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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.

Eternal God, whose power is unsearchable and whose judgments are great, quiet our hearts in Your presence. Teach us to be still and know that You are God.

Bless our Senators. Give them hearts to listen, teachable minds to learn, and humble wills to obey. Let the light of Your purposes guide them from bewilderment to trust in Your infinite wisdom and resources. Lord, use them to bring about an ordered society of nations that gives substance to humanity's dream of unity and peace. Watch over the entire Senate family and surround us with Your protections.

We pray in Your great 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, July 28, 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.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business for 1 hour. Senators during that time will be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes. The majority will control the first 30 minutes and the Republicans will control the second 30 minutes. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the Energy and Water appropriations bill. The Senate will recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. today to accommodate the weekly caucus luncheons.

Mr. President, I have spoken with the Republican leader at some length over the last few days, and we all know what we have to do before we leave here. We are going to finish the Energy and Water appropriations bill, the Agriculture appropriations bill. We have the Travel Promotion Act we have to do. We have to complete the Sotomayor nomination.

We have a package of extenders, for lack of a better description, the House is going to send us. They are going to likely be out next week but not for certain. In that package they are sending us, there will be an extension of the highway bill. I think all of this goes until about December. The Postal Service, we have to help them. We have to do something with FHA. We have to do something with unemployment compensation. That is all in one thing they

are going to send us for short extensions. I have not seen what they are going to put together; therefore, I could not share it with my esteemed colleague. But as soon as we have some information, we will make sure the committees of jurisdiction on both sides have knowledge of what that is. But we have to complete that work before we leave here, and I hope we can do it sooner rather than later. I hope we do not have to work this weekend.

We have a finite number of things we need to do before we proceed on to the summer recess. This is something Members look forward to. I personally have a very busy schedule, as I am sure most Members do. But once a year, I get together with my family. I am looking forward to that. It is for 7 or 8 days. But to justify that, we have a lot of work to do. If we look back in the years past, Congress adjourned by this time in years past. They were through for the year. We are, unfortunately, not able to do that as much as we would like that. There is a lot of work we could do at home but we cannot because this is where business is when we are in session. So we are going to continue to work through these things and do it as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, fixing our broken health care system after decades of inaction is no small task. With such an effort comes no shortage of strong convictions, diverse ideas, rigorous analysis, and constructive criticism. But as the plans, proposals, and policies evolve, our principles remain constant. Although we navigate a sea of choices, we know where we will land. First, we will bring security and stability back to health care. Second, we will not add a penny to the considerable national deficit that has ballooned over the past 8 years. This work we are doing on health care is budget neutral.

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



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That means it will not run up the debt. We are obligated to do that because that is in the budget resolution we passed earlier this year. That is what it says. We cannot do health care if it costs an extra penny. So we will do that. Finally, we will remain focused on seeing this fight all the way through because we are long overdue for a change.

Those who are fortunate enough to have health care now and who hear us debate how to make it better might wonder: What are you talking about? You may wonder what is in it for you—the people who are listening in. Well, health care reform helps everyone and affects everyone. It will help those who have insurance today but do not know if it will be there tomorrow. It will help those who worry about being just one illness away or one accident or one pink slip away from losing the insurance they have. It will help those who are covered but fear their children very likely will not be able to say that when they grow up—that they have coverage. And it will help nearly 50 million people who have none to begin with.

The reform we are pursuing means making sure that if you lose your job, your health care will not go with it. It means that if you change jobs, you will not have to worry about losing your coverage. Health care reform means lowering the costs of care and keeping them low. It means improving the quality of the care you get and keeping the quality of care high. Reforming health care means that if your mother had breast cancer or you had minor surgery last year or your child gets allergies every spring, your insurance company cannot say: I am sorry, you are too much of a risk to cover. It means the premiums you pay every month will not go up just because your insurance company feels like it. It means keeping costs stable so the price of staying healthy does not fluctuate like a gallon of gasoline. It not only means making sure you can keep your family's doctor or keep your health care plan if you like it but also that you can afford to do so. No one can predict when that next accident may occur or when one might lose their job. We do not know when we will get sick next or when one of our loved ones will become ill. But we can take the uncertainty and unfairness out of the current system. We can make sure it is stable, more secure, more reliable, and more dependable.

