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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL, a Senator from the State of Connecticut.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, the source of wisdom and might, with renewed powers and refreshed spirits, we return to this national Chamber of deliberation. We begin our work with the awareness that without You nothing of significance can be accomplished. Be the guardian and guide of our Senators as they travel the unbeaten path into our national future. Grant them wisdom and courage for the living of these days.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable RICHARD BLUMENTHAL 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 23, 2012.

To the Senate:

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

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

WELCOME

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I, first of all, welcome everyone back after the long break we had. I hope it was restful and productive for everyone.

As happens every 4 years, we have a Presidential election year and, as a result of that, things should be more tense than usual, but I certainly hope not.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 440 AND H.R. 3012

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 440) to provide for the establishment of the Special Envoy to Promote Religious Freedom of Religious Minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

A bill (H.R. 3012) to amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to eliminate the per-country numerical limitation for employment-based immigrants, to increase the per-country numerical limitation for family-sponsored immigrants, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to further proceedings in regard to these two bills.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The bills will be placed on the calendar.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Senate will be in morning business until 4 o'clock today, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Following that morning business, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the nomination of John Gerrard to be United States District Judge for the District of Nebraska. At 5:30 p.m., we will vote on confirmation of that nomination.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE—S. 968

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion with respect to the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 70, S. 968, be vitiated.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

WISHING SENATOR KIRK A SPEEDY RECOVERY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I was saddened to hear that Senator MARK KIRK suffered a stroke over the weekend. He had surgery this morning. I have followed it as closely as I have been able to. The doctors say he will recover, and I am confident that is true. He is young and in very good health. I wish him a full and speedy recovery and look forward to him returning to his work in the Senate as soon as possible.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Winston Churchill said:

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

I know each of my colleagues in the Senate—regardless of political party—has the courage to stand up and speak in defense of his or her principles. This year I hope we each find the courage and faith to listen and cooperate as well.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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