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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the captain of our souls, You know every temptation and trial we face. Give our lawmakers today the wisdom to be good stewards of the bounties You have given and to trust You to deliver them from evil. Make them pure enough to use wisely the wealth we call ours, as they remember that to whom much is given, much will be required. Allow no hunger for attainment nor thirst of ambition to drive them to align themselves with wrong. Lord, strengthen them to serve You this day with right choices and unswerving loyalty.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL 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. INOUE).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 22, 2012.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator

from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

DANIEL K. INOUE,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico 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 1 hour. The majority will control the first half, the Republicans the final half.

Following that morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the capital formation bill.

The filing deadline for second-degree amendments to the motion to concur with respect to the STOCK Act is 10:30 this morning.

At about 12:30 p.m. today, there will be seven rollcall votes, including completion of the IPO bill, the STOCK Act, and three judicial nominations.

JOBS CREATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I was disappointed to see in the newspaper this morning and hear on the news that Republicans in the House have decided to not mess with our highway bill—a bill on which we spent 5 weeks. The highway bill is a piece of bipartisan legislation that will save a great 2.8 million jobs. The House of Representatives is so disorganized and in such a state of disrepair that they can't even extend the highway bill. I don't know what is in their minds.

This program was started by a radical liberal Dwight Eisenhower, who decided after having brought—as a

major under orders from his commander—a caravan of military vehicles across the country that the roads were awful. So he remembered that all during his military service. When he became President of the United States, he decided something needed to be done about that. The Interstate Highway System was the brainchild of Dwight Eisenhower. Now the Republicans in the House are talking as if it is some socialist program that was developed at Harvard or some other radically liberal place. I can't imagine what their mindset is.

BARBARA BOXER, one of the most liberal Members of this body, and JIM INHOFE, one of the most conservative Members, came together on a bill that we passed on a bipartisan basis in the Senate. The vast majority of the Democrats voted for it, and the vast majority of Republicans voted for it. It is a good bill that will save or create 2.8 million jobs. But over in that big dark hole we now refer to as the tea party-dominated House of Representatives, they couldn't do it. They couldn't agree on it. They couldn't agree even on their own bill. They destroyed their own bill. Now they will not even agree to take up our bill.

The funding for our highway system terminates at the end of this month. I am not inclined to go for the short-term extension they are going to send to us. They are going to have to feel the heat of the American people—they meaning the tea party-driven House of Representatives.

The initial public offering legislation will be on the floor and debated for the last time in just a short time. It will pass. The bill is far from perfect, but it is a good bill. It will help capital formation, and I am glad we are able to pass it on to the House. I am hopeful, with the good work done by Senator MERKLEY, Senator WARNER, Senator BENNET and others, the minority will wrap their arms around this and pass it. I hope they will agree to pass the

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



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Reed amendment. We will soon know about that. The bill is going to be gone and sent to the President soon if the House agrees to pass this legislation.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 2 years ago tomorrow President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act into law. It was the greatest single step in generations toward ensuring access to affordable quality health care for every American, regardless of where they live or how much money they make.

Millions and millions of Americans have already felt the benefit of this law. Seniors are saving money—millions and millions of dollars—on their prescriptions and their free checkups. The doughnut hole is rapidly disappearing because of this law.

Insurance companies can no longer set arbitrary lifetime caps on benefits, putting millions of Americans one car accident or heart attack away from bankruptcy. People think they are in good shape; they have a health insurance policy. Then they get into a car accident or they get cancer or some other dread disease and they are in the process of being taken care of and they are told their bills are not going to be paid anymore; their limit is \$10,000 or \$50,000 and insurance stopped paying the benefits.

Under this legislation that can no longer be done. That is why the President signed the bill. Under this legislation that is now law, children can no longer be denied insurance because they have preexisting conditions. The protection will soon extend to all Americans, and in 2 short years—in fact, less time than that—virtually every man, woman, and child in America will have access to the health insurance they can afford and the vital care they need. They will have the same kind of insurance the Presiding Officer and I have—basically the same insurance. People rail against this plan of President Obama's. I haven't seen a single one of the Republicans rail against this law saying: We don't want our insurance because it is government insurance.

