as important to the average American and Texas family as high energy prices and we are unable to get it teed up so we can actually have a meaningful debate and a vote, an up-or-down vote on