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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Lord God Almighty, may our hearts be right with You so that our lives will honor You. Bless the Members of this body. Provide them with all the direction, defense, support, and consolation they need for life's journey. As they keep their minds on You, infuse them with Your wonderful peace. Lord, give them an abundant supply of Your spirit that they will submit to You in every trial, trusting You even when walking through the valley of shadows. Uphold them by Your might that they may move forward with faith and perseverance.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS 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, June 16, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a

Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BURRIS 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 legislative 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 for the transaction of morning business for an hour. Senators 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 next 30 minutes. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 1023, the Travel Promotion Act. There will be 1 hour for debate prior to a cloture vote on that motion to proceed. Senators should expect the vote to begin as early as quarter to 12 today. The Senate will recess, as we do on every Tuesday, from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. for our weekly caucus luncheons.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, every day, like every Senator, I get mail from

men and women across my State. People still write letters. It is not all over the Internet. People still send handwritten letters, lots of them. People offer advice, criticism, suggestions, and stories. They are making sure their representative democracy works the way they believe it should. Anyone who is watching at home and wondering whether the representatives you send to Washington actually read these letters, I can tell you that we do.

I can tell you that on no other issue have the letters my constituents have sent me underscored the urgent need to act more than the health care nightmares they have shared with me.

For example, Lisa lives in Gardnerville, NV, a beautiful place, right under the Sierra Nevada mountains. It is very scenic and beautiful. She lives in Gardnerville with her two daughters. One is 10 and one is 7. The youngest little girl suffers seizures, and her teachers think she has a learning disability. Because of her family history, Lisa, the mom, is at high risk for cervical cancer. Although she has been told by her doctors that she should get an exam every 3 months, she now goes once a year because she doesn't have the money to go every 3 months. When Lisa lost her job recently, she lost her health coverage. Now both Lisa and her daughters miss out on the tests and preventive medicine to keep them healthy. Her long letter ended with a simple plea: "We want to go to the doctor."

Braden lives in Sparks, NV. The 55-hour weeks he works to support his family just barely cover his bills. He doesn't have enough money to buy health insurance for his family, so he doesn't buy it. Braden owes a hospital \$12,000 for a trip to the emergency room—the only place he could go because he has no health care. Braden is brave, though. In his letter, he doesn't dread the debt he carries or grumble about how hard he works, but he does fear, "If I was seriously sick or injured, I would lose it all."

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



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Alysia is a 21-year-old woman from Las Vegas. She needs surgery for the kidney disease with which she has suffered since she was born, but because she recently lost her job, health care is not part of her life anymore. Alysia has done everything she can to try to get help. Medicaid tells her she doesn't qualify because she isn't pregnant, doesn't have children, doesn't have disability insurance. Insurance companies refuse to cover her, calling her kidney disorder a preexisting condition. Everyone else calls this a tragedy.

These stories are as real as they come. The letters are written by people who play by the rules and don't understand why the health care system doesn't play by the rules. They are written from the heart, and many are written through pain, tears, and uncertainty. Sadly, though, they are not unique. Many Americans like Lisa skip routine medical checkups or, like Braden, live one accident away from bankruptcy or one sickness away from bankruptcy or, like Alysia, fear for the worst as they fight through the red-tape.

Our Republican colleagues like things, obviously, just the way they are, the status quo. They have committed themselves to a strategy of misinformation and misrepresentation. I heard it again on the radio this morning—government health care. In fact, one Senator said that if he heard a Republican Senator say anything other than “government health care”—and he instructed them not to use “public choice” or “public option”—he jokingly said they will have to put some money in the kitty.

Misinformation and misrepresentation is not where we should be. This, together with their attempt to delay, is only going to hurt people like Alysia, Braden, and Lisa.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the health care system in this country is in urgent need of reform. People are frustrated with the soaring cost of care, and they are frustrated that so many of their fellow Americans lack the coverage they need that they should be able to expect in a nation as prosperous as ours. People are also worried about the enormous burden rising health care costs is placing on American businesses, which are being forced to put off pay increases and lay off workers to cope with rising insurance premiums. And now people are concerned that a new government health plan that is being talked about will make all of these problems even worse.

