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Senate

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.

Gracious God, today inspire and encourage our lawmakers to do the work of justice and mercy so that all citizens will be bound together in respecting one another. Give our Senators an awareness of this Nation's rich diversity and heritage as well as the mutual goals that unite us as a people.

Lord, lead us all away from any self-sufficiency that makes us not feel our need for Your redeeming and refreshing grace. And Lord, we praise You for Your healing mercies that have been felt by our leader's wife and daughter, Mrs. Landra Reid and Lana.

We pray in Your merciful Name. 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, March 15, 2010.

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.

OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last Thursday my wife was involved in a violent car accident.

We often say this Senate is a family. I am reminded of it time and time again when both triumph and tragedy unite us. Over the past few days, I learned all over again just how close, how genuine, how meaningful that family is. The tremendous outpouring of support for my wife and daughter from people across Nevada and the Nation and from my Senate family has deeply touched all of us. We have received literally hundreds and hundreds of e-mails and phone calls. We very much appreciate all the thoughts for Landra and every prayer on her behalf. The kindness and concern are overwhelming and really humbling.

It really was a close call, but we are grateful it wasn't worse, and we are confident she will be making a full recovery. It won't be tomorrow or the next day, but she will be back on her feet as soon as she can. My wife Landra and I have been married for 50 years. She is the strongest and most selfless person I know. If anyone can recover, it is she.

Before we begin this week's work, I wish to say to my Senate family and all of those watching: Thank you very much.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will turn to a period of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message on H.R. 2847, the HIRE Act or the Jobs I bill. At 5:30 p.m., we will have a cloture vote on the motion to concur in the House amendments with respect to that bill.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, let me first say to my good friend from Nevada how good it is to hear such a positive report on Landra's recovery. We are all grateful that hopefully she will be home sometime soon and on her way to a speedy recovery.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the debate over health care continues, and this week all eyes are on the House. All we hear about is the arm-twisting and the horse-trading going on over there behind the scenes—the mad dash ahead of the big vote—and once again Americans just can't believe what they are hearing.

Behind all of these stories is a simple truth: Democratic leaders are doing everything they can to convince a handful of lawmakers that they should vote for a bill they don't really like and which their constituents overwhelmingly oppose. They are scrambling to get these wavering House Members to vote for a bill which claims to be reform but which promises to lead to

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



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higher health care costs, higher insurance premiums, and a vast expansion of government's role in our daily lives. They are pulling out all the stops. They are doing everything they can to jam this bill through, and they don't even seem to care anymore about how ugly it all looks.

What we are seeing is nothing more than a replay of the same revolting process Democrats used to pass this bill in the Senate, a process that completely outraged the public. The same deals they used to get this bill through the Senate are back. As if voting on these deals the first time wasn't bad enough, Democrats in the House are now getting ready to vote for them again. Every one of the deals that were so revolting to the American people will still be in the bill House Members are expected to vote on later this week. That means that anybody who votes for this bill will be voting in favor of the special deals that were put there for no other reason than to sway votes.

A handful of Democrats have stood up in opposition to these deals and this entire process. One longtime Democratic Congressman said last week that he won't be voting for the bill as a result of the deals. Here is what he had to say. This Democratic Congressman said:

I reject unequivocally the unsavory deal making that took place in the Senate where Nebraska, Florida, and Louisiana obtained special benefits that do not apply to the other States and those special benefits provided to those States at the expense of the residents of all other States. I simply cannot support legislation that contains those unwarranted giveaways to a select few States at the expense of others.

That was a Democratic Member of the House of Representatives.

But others are keeping quiet. They are still on the fence. That is why this week's vote promises to be even uglier than the last one, because this bill goes beyond things such as the "Cornhusker kickback" and the "Louisiana purchase" and the "Gator aid."

I was disappointed to see the White House reverse itself over the weekend and endorse many of these sweetheart deals after the President said he would try to have them removed. Apparently, they determined that removing the deals might jeopardize efforts to pass the bill. So now the White House says it won't object to all of the special deals, just some of them. The White House says it won't object to all the special deals, just some of them. What that means, of course, is that some Senators and House Members are getting special deals on top of special deals.

