



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 111th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 155

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 2009

No. 119

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 8, 2009, at 2 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, AUGUST 3, 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 our help of the ages past, our hope for years to come, in Your secret places we find our faith and strength. Help us to know ourselves for who we are, people who too often seek our own way instead of striving to fulfill Your purposes. Cleanse the inner foundations of our hearts from any hint of pretense and use our Senators for Your glory. In this challenging hour of human destiny, deepen in our Senators a sense of surpassing opportunity to do their full part in building a better nation and world. Lord, fit them to protect this land from outward evil and from inner corruption. Make the words of their mouths and the meditations of their hearts be acceptable in Your sight, O God, our rock and our Redeemer. 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, August 3, 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.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for up to 1 hour. Senator BEGICH will give his maiden speech. We all look forward to this. He will have the first 30 minutes of morning business time. I note before he starts his speech, we are all so pleased with the work he has done. He has done an outstanding job for the people of the State of Alaska and our country, and I look forward to his re-

marks. The Republicans will control the final 30 minutes.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the Agriculture Appropriations Act. At 5:30 the Senate will proceed to a cloture vote on the substitute amendment to the bill. Additional votes in relation to the amendments are possible following the cloture vote. The deadline for filing first-degree amendments is 3:30 today.

In speaking to Senator BROWNBACK and on our side Senator KOHL, who is the comanager of the bill and who, of course, would love to finish it today, Senator BROWNBACK said on Thursday that he thought we could finish the bill this evening and I hope that in fact is the case. The longer we are on this bill the less time there will be for Sotomayor speeches, so we look forward to completing this Agriculture appropriations bill so we can go to the Supreme Court nomination and listen to what people have to say about the new Supreme Court Justice.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the American people wake up every morning worrying about real problems. They go to bed every night with real concerns. They worry about the agonizing sacrifices they have to make so they can afford to stay healthy, and their fear is sincere.

Our response and responsibility to the American people should be equally grounded in reality. That reality is that our health care system is in serious distress. I believe serious problems

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



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deserve serious efforts by serious legislators to develop serious solutions.

Unfortunately, much of what we have seen from the other side is simply one radical distraction after the next. For months, Republicans have perpetuated a pollster- and consultant-created myth that our plan and our goal is to have the government run your health care. It is not. Let me repeat: It is not. In fact, one of our core principles is that if you like the health care you have, you can keep it. But the other side simply won't let the facts get in the way of a good story.

A Republican Congressman recently claimed that our plan to improve health care would "put seniors in a position of being put to death by their government."

A Republican Senator made a similar statement to mislead his constituents. He actually accused Democrats of proposing a plan that would kill Americans. It is hard to imagine that. Rather than having a serious and real debate about a serious and real crisis, some Senators and Congressmen want the American people to believe their colleagues are proposing a plan to kill them.

These distortions and distractions are revolting, and they are not limited to health care.

An artificial controversy is getting far too much attention lately—one that ignores the undeniable and proven fact that President Obama was born in the United States of America. Last week, one of the Republican leaders in the House of Representatives continued to give this false and misleading claim credence. Let's be clear: It is a phony issue that does not deserve even a minute of our attention on the floor of the Senate. It is absurd, irresponsible, and baseless, and the false claims have long ago been refuted.

The American people have every right to expect we will solve real problems before creating fake problems. They should know that rather than helping them get ahead, some of our colleagues would rather spew ludicrous conspiracy theories.

The other side hasn't stopped at fake arguments and fake issues. We also have seen them resort to fake letters. Some Members of Congress have recently received forged letters purporting to be from the NAACP. Others have received a similar letter signed by a fake name with a fake job title purporting to be from a local Hispanic group. The bogus letters have been tracked back to employees of a Republican lobbying firm. This behavior is sick, it is shameful, it is dishonest, and it is undemocratic.

When we passed the economic recovery plan this winter, some opposed it. They didn't believe we needed an aggressive plan in response to a grave crisis that now is putting people back to work, ensuring middle-class families can get ahead, and investing in our future. But objecting to that legislation is their right. As we start to see a re-

turn on our investment, many of those who tried to block this bill have since sought credit for the good it is doing. Others who opposed the plan outright—those who wish we weren't investing in their States and districts—now complain they wish to see us invest more quickly. Well, you can't have it both ways. It is yet another embarrassing example of misinformation and misrepresentation upon which some on the other side tend to rely.

I cannot blame people for wondering why, with an issue as important as health care now before us, bipartisan consensus sometimes seems so elusive. So I say to them: This extreme brand of strategy and the extreme tactics that come with it are what we have to contend with.

First, Rush Limbaugh happily admitted he wants our President to fail. Then a Republican Senator openly admitted he wants to block the health insurance reform for millions as a way to "break the President." Another Republican Senator admitted that at least half of the other side's opposition to reform is purely political. And an influential commentator advised Republicans to avoid consensus at all costs and instead "go for the kill."

These partisan tactics have consequences. These consequences will be evident at any kitchen table, in every family budget, and every American's peace of mind.

And they are watching. A poll released last week found that a majority of Americans credit President Obama with putting partisanship aside and trying to work with congressional Republicans to get this done for the good of the country. Republicans, they found, weren't returning the favor.

Others may be focused on delaying and denying health insurance reform, but we will make sure we don't let that happen. We already have seen what happens when we do nothing. The costs of sitting this one out are far too high and not acting is not an option.

The American people appreciate those Republicans who have come to the negotiating table in good faith. I am sorry to say that there simply aren't enough of them. At this stage, out of 100 Senators, we have 3 Republicans who are willing to work with us on health care. I am very happy to have them, but I wish we had more.

Rather than having a serious and real debate about a serious and real crisis, some would prefer to deploy tactics to scare the American people. But what scares the American people is that under the status quo, they live just one illness, one accident, or one pink slip away from losing everything.

This is no time to let partisanship get the best of us. This is no time to obsess over fake controversies or oppose ideas simply because they were proposed by people who sit on the other side of this Chamber. This is no time to instill unfounded fears and incite the hope that our Nation's leaders fail. This is the time to get serious about

making it easier for American citizens to afford to live a healthy life.

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. The Senate will proceed to 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 distinguished Senator from Alaska, Mr. BEGICH, controlling the first 30 minutes and the Republicans controlling the final 30 minutes.

The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

Mr. BEGICH. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. BEGICH pertaining to the introduction of S. 1560, S. 1561, S. 1562, S. 1563, S. 1564, and S. 1565 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

LU YOUNG

Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, before yielding the floor, I wish to mark the passing of a great Alaskan—Lu Young, the wife of Alaska's long-time Congressman DON YOUNG.

Lu passed away suddenly over the weekend. Lu was an Alaskan of true distinction. I am proud to have shared a friendship with her for several decades.

Our State is better because of her service and many contributions. The thoughts and prayers of Alaskans and me are with Representative YOUNG and his family.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Alaska.

SENATOR BEGICH'S MAIDEN SPEECH

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to congratulate my colleague from Alaska, Senator BEGICH, and recognize his maiden speech on the Senate floor. The tradition of giving a maiden speech is one that perhaps in recent years has not been followed as intently as it has in days gone past. Senator BEGICH has highlighted with his remarks today and with the collection of bills he has introduced on the Senate floor—the significance of America's role as an Arctic nation and the key that Alaska holds as a leader in that responsibility.

I appreciate what he is doing to shine a spotlight on these issues, whether it is how we deal with the impact of climate change, whether it is how we deal with the health consequences, how we