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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, architect of our destinies, You have entrusted this world to humanity. Make us responsible stewards of its resources. Lord, lead our lawmakers to work and conserve not only inanimate things but human capital as well. Guide them to invest in the talents and creativity of the American people, remembering how our citizens have solved great problems in our past. Use our governmental leaders to bring order from chaos and harmony from discord. Lord, give them the wisdom to be forces for unity and good will. Replenish their physical strength so they can have resiliency for each challenge.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK R. WARNER 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 21, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNER 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, the Senate will resume executive session and consideration of the nomination of Christopher Hill to be Ambassador to Iraq. This is all postcloture time. Cloture was invoked last evening. We have 30 hours, if the Republicans ask we use all that time. Whenever that time is completed, Mr. President—30 hours—we will move to the next matter on which another filibuster is being conducted to prevent us from going to S. 386, the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act legislation, which is somewhat astounding since it is a bipartisan bill. But that is where we find ourselves.

It is too bad we cannot move to that and start offering amendments and complete that legislation, but that is the way the minority wishes to proceed—not to allow us to proceed.

The Senate will remain in session, as I indicated yesterday, until we vote on the confirmation of the Hill nomination, and then cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 386, the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act. If Senators require the full 30 hours of postcloture debate, we will vote at 1 a.m. this morning.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. today to allow for the weekly caucus luncheons to meet.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 131

Mr. REID. Mr. President, H.R. 131 is at the desk. It is my understanding it is due for its second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows: A bill (H.R. 131) to establish the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Without objection, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

NEVADA'S PULITZER PRIZE WINNER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is not every day we get to read good news in the newspaper, and it is certainly not common of late to read good news about newspapers. Today is one of those rare days. A newspaper in the State of Nevada—the Las Vegas Sun—has won the Pulitzer Prize because of a courageous young journalist named Alexandra Berzon. I spoke to her yesterday. This was basically this young woman's first reporting job. She is so excited, as she should be.

I am very happy and proud the Pulitzer is coming to Nevada. This is only the second time in Nevada's history it has received this most prestigious award in journalism and the first time in more than three decades. But I am especially proud because the Sun has been recognized for public service reporting that uncovered lax safety standards and led to actual policy changes that are saving lives.

The famous Las Vegas strip recently saw a \$32 billion building boom. But something else was going up along with the hotels and casinos—the unnecessary deaths of construction workers. Twelve workers died in a little over 17

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



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months. Berzon's careful reporting led to important safety improvements, and not one worker has died since these changes took effect. I applaud Alexandra Berzon, her editors, and everyone at the Las Vegas Sun, which has a storied history of solid investigative journalism.

This newspaper started on a string many years ago—in the 1950s—by a man by the name of Hank Greenspun. He was a crusading newspaperman. He was the first person in the entire country to take on Senator McCarthy and the awful things he was doing to America and about America. He took him on personally on one of McCarthy's visits to Las Vegas.

He also did something else which was very courageous. Nevada had a very powerful Senator. His name was Pat McCarran. He was noted for his use of power, and Hank Greenspun, of the Las Vegas Sun newspaper, took after him big time. McCarran asked all the strip hotels to no longer advertise in that newspaper, and they followed the demand of Senator McCarran. A lawsuit was filed. We only had one Federal judge, and that one Federal judge—even though he had been appointed by McCarran in an antitrust action, which is not a jury trial—ruled in favor of the Sun. He won that lawsuit.

He took on McCarthy, he took on McCarran, and that was only the beginning of this great newspaper and the things it has done, and now they have won a Pulitzer. Hank Greenspun must be smiling from heaven.

Someone who is a modern-day icon of this newspaper was a man who taught me in high school. Fortunately, he and I, unexpectedly, were elected, independently, Governor and Lieutenant Governor at the same time. He served 8 years. His name was Mike O'Callaghan, Governor of the State, and a very popular person. He could have gone on to make huge amounts of money in other places. He decided not to do that. I was a lawyer. I drew up this big contract where he would go to work for Hank Greenspun running his newspapers. I met with him, handed him the contract, and he said: We don't sign contracts; we shake hands. So they shook hands, and that was the beginning of a relationship that is historic in Nevada. My dear friend Mike O'Callaghan died in church; he went to mass every morning, and died as a young man in church, where I am sure his good thoughts are still coming forward.