For weeks, many of us have been warning about plans for a government

takeover of health care along the lines of takeovers we have seen in other areas of the private sector. Now the details of those plans are coming to light, and they raise two questions: How much is all this going to cost, and how are we going to pay for it?

Let's take just three proposals in the plan that is currently taking shape in the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, the details of which are just beginning to emerge.

First, there is a massive expansion of Medicaid. Here is a program that was originally established as a partnership between the Federal Government and the States to assist the poor and disabled and which has become fiscally unsustainable. Yet, rather than reform this broken program, the HELP Committee is proposing a massive new expansion.

Second, the HELP Committee bill includes massive new subsidies for Americans with incomes higher than \$100,000 a year. The purpose of these subsidies is to help defray the cost of rising insurance premiums. We all know health insurance is too expensive, but we ought to be working to lower those premiums, not opening the Federal checkbook to drive them up even higher.

Third, the HELP Committee bill establishes a new so-called prevention and public health investment fund. The details of this fund are a little murky, but early indications are that it will direct billions of dollars to things such as having the government build sidewalks and government-subsidized farmers markets. The idea here is to use tax dollars to encourage healthier lifestyles. But at a time when Americans are buried under medical bills and frightened about losing the coverage they have, farmers markets and sidewalks are not the reforms they have in mind.

Americans want serious health care reform, not expansion of programs that are already fiscally unsustainable, subsidies that disguise rising costs instead of addressing their causes, and billions for sidewalks and asparagus. These are precisely the kinds of proposals that mask the underlying problems and cause people to lose faith in government solutions, and they are simply not acceptable.

The details we are seeing from the HELP Committee should make us more skeptical of a government health plan, not less, and they should underscore for every American the need for the kinds of real, comprehensive reforms some of us have been calling for over the last few weeks.

The irony in this whole debate is that we are being told that America's fiscal future will be jeopardized if we do not allow these people who are proposing these outrageous so-called reforms to take over the entire health care system.

Preliminary estimates for this flawed legislative proposal are simply staggering. Just yesterday, the Congressional Budget Office released an esti-

mate of just part—just part—of the HELP Committee bill. Focusing on just this one section, the CBO determined the bill will spend \$1.3 trillion over 10 years, even though 37 million people would still be left without health insurance. Let me say that again, Mr. President. Just part of the HELP Committee bill would spend \$1.3 trillion over 10 years, after which 37 million Americans would still be uninsured. Let me say that again, as I just have. One section of the bill—one section—\$1.3 trillion, and 37 million still uninsured. And this isn't even a complete evaluation of the bill. Large proposals that will have a significant impact on the cost, such as the Medicaid expansion and a government-run plan, have not even been factored in yet.

Moreover, according to details of the HELP Committee plan, a new health care exchange would result in 15 million Americans losing the employer coverage they already have—further evidence if you like what you have, you may well lose it under a government-run plan.

How does the HELP Committee propose we pay for all this? Well, its proposal is full of creative new ways to spend taxpayer dollars, but it offers little in offsetting the cost of the overall bill. They will either charge the money to the national credit card or, more likely, raise taxes on working families. In other words, more spending, higher taxes, and even more debt. So far, some of the taxes under discussion include a new tax on soda, juice boxes, the creation of a new tax on jobs, and new limits on charitable deductions.

Based on the CBO estimate, these taxes would only be the beginning. The health care proposal being put together is not only extremely defective, it will cost a fortune. And that cost will come straight out of the taxpayers' pocket-book.

The bottom line is this: Under the illusion of reform, Americans will be asked to give up the care they like for something worse, and then they will be taxed to the hilt to pay for it. Americans don't want changes that make the entire health care system as unsustainable as Medicaid, and they don't want to go broke covering the cost.

Mr. President, 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 now be a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak 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 second half.