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Senate

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

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Here we are again, Lord, a people in need of Your presence and power in order to meet life with courage and faith.

Today, strengthen the Members of this body with a faith that will ever choose the harder right over the easy expedient. Give them wisdom to follow Your example of sacrificial service, infusing them with the courage to do right as You give them the light to see it. Lord, lift from them the burden of loss and sorrow when forces beyond their control invade their lives and seek to rob them of Your peace. Bless them with the assurance that they are never alone, for You have promised never to forsake them. Fill their disappointments with Your strengthening presence, transforming their darkness into the glory of Your new dawn of hope and life.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK L. PRYOR 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, November 19, 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 L. PRYOR, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. PRYOR 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. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for an hour. Senators during that time will be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The majority will control the first 30 minutes and the Republicans will control the final 30 minutes.

Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of S. 1963, which is the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act. Debate on the bill will be limited to 30 minutes equally divided and controlled between Senators AKAKA and BURR or their designees. The only amendment in order to the bill is the Coburn amendment relating to the funding pri-

orities in this bill. Debate on the Coburn amendment is limited to 3 hours, with Senator COBURN controlling 2 hours and Senator AKAKA controlling the final hour.

At 2 p.m., the Senate will resume debate on the nomination of David Hamilton to be U.S. circuit judge for the Seventh Circuit. Debate until 2:30 is going to be equally divided and controlled between Senators LEAHY and SESSIONS or their designees.

At 2:30 p.m., the Senate will proceed to a series of three rollcall votes. Those votes will be on confirmation of the Hamilton nomination, in relation to the Coburn amendment, and on passage of the veterans omnibus bill.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have traveled a great distance to get where we stand today. With the bill we unveiled last night, we begin the last leg of this historic journey.

The American people and President Obama have asked us for health insurance reform. There are two things we must have above all: No. 1, make it more affordable for every American to live a healthy life, and No. 2, do so in a fiscally responsible way that helps our economy recover. Senate Democrats have listened, and we have written a bill that will save lives, save money, and save Medicare.

Since yesterday evening, the bill has been on the Internet for all to see. You will find it at democrats.senate.gov, but here is a quick summary of what is in that bill. And I say, Mr. President, this is a big bill. I was at a meeting with some other Senators this morning, and everyone acknowledged that no one can ever remember a bill that affects everybody in America as this bill does. It is a bill that has a lot of pages in it. But, as we know, it is printed the way all bills are printed. If we wanted to print it in smaller fashion—as books are written, for example—it

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



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would be much smaller. It is a lot of words, and every word in it is important and necessary. Since yesterday evening, as I have indicated, this bill has been on the Internet. Everyone in the world can see this bill.

As the President asked us to do, this bill will not add a dime to the deficit—quite the opposite, in fact: It will cut it by \$130 billion in the first 10 years and by as much as \$3/4 trillion in the first 20 years. We do this by keeping costs down. This critical reform will cost less than \$85 billion a year over the next decade, well under President Obama's goal.

We will make sure every American can afford quality health care. We will make sure more than 30 million Americans who do not have health care today will soon have it. We will not only protect Medicare, but we will make it stronger.

These numbers are as impressive as they are important for our Nation's future, and though we are proud of these numbers, these figures, we cannot afford to overlook what this is really all about. More accurately, we cannot afford to overlook whom this is about.

This is about a parent who cannot take a child to the doctor because insurance is too expensive, their employer canceled it, or they lost their job. That is why we are making sure every American can afford good coverage.

This is about the small business in Nevada or someplace else in the country that had to lay off an employee because it couldn't afford skyrocketing health care premiums. That is why we are cutting those small business taxes.

It is about the woman with high cholesterol or the man with heart disease or the child with hay fever who can't get help and can't get insurance. That is why we are stopping insurance companies from deciding they would rather not give health care to the sick.

This is about the family who has to make a terrible choice between their mortgage and their medications. When this bill passes, the only choice they will have to make is which insurance company offers them the best coverage. They will have the choice to make, and it is a good choice. The choice is, which best suits their family?

This is also about mothers and sisters and wives and daughters who cannot get the proper testing they need to detect breast cancer. It is inexcusable that women cannot get the tests they need. That is why we are making prevention and wellness a priority.

For these families and these businesses, for our economy's renewal, our children's future, and our Nation's promise, the finish line is in sight. I am confident we will cross it soon. Once again, I am inviting my Republican colleagues to join us on the right side of history.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for months we have been warning the American people of the Democrats' plans to raise premiums, raise taxes, and slash Medicare in order to fund more government. Americans know that is not reform, and unfortunately the majority has not been listening.

While two committees have publicly reported legislation, the bill we are being asked to consider was assembled behind closed doors, out of sight, and without input from the public for over the last 6 weeks. We are being told we must rush to pass this legislation, even though most of its provisions will not take effect for another 5 years, until 2014. That is a little bit like being asked to pay your mortgage 4 years before you are allowed to move into your house. Americans reasonably want to know: How much will it cost? Will their premiums go up? What is hidden in the fine print? Are favored interests or States getting sweetheart deals? The American people want to take the time to get this right.

Over here, we have the House bill and the Senate bill together, each of them roughly 2,000 pages. You see this massive bill to rewrite one-sixth of our economy, with stunning unintended consequences for ourselves and for our children and for our grandchildren.

The majority leader's bill is 2,074 pages long. When fully implemented—and the way to look at the true cost of this bill is how much it will cost over a 10-year period when it is fully implemented. What has been skillfully done in order to make it look less expensive, in this proposal, is phasing in benefits and taxes at different times. But when this 2,074-page bill is fully implemented, it will cost \$2.5 trillion.

According to CBO, Federal health care spending will actually go up, not down, as a result of this mammoth effort to rewrite one-sixth of our economy. It cuts Medicare by \$465 billion—nearly \$1/2 trillion in cuts to a program that is so important to our seniors. Hospitals, Medicare Advantage, nursing homes, home health, hospice—all of those will be slashed in this \$465 billion cut to Medicare. It raises taxes \$493 billion. So you have here massive cuts in Medicare and massive tax increases.

Who gets hit? Who gets hit with the tax increases? You do. If you have insurance, you get taxed. If you do not have insurance, you get taxed. If you need a lifesaving medical device, you get taxed. If you need prescription medicines, you get taxed. There is also a new Medicare payroll tax.

What is the bottom line here? After weeks of drafting a bill behind closed doors, the majority has produced a bill

that increases premiums, raises taxes, and slashes Medicare by \$1/2 trillion, to create a new government program. This is not what the American people want. I do not believe they think this is reform. This is not the direction to take.

I yield the floor.

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 be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent, during the time we control for the next half hour, that we be able to engage in a colloquy with other Senators.

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, for months we have gathered in this Chamber to talk about why we need a public option as part of health care reform. Almost every week the insurance companies provide another example of why a public option is critical to ensuring all Americans have access to quality, affordable health insurance. Our most recent examples come courtesy of two of America's largest insurance companies—Humana and CIGNA. Wall Street just completed its third quarter earnings season, and Humana and CIGNA released their reports a couple weeks ago. Let's just say that both companies did very well last quarter. Humana profits in the third quarter were up 65 percent over the same time last year. CIGNA profits in the third quarter were up 92 percent.

Senator BROWN has focused on the insurance company issue and has seen what is happening to the American people. This is happening at a time when 47 million Americans are without access to affordable health care. I will ask him to speak a little bit about the insurance company issue and what is happening.

Before doing so, the Republican leader was here on the floor, and he was talking about the numbers that were given by CBO. These are number crunchers. They are by nonpartisan folks. These are people who work very hard late at night. They have been