But that is not all the White House is willing to do to jam this bill through. According to press reports, it is also promising to raise campaign cash for House Members who vote for the House bill. We read in one of the papers today that the White House is openly signaling that those lawmakers will go to the top of the list for fundraisers and Presidential visits ahead of the Novem-

ber elections. So if press accounts are accurate, lawmakers who support the bill are being told they get repaid with Presidential visits and big-money fundraisers from the President or the Vice President—vote for the bill and you get a special visit for your reelection campaign.

We also read this morning in the Politico Pulse that the drug lobbyists were here in the Capitol over the weekend huddling with Democratic staffers to make sure their interests would be protected in the final bill.

This is precisely the kind of thing Americans rebelled against after the last vote on this bill. This debate should be about the substance of a bill that would restructure one-sixth of our economy and the direction Americans want to go in as a country, not how much money such-and-such Senator or Congressman needs in order to vote for it.

It is especially disappointing that this particular White House is supporting all this. After the "Cornhusker kickback" and the other special deals, the administration had an opportunity to distance itself from this process, to hit the reset button, and to work toward a bill Americans could be proud of. Unfortunately, in its desperation to force this bill through, the White House is reverting to the anything-goes approach, and the result is predictable: Americans won't like this bill any more than they liked the last one. They have issued their verdict about this bill and this process. They don't like either one. And once again, the only people who don't seem to get it are the Democrats here in Washington.

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 be a period for the transaction of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Arizona.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I wish to pick up on the comments of my colleague, the Republican leader.

There is another distressing story in the paper today reported by the Associated Press. They report that all of the special deals that last week the President said he was going to try to remove from the legislation, now—except for the "Cornhusker kickback"—they are going to leave them in there because they need the votes. If that is correct, this process is even sicker than we thought it was.

Part of the reason for the Democratic leadership using the reconciliation provision to fix the Senate bill was to take all of these special provisions out, but now it appears, according to the Associated Press, that they are going to be kept in there because they need the votes.

Let me detail what a couple of these are. Last week, there was a story in Politico that detailed six specific items. Of course, there was the "Cornhusker kickback" that got such bad publicity and everybody agreed it had to go, including the Senator who voted for the legislation after he was promised that in his State there would be no cost for the coverage of additional Medicaid patients. Now that is apparently going to be "fixed," at great expense, I might add, to the taxpayers of the United States, but apparently unfixed are six other items, and there are more, by the way.

Quote:

"We have defended it and we will defend it," said Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, whose state picked up \$600 million in extra Medicaid funding . . .

Again, I am quoting from a March 10 Politico story.

Second:

In a letter to congressional leaders last week, Obama targeted the Nebraska and Florida deals for elimination. The Florida provision could also shield some seniors in California, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, according to Senator Bill Nelson's office.

This provision deals with Medicare patients. The reason it is important to me is because there are 330,000-plus Arizona seniors who have Medicare Advantage plans. These are the plans that would suffer under the legislation proposed by the President. Because they would have benefits they currently enjoy taken away from them, the seniors in all of the States are obviously complaining to their Senators. So Democrats have said: Well, OK, if seniors are upset about having these benefits taken away, then we will shield the seniors in our States who have these Medicare Advantage policies so that they don't have to give up their benefits—the biggest set of beneficiaries, and there are over 800,000 of them in the State of Florida but apparently also some in California, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. All right. Special deal for them.

If this bill, by the way, is so great, why do we have to protect our citizens from its provisions? But that is the way it works. However, my senior citizen constituents in Arizona don't get grandfathered as do those in other States. It just shows you how bad the bill policy is in the area generally that you have to protect your constituents from suffering the effects of the bill but also the bad policy that does that to the detriment of other constituencies. Apparently, now that is going to stay in the bill.

Then there was the so-called "Louisiana purchase," \$300 million to Louisiana. Then there was the \$1.1 billion