

SENATE—Wednesday, June 30, 2010

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK BEGICH, a Senator from the State of Alaska.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal and blessed God, in the midst of our days of labor, we are grateful for opportunities to pray.

As our lawmakers grapple with pressing issues, give them the wisdom to seek Your guidance and to depend upon Your direction. Respond to their petition by undergirding them with Your enabling might, empowering them to exercise responsible stewardship of their influence by striving to be lights in a dark world. Open their ears and hearts this day to hear Your voice and obey Your commands, strengthening them to make their utmost contribution to healing a hurting world.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK BEGICH 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. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 30, 2010.

To the Senate:

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

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BEGICH 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, following leader remarks, if any, the Senate will

turn to a period of morning business for 2 hours, with Senators during that period of time allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to executive session and will debate the nomination of GEN David Petraeus. There will be up to 20 minutes for debate prior to a vote on confirmation of the nomination. Senators should expect that vote to occur around noon today.

As a reminder to all Senators, last evening I filed cloture on unemployment insurance and the home buyer tax credit extension. That vote would occur tomorrow unless we arrange, by unanimous consent, sometime today to do this. I will work with the Republican leader on an agreement that would let us vote on that issue today if the minority is so determined.

We will also be able to resume consideration of the small business jobs bill this afternoon. We will consider amendments. Rollcall votes are expected to occur throughout the afternoon and into the evening.

I say to Democratic Senators, we were looking yesterday for an amendment, but none was available. So I agreed to have something happen in the interim and let the Republicans offer amendments if we have none ready or offered. I hope we will also be able to resume consideration of this matter and make headway. It is extremely important that we do that.

On unemployment compensation, we really need to do this. I have had a number of conversations with Senators from individual States about how difficult it is for them to have these long-term unemployed no longer having anyplace to go for help, and there are newspaper articles about people who are desperate throughout America. So I hope we can do something on that.

We have here, and I will call for it in a little bit, the reading of the bill we got from the House of Representatives dealing with extending the first-time home buyer tax credit. That will allow the paperwork to be completed. There is significant support on the other side for this, and I would hope we could do this by consent. If not, it will be part of the vote we have on unemployment compensation. There is no effort to do anything other than to get these two matters passed. So I would hope my friends on the other side of the aisle would consider just letting us do the home buyers assistance, the thing that passed the House. It is paid for. It has been agreed to by Democrats and Republicans. It passed the House last night with 400 votes—400 votes. So I would hope we could get that done by

consent. It is the end of the month today, and we should get this done. I hope we can do that.

As many people are aware, Senator BYRD will lay in repose in the Senate Chamber from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. tomorrow. The family will be in the Chamber from 10 a.m. until 12 noon. Members are encouraged to pay their respects to the family from 10:15 a.m. until 12 noon.

Senate staff with floor privileges and a congressional ID are invited to pay respects from the Senate floor and should enter the Chamber through the north door of the Capitol. Members of the public and Senate staff without floor privileges are invited to pay tribute to Senator BYRD from the Senate galleries from 10:15 a.m. until 3:45 p.m. The public and staff without floor privileges should enter via the Capitol Visitor Center.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 5623

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as I indicated, H.R. 5623, the Homebuyer Assistance and Improvement Act, is at the desk. I believe it is due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct. The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5623) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to extend the homebuyer tax credit for the purchase of a principal residence before October 1, 2010, in the case of a written binding contract entered into with respect to such principal residence before May 1, 2010, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would at this time object to any further proceedings.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

CAP AND TRADE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, President Obama invited a group of Senators down to the White House to talk about the kind of energy bill he would like Congress to pass sometime this summer.

The first thing we heard about this meeting is that the President said it

was not a meeting about the oil spill. Let me say that again. The President said the purpose of this meeting was not to discuss the ongoing crisis in the Gulf of Mexico, where up to 60,000 barrels of oil are spewing into the gulf waters each and every day, and which have been for 72 days now.

Senator ALEXANDER had to raise the issue himself, only to be dismissed by the President. Well, I am sure that will be of great comfort to the people of the gulf coast. When the President called Senators to the White House to talk about energy, I am sure most people in the gulf thought the crisis down there would at least be a topic of discussion. Evidently, they were wrong.

The second thing we heard about the meeting is that the President made what was described as a “very passionate” argument in favor of “putting a price on carbon.” This, of course, is code for the new national energy tax commonly referred to around here as cap and trade.

This is what the meeting was really about. And those of us who said that this is also what the President was talking about in his Oval Office speech a couple weeks ago were right: when the President urged Americans to view the gulf oil spill as a reason to embrace his vision of energy consumption in this country, he was talking about giving government vast new powers over industry and over the everyday lives of Americans through a new national energy tax.

