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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 6, 2009, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2009

The Senate met at 2 p.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.

God of grace and glory, help us to look in the right place for wisdom and guidance. Remind our lawmakers that You have promised in James 1:5 to liberally give wisdom to all who request it.

May our Senators begin the quest of speaking Your wisdom so that when the days of opportunity are past, they will go out with joy and be filled with peace. May your wisdom lift them above all bitterness and infuse them with an unshakeable faith in Your providence. Lord, give them a sense of Your purposes and a deep dependance on Your guidance and grace. Help them to attempt something they could not do without Your power.

We pray in Your great 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, October 5, 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.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business until 4 o'clock today, with Senators during that time

able to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2847, the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill. Today will be for debate only. There will be no amendments today or rollcall votes today.

We have two of our experienced managers, Senator MIKULSKI and Senator SHELBY from Alabama, my dear friend. He and I came to the Senate together. We had our offices next door to one another in the Longworth House Office Building. So we have two extremely fine managers. We hope to move through this bill as quickly as possible. It is a very important piece of legislation. We would have moved more quickly, but Senator MIKULSKI had an accident and was in the hospital and had surgery. But she is up strong and ready to take this on and get on it as quickly as possible.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, President Reagan once said that the status quo is Latin for "the mess we're in." "A mess" is unquestionably an accurate way to describe America's unhealthy health care system. The cost of staying healthy is rising too fast, much faster than families' incomes. Insurance companies are not cutting costs; instead, they are cutting benefits, often at the very time people need them the most. When costs go up as wages go down, when the sick are singled out and robbed of their health care, something has to give. Unfortunately, the "give" in this case is hard-working families,

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



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more and more of whom file for bankruptcy and foreclosure every day because they cannot pay their medical bills. The casualties are the patients who put off a needed doctor's visit or do not get a medical procedure they need because it costs too much. The casualties are the people who cannot afford an important prescription, who use an expired prescription, who skip a dose of medicine or even take some pills and split them. You can even buy now, in a drugstore, a little plastic device that has a little blade in it that can cut your pills in half. Especially seniors are buying this now. They do this because they can't afford to stay healthy in the richest country in the world.

Every day, more and more families know what I am talking about. It is not just happening to a handful or a hundred, it is not just threatening thousands. The fact is, one in five Nevadans can't afford health insurance and those who do have it are at great risk of losing it. If we do not act today, 10 years from now health care costs will more than double and the number of Nevadans who can't afford health insurance will nearly double as well. It is the same in the States of Virginia, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Utah, California, and New Mexico. It does not matter where you are. That is a mess. It is not right. And it is what Democrats have been working so hard to turn around.

You have all heard a lot about our plan over the past months. I hope you know we are fighting to protect what works about the system, fix what does not, and help the middle class get ahead. You know we are fighting to stabilize health insurance for those who have it and help secure it for those who do not. We are fighting to keep the insurance industry honest and protect Medicare. We are fighting to lower costs for every family so every American can afford good, quality care that can never be taken away. And we are doing it all without adding a dime to the deficit.

That plan sounds pretty good to me, but some Republicans do not seem too fond of that plan. We have heard much about what their opposition has been in recent weeks and months. But what you have not heard a lot about is what the Republicans do think is the best way to fix our broken health care system.

Well, here are the basics. Under the Republican plan, insurance companies can deny you coverage when you need it the most, because they want the status quo. That is the status quo. Under the Republican plan, that is the status quo. Insurance companies can deny you coverage because you have high cholesterol, hay fever, or heart disease. They can raise your rates because you are getting older, because your dad had prostate cancer, or simply because you are a woman. That is the status quo. That is what they want. Under the Republican plan, if you do have health in-

surance, your family has to pay more than \$1,000 a year extra to cover all of those who have no health insurance. If that plan sounds familiar, if it sounds like a mess, that is because it is exactly the same mess we are already in. As Ronald Reagan would say, that plan already goes by another name—I repeat—the status quo, the “mess” described by President Reagan.

Some might ask: Why would they be supporting the status quo? Why would they refuse to fix such a central part of our economy when it is so clearly and so badly broken?

Paul Krugman has a theory. Krugman, of course, won the Nobel Prize for economics last year. He teaches at Princeton, one of our finest universities, and writes a widely respected column in the New York Times. In his column today, he blames what he called “the politics of spite.” He noticed that most Republicans who resist health insurance are fighting it for the sake of fighting it. He observed that while we are fighting for hard-working families, Republicans are busy fighting us. He pointed out that there is no Republican plan to help people, only a plan to hurt the President. These politics are simply out of touch. The majority of Americans know our recovering economy needs health insurance reform now more than ever. The majority of Americans support the idea that health insurance companies should be required to cover every family. And the majority of Americans support creating more competition in the marketplace to drive down the cost of health insurance.

There are those who reflexively and recklessly stand in the way of what we all know needs to be done. Although their megaphone is very loud, they constitute a small minority. This is the minority—this is very hard to comprehend—the same minority who happily pumped one fist when America lost its bid to host the Olympics. They were cheering—we saw it on television—because we lost the Olympics. But they shake the other fist at those who slander us as unpatriotic. This is the same minority who disputes indisputable evidence about how our health care plan will help seniors or disputes undisputable evidence about our President's birth records. This is the same minority who relies on distortions, distractions, and deception to change the subject away from health care rather than debate the facts in good faith. Paul Krugman was right to call it the “politics of spite,” and he was right to conclude that such blind malice has no role in the legislative process.

Just as the majority of Americans yearn for the day when they can afford to live a healthy life without fear of living just one accident, one illness, or one pink slip away from losing everything, a majority of Americans also are hopeful about reform. They are optimistic. All of the polls indicate there should be reform.

I had the good fortune of serving in the Senate with Bill Frist. Bill Frist,

when he came to the Senate, was a famous transplant surgeon. I can remember him telling me about, as a young surgeon, traveling to places in a small airplane to pick up a heart so he could take it and give it to someone else to give them life. He did that himself, he carried it himself, a very famous surgeon.

In the book I wrote, an autobiography, I talk about Bill Frist. Here on the Senate floor, whenever in a private conversation the subject of health care came up, his eyes lit. He was so into medicine. That was who he was. He was Dr. Bill Frist. He was a Republican. As I have indicated, he was a physician, and a good one. But here is what he said last Friday, a couple of days ago: If he still served in this body, he would vote for health insurance that will soon come to the floor. That is Bill Frist.

Former Senate Republican Leaders Bob Dole and Howard Baker, both famous men, have similarly supported reform—not specific reform, but they say reform should come to be. They didn't have the benefit of seeing this legislation as did Bill Frist.

All three—Frist, Dole, and Baker—have come out because they know it is necessary, it is overdue, and it is right. This is not a partisan issue. All three have recognized that the status quo is not an option. All three have done so in the spirit of service, not a sense of spite. How did they reach this conclusion when so many of the Republican colleagues in this body and elsewhere have not?

I will quote Bill Frist directly, Dr. Frist. He said:

I would take heat for it. . . . That's what leadership is all about.

I encourage all my Republican colleagues to consider the words of two men on opposite sides of the political spectrum—Krugman, a real progressive, and Frist, a real conservative—who disagree on much about a lot of things. But both know that leadership, courage, and honesty will improve the lives of the people we represent. I encourage them to heed the words of a hero of the Republican Party, Ronald Reagan, who knew that anytime one defends a broken status quo, it only makes a bad situation worse and, in Reagan's words, “a mess.”

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, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business until 4 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.