With Hank and Mike, I am sure, as I have indicated about Hank, they are looking down from this place we call heaven at this wonderful time for this newspaper.

The kind of reporting Alexandra Berzon did is a model for reporters everywhere to follow. Of the 21 Pulitzer Prizes, only one—the Public Service Award—the one that the Las Vegas Sun was awarded—doesn't come with a cash prize. All the others come with a \$10,000 cash prize but not this one. It comes with a medal. But this medal is

going to mean much more to Alexandra than any dollar amount would. It is a reminder that journalism, in its most fundamental role—as a disinterested watchdog for our communities and our citizens, our country—benefits all of us.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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

GITMO CLOSURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, I pointed out that the President's war funding request contains up to \$80 million to close the U.S. detention facility in Guantanamo Bay. The administration says Guantanamo will be closed by next January. What they haven't told us is what they plan to do with these killers once it closes. Well, Americans want some assurances that closing Guantanamo will not make them less safe. Frankly, that is a very important and understandable request.

Guantanamo currently houses some of the most dangerous men alive. These are men who are proud of the innocent lives they have taken and who want to return to terrorism. One person who is there, and whom we don't know what we will do with, is Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks. We captured him while he was planning followup attacks to 9/11, including plots to destroy a West Coast skyscraper and to smuggle explosives into New York. If we hadn't captured him, he may have succeeded in launching the same type of attack on the west coast that he carried out on the east coast. This is a man who brags about decapitating the American journalist Daniel Pearl, with the following quote: "... with my blessed right hand." How does transferring Khalid Shaikh Mohammed make the country safer?

Another person at Guantanamo that the administration doesn't know what it will do with in 9 months is Ali Abd al-Aziz Ali, who served as a key lieutenant for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed during the 9/11 operation. How does transferring him make the country safer?

Then there is Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri. He was al-Qaida's operations chief in the Arabian Peninsula and the mastermind behind the attack on the USS Cole which killed 17 sailors in 2000. How does transferring or releasing him make our country safer?

These are just 3 of the 240 terrorists that the administration doesn't know what to do with. The one thing they do know is that they claim they are going to close Guantanamo in 9 months, even though they can't say yet whether the alternative is as safe and secure. All of this, despite the fact that after visiting Guantanamo for the first time recently, Attorney General Holder said

he was "impressed by the people who are presently running the camp" and that "the facilities there are good ones."

That was certainly my impression when I went there a few years ago.

The administration needs to tell the American people what it plans to do with these men if it closes Guantanamo. Two years ago, the Senate voted 94 to 3—94 to 3—against sending these men to the United States. Foreign countries have so far been unwilling to take any of them in significant numbers—understandably. Even if countries were willing to take them, there is an increasing probability that some of these murderers would return to the battlefield. The Defense Department recently confirmed that 18 former detainees had returned to the battlefield and said that at least 40 more are suspected of having done so. These are people we have already released who are back on the battlefield.

Earlier this year, the Saudi Government said that nearly a dozen Saudis who were released from Gitmo are believed to have returned to terrorism.

The administration has made a priority of closing Guantanamo, but its first priority should be to assure the American people that the detainees at Gitmo will never again be able to harm Americans.

ENTITLEMENT SPENDING

Mr. President, I wish to say another word in addition to my comments yesterday about the President's welcome gesture on wasteful spending. The Cabinet has been asked to find \$100 million in savings over the next few months and this is clearly a step in the right direction, but it is just a step. Current levels of Government spending and debt are completely and totally out of control and the threat of a fiscal catastrophe is very real. The only way to address this out-of-control spending is to get at the heart of the problem, which is entitlement spending. A lot of people do not realize that nearly 70 percent of the money the Federal Government spends every year is mandatory spending on very popular programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and on the interest we have to pay on the national debt.

Entitlements are the heart of the problem. As Willie Sutton put it: That's where the money is. And if we don't find a way to address this spending, we will be in very serious trouble as a nation. Fortunately, Senators GREGG and CONRAD have a proposal on the table that addresses entitlement spending head on, by forcing Democrats and Republicans to come together and make the kind of tough choices necessary to steer the country out of an otherwise inevitable financial shipwreck. It deserves much more attention than it has received, and it deserves a vote here in the Senate.

Cutting \$100 million in waste is certainly good, but let's put it in context. The amount of money the President asked the Cabinet to save yesterday,