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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable PAUL G. KIRK, Jr., a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

God of justice, bring wholeness to our world. Keep fear, ignorance, and pride from limiting Your work in our Nation.

Give the Members of this body the insight to understand the actions they should take during these challenging times. Quicken their hearts and purify their minds. Broaden their concerns and strengthen their commitments. Lord, lead them through this season of

challenge to a deeper experience with You, enabling them to feel You in their midst, as they grapple with the problems of our time.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable PAUL G. KIRK, Jr., 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, December 9, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable PAUL G. KIRK, Jr., a Senator from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

NOTICE

If the 111th Congress, 1st Session, adjourns sine die on or before December 23, 2009, a final issue of the *Congressional Record* for the 111th Congress, 1st Session, will be published on Thursday, December 31, 2009, to permit Members to insert statements.

All material for insertion must be signed by the Member and delivered to the respective offices of the Official Reporters of Debates (Room HT-59 or S-123 of the Capitol), Monday through Friday, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. through Wednesday, December 30. The final issue will be dated Thursday, December 31, 2009, and will be delivered on Monday, January 4, 2010.

None of the material printed in the final issue of the *Congressional Record* may contain subject matter, or relate to any event, that occurred after the sine die date.

Senators' statements should also be formatted according to the instructions at http://webster/secretary/cong_record.pdf, and submitted electronically, either on a disk to accompany the signed statement, or by e-mail to the Official Reporters of Debates at "Record@Sec.Senate.gov".

Members of the House of Representatives' statements may also be submitted electronically by e-mail, to accompany the signed statement, and formatted according to the instructions for the Extensions of Remarks template at <http://clerk.house.gov/forms>. The Official Reporters will transmit to GPO the template formatted electronic file only after receipt of, and authentication with, the hard copy, and signed manuscript. Deliver statements to the Official Reporters in Room HT-59.

Members of Congress desiring to purchase reprints of material submitted for inclusion in the *Congressional Record* may do so by contacting the Office of Congressional Publishing Services, at the Government Printing Office, on 512-0224, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. daily.

By order of the Joint Committee on Printing.

CHARLES E. SCHUMER, *Chairman*.

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



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RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader marks, the Senate will resume consideration of the health care reform legislation. Following remarks by the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee or their designees, the next 2 hours will be equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The Republicans will control the first 30 minutes and the majority will control the second 30 minutes. The remaining time will be equally divided and used in alternating fashion. No amendments are in order during the controlled time. Rollcall votes could occur this afternoon, but at this stage we have no knowledge that we have worked anything out and don't know if we will. We will do our best to give Members as much notice as possible.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, much of this momentous health care debate revolves around numbers, as it should. We read them in reports, see them in charts, and hear about them in speeches. The state of health care in this country is in such a severe crisis that these numbers are often quite overwhelming. Today, I want to talk about 1 number—31. It has a special significance, especially today, along the course of this long, historic pursuit to make it possible for every American to have health insurance and good health.

First, let's discuss the future.

The number 31 is a powerful reminder of both the great opportunity before us and the great cost of inaction, a tangible illustration of what we stand to gain and what we stand to lose. When we pass this bill, 31 million Americans who today have no health insurance will have health insurance at long last. That means they no longer will have to put off the surgery they need and will be able to finally use prescriptions as prescribed—not half a pill every day, a whole pill every day. It means 31 million Americans will have a decent shot at a healthy life.

If we don't act, if we let misinformation confuse us or let distractions divert us or refuse to answer the American people's call to action, many more will suffer. In Nevada, like every other State, health insurance costs continue to climb. If we don't act, in just 6 years, the typical Nevada family will spend more than 31 percent of their income on health care premiums. Almost a third of every Nevadan's paycheck will go right to his or her insurance company. That number is even higher on average throughout the country but only if we do nothing.

Second, let's talk for just a little bit about today, the present.

Right now, every 31 minutes insurance companies terminate insurance for 300 Americans. Sometimes it is because you lost your job, because you lost your health care when you lost your job. Sometimes it is because you change your job but your health care company doesn't come along with your job change. And sometimes, at the very time you need it the most, the insurance company says: Sorry. We are not going to continue the insurance we have given you before. Because they want to make more money, a greedy health insurance company looks at your medical history and says: I am sorry, but we are going to take it away from you. You have no recourse. Maybe you have had high cholesterol your whole life or maybe acne as a child or you had a C-section as an adult. Health insurance companies have used all these reasons to drop someone's coverage. Maybe you had minor surgery 10 years ago or your mother had breast cancer or your father had heart disease. That is all it takes. We all know that, much like our Republican colleagues, insurance companies will use any excuse in the book to say no.

But that statistic, that every 31 minutes in America more than 300 people lose their health insurance coverage, what does that really mean? Imagine if the Senate gallery—600 people can be seated in our galleries—imagine if every single one of these seats was filled by a good American citizen who wanted to look over the Senate and they all had health care when they came in here. Imagine that each of them came this morning to watch their government work, to observe the proceedings here on the floor for an hour or so. Then each of them went on their way when that hour came to a close, but on their way out the door they were told that no longer would they have health care. That is what is happening right now in America, the wealthiest and greatest country in the world. Every 31 minutes, 300 more people lose their health coverage.

Third and finally, let's talk about the past. Let's put the historical moment upon us in the context of history.

It was 31 years ago this day that Senator Ted Kennedy gave one of the most profound and stirring speeches both of his remarkable life and in the history of the Senate and certainly in the history of our Nation's long health care debate. In that talk, he made an observation that rings just as true today as it did more than three decades ago. He said:

One of the most shameful things about modern America is that in our unbelievably rich land, the quality of the health care available to many of our people is unbelievably poor and the cost is unbelievably high.

Senator Kennedy observed how out of control costs were back in 1978 and warned how quickly they would rise if we did not act.

Well, we didn't act. In the past 31 years, health care costs have sky-

rocketed, and that is a gross understatement. The number of uninsured Americans has done the same. We have 50 million now uninsured and more bankruptcies than ever. Three out of five are because of medical expenses. Other countries have no bankruptcies because of medical expenses. Germany, France, Great Britain, Japan—they don't have bankruptcies because of health expenses. The cost of prescription drugs has doubled in just the past decade, and far fewer small businesses can afford to cover their workers. One more thing has happened: The resistance of the health insurance industry and congressional Republicans to change the American people's demand has only become more tone deaf and more intense.

If we don't act at this time, those terrible trends will only continue. I can hear Senator Kennedy now. I wasn't here 31 years ago, but I can hear him because I listened to him very closely for more than 31 years. Costs will continue to go up without end. More Americans who have health insurance today will lose it. More patients will die of diseases we know how to treat. As the crisis spirals, insurance company executives will laugh all the way to the bank. One company made \$1 billion last year; the chief executive took home \$100 million. How is that?

Much of the health care debate revolves around numbers, but at its heart, it is really about people. On December 9, 1978, 31 years ago, Senator Ted Kennedy asked us to recognize that health care is "a basic right for all, not just an expensive luxury for the few." A generation later, good health is still a luxury in this country. We are working day and night to see if we can help the generation that is here now and generations to come. If we don't, they will have the same memories 31 years from now as Senator Kennedy prophesied 31 years ago.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE: IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people have now seen what Democrats in Congress plan to do with seniors' health care. They have looked on in total disbelief as the majority voted again and again to slash Medicare by nearly \$½ trillion.

Incredibly, these cuts represent just part of the pain caused by this bill. In addition to punishing seniors, it would punish businesses. At a time when 1 out of 10 working Americans is looking for a job, this bill would hit employers