In other words, at a moment when the American people were hoping to hear about what the White House was doing to fix the oil leak in the gulf, the President was using that moment to prepare the ground for yet another piece of legislation that would expand the reach of government, and which would do absolutely nothing to solve the crisis at hand.

The leak still is not fixed. For more than 2 months, this pipe has gushed oil into the gulf, polluting our waters and our beaches, wreaking havoc on the lives and livelihoods of millions along the gulf. I think it is most people’s view that the left-wing wish-list can wait. Fixing this immediate problem should be the top priority right now.

One of the President’s senior advisers said the other day that when the President was elected, he had to deal with problems that had been put off for too long. But the administration needs to solve the most urgent problems first, and the most urgent problem is not a new national energy tax, it is the crisis in the gulf.

Former President Clinton had it right the other day. He said the Federal Government’s position on this issue ought to be very straightforward. The most important thing, he said, is to fix the leak. The second most important thing is to keep oil away from the shores. The third most important thing

is to minimize the damage from the oil that reaches the shores. And the fourth most important thing is to find out who did what wrong, at BP and in the Federal Government, and to hold them accountable.

But the first thing is to fix the leak.

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 of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Illinois.

ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

Mr. DURBIN. In response to the Republican leader’s speech, I have three words: Drill, baby, drill. That was the chant we heard across the United States from the Republican side of the aisle during the last Presidential campaign. The notion was that if we just started drilling in every direction, we could solve America’s energy problems. It was an irresponsible chant, failing to address the most fundamental issue of our time: the future of America’s national energy picture.

What you heard this morning from the Republican leader is a return to the subject but ignoring the past. What we know is this: We know we have become more and more dependent on foreign oil. It costs us, as a Nation, \$1 billion a day that we are sending overseas to other countries to buy their oil to sustain our economy. This dependence, unfortunately, leads to commitments we have to make—military commitments, political commitments, economic commitments—because of this dependence on foreign oil.

The second reality is this: We understand there is a new, emerging energy technology in the 21st century. It is an energy technology based on efficiency, economy, and the reduction of costs. There are other countries in the world that are taking the lead in this area, not the least of which is the nation of China.

I recently heard from MICHAEL BENNET of Colorado, who spoke to us at a Democratic Senate luncheon. He came up with a statistic which in many ways is hard to believe but equally scary, and here is what it is: The largest export of the United States of America of any product is in the aircraft industry. Look at Boeing. Look at all of the aircraft we are exporting around the world. It is our major export. Yet if you compare our major export to the export by China—by China—of energy

technology to the world, they are now at 50 percent of the value of our annual aircraft exports. China has decided that the future of the world is based on new, clean energy technology, and they are doing something about it. They don’t come to their leadership and squabble, at least not in a public fashion; they get focused—focused on creating businesses and jobs and being ready to compete in the 21st century.

The third premise of our energy policy goes to something on which the Senator from Kentucky may or may not agree with me. I happen to believe the activities of humans on this Earth make a difference when it comes to the planet. I happen to believe when we look at glacial melt around the world, it reflects the fact that the world is changing. Ever so gradually, it is getting warmer. As the Earth increases its temperature, it changes weather patterns, the currents of the oceans, the land we live on, the crops we grow, and our future. Some people don’t accept that. Some don’t see a connection. They don’t believe any of the carbon released into the atmosphere creates a problem. I have met many of them. Some are people who in good faith don’t come to the same conclusion I reach. I respect them, but I respectfully think they are wrong.

What have we learned from the gulf crisis? We have learned a lot. Yesterday I had one of the vice presidents of BP America in my office. I talked to him about how we have reached this point. I said: When we have reached the point where we are drilling deep, going after the tough, deep oil to fuel our economy and its needs, we are engendering more problems and more challenges than before. Had there been a spill of oil in downstate Illinois or in Alaska or Texas, it would have been terrible, but it could have been contained much more quickly than this gusher of oil coming from the floor of the Gulf of Mexico. As we explore in new areas, tougher, more challenging areas, we run greater risk. That is a reality.

I take exception to the remarks of the Senator from Kentucky who suggested this administration is not doing everything in its power to deal with this spill in the gulf. Let’s look at what we have done. This President called in BP and made it clear that the cost of this damage will be borne by that oil company, not by the taxpayers. I was pleasantly surprised when the Governor of Mississippi, Haley Barbour, a man who in the past was as passionate in his beliefs as I am in my Democratic beliefs, came out and praised President Obama for sitting down with BP and getting a commitment of \$20 billion in a fund to deal with the economic losses associated with this spill. BP has bought commercials that most of us have seen saying: We will pay for this, all of it. I don’t know if the Senator