Second, all of the many plans we have heard for fixing health care have something else in common: They each have maintained President Obama's commitment that this effort, I repeat, will not dig us any deeper into debt than we already have. Any plan that passes this body will be fully paid for, I repeat. When all the numbers are crunched, the No. 1 bottom line is zero. It will not cost anything. In fact, as we improve disease prevention, reduce health disparities, and better coordi-

nate medical services, we will be lowering future costs even further.

Families will also save in the long run because the status quo comes with a hidden health care tax. If you have health care now, you are paying at least \$1,000 more for that health care then you would need to if other families had some insurance. When we reform health care and you are no longer responsible for covering the uninsured, you will see those savings in every paycheck you get.

The only costs that worry me are the costs of doing nothing, of inaction. We have already seen what happens when we do nothing. Over the past 8 years, health care costs rose to record levels and the number of Americans who cannot afford insurance did the same. The number of people who lost their insurance rose dramatically. Every day, 14,000 people in America—7 days a week—lose their health insurance. Right now, in Nevada, half a million people already lack the coverage they need or struggle with inadequate coverage. If we do not act, many, many more Nevadans and millions more Americans will lose their health care as it gets more expensive day by day.

For a generation, we have been working to fix this broken health care system. Throughout this year, we have explored numerous proposals in numerous bipartisan roundtables and committee hearings. This has been the No. 1 issue on our agenda for a long time now. And today we are closer than ever to getting something done.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let me just add to what I said to open the Senate. Senator DORGAN is an experienced legislator. He is working with one of our outstanding Republican legislators, Senator BENNETT of Utah. They are here and will be, in an hour, ready to start accepting amendments, if there are any. I had one of my Democratic colleagues say: I have a problem with that bill. I said: Get your amendment there today because if you wait until tomorrow, you may not get a chance to offer it.

We need to move forward. These are appropriations bills, and if Democrats and Republicans have not agreed on much here, there has been an absolute commitment to get our appropriations bills done. We are behind schedule even now. We do not want another big omnibus bill. We want to do these appropriations bills, get them done. And we are going to be able to say, when we leave here this work period, we at least got a third of them done before the August break. We are going to come back in September and continue to work through these.

So I repeat, if you have an amendment, you better get it over here today because tomorrow it may not be available to you.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE WEEK VIII, DAY II

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as the debate over health care continues, it is important that we not lose sight of the fact that the American people expect results. No one was ever elected to Congress to push a problem down the road or to point fingers. Americans certainly want reform, and that is exactly what they expect us to deliver. At the same time, Americans have a right to expect that the legislation we pass actually addresses the problems they face and that we do not use the need for reform as an excuse to pass legislation that does not really help or that makes existing problems worse.

This is the nature of the debate we are in: Some in Washington seem to be rushing to push through so-called reforms just for the sake of reform, regardless of whether they actually help the situation, while others are insisting we take the time to get it right.

Fortunately, with each passing day, more and more Americans and now more and more Members of Congress are insisting that we take the responsible path to health care reform—even if it means hitting the reset button and meeting in the middle on reforms that all of us can agree on and that Americans can embrace.

Here are some of the cautionary notes we have heard from Senators just in the last few days.

One top Senator said:

It's better to get a product that's based on quality and thoughtfulness than on trying to just get something through.

Last week, nine freshmen Senators wrote an open letter to the Senate Finance Committee calling for a solution that doesn't bankrupt our health care system. Here is what those nine Senators wrote:

In the face of exploding debt and deficits, however, we are concerned that too little focus has been given to the need for cost containment.

We are hearing the same things over in the House. One Congressman said on Sunday morning that:

The American people want to take a closer look. They want to feel comfortable with it. We have a long way to go.

Another Congressman said he thinks Americans are "shell-shocked" after last year's financial bailout, the stimulus, the cap-and-trade bill, and other major bills approved this year.

Another Congressman, referring to health care reform, asked:

Why are we rushing? Why are we rushing? Let's get it right.

America's Governors are also calling on the administration and Congress to slow down and insisting that Congress take the time to produce the right reform.