Every Member of the Senate has the same insurance that we are by law giving to everyone in America. So my Republican colleagues who berate this bill, let them drop their government insurance. If they hate this coverage so much that we are trying to give to the American people, they can drop what they have because it is the same thing basically.

No longer will hundreds of millions of Americans live in fear of losing their insurance because they lose their jobs, and no longer will tens of millions rely on the only care they know exists—an emergency room. The most expensive care in America is an emergency room visit. Some people go without care because they have no insurance at all.

This is not just a story I have heard from other people. There are people

today who have no insurance just like my family had no insurance when I was growing up. We didn't go to the doctor. We had no insurance. The only time I can remember going to the doctor was when I was deathly ill—literally deathly ill.

My parents had no car, and I had something wrong. I had been sick for a long time. My brother had somebody visit him, and my mother asked if they would be good enough to take us over to the hospital, which was 50 miles away. They did, and I had a growth on one of my intestines. I was very, very sick.

There are many people today just like I was as a little boy; they have no insurance, and they may have the same situation I had, with no transportation and having a visitor take them to the nearest emergency room. That is what happened to me. In my case, the emergency room was 50 miles away.

Unfortunately, Republicans continue to target the rights and benefits guaranteed under that law. If Republicans have their way, insurance companies will once again be allowed to deny care to sick children because they have asthma or diabetes or some of the other situations young people get. In Nevada, thousands of children with preexisting conditions would once again be at the whim of insurance companies that care more about making money than about making people better. If Republicans have their way, young adults just out of college will be kicked off their parents' insurance plans. That is also something I know exists today.

In the little town of Searchlight, where I have my home, a young man named Jeff wanted to go to school. He started at community college and was doing pretty well when he got pain in his groin. At first it started out as a little ache, and then it got to the point that he couldn't take it anymore. But because he was at an age where he was no longer able to stay on his parents' insurance policy, he didn't know where to go. So he went to the so-called county hospital, indigent hospital. He was diagnosed with having testicular cancer. He had been on his dad's insurance policy, but he arrived at an age where he was no longer eligible. His parents certainly did not have much. His mother worked part time in a post office, and his dad worked at a steam-generating plant 50 miles away from Searchlight. So they begged—I am stretching a little bit—but they borrowed and borrowed and borrowed to take care of his two surgeries, a number of hospital visitations, chemotherapy. They paid for that—thousands and thousands of dollars that they had to find a way to pay for for their boy.

Under the law that is now in existence, young people can stay on their parents' insurance policy for 3 or 4 years more, allowing many who are finishing college to go find a job while staying on their parents' insurance policy.

In Nevada, thousands of children with preexisting conditions would, once again, as I have indicated, be without the ability to be taken care of when they are sick.

Almost 23,000 young adults in Nevada would once again have to defer their dreams to take a job or, as I just indicated, go to college or risk going without any care.

If Republicans have their way, our seniors will pay for more prescriptions and checkups. We have had about a quarter of a million Nevada seniors who now get wellness visits, cancer screenings, and other preventive services. If this goes away, it will not happen anymore.

Tens of thousands of seniors who saved millions and millions of dollars in Nevada alone on prescription drugs last year will once again be forced to choose between buying food and buying medicine. If Republicans have their way, taxes will increase for small businesses. So will the deficit. Repealing health care reform would add almost \$1.5 trillion to the Federal debt—not billion, trillion. But when Democrats undertook health care reform, it wasn't just about saving money, it was about saving lives, and we did that.

While the numbers I have just discussed are very important, there is one number that matters more than all the others: 45,000. In the year 2011, 45,000 Americans died because they lacked health insurance. That is almost 1,000 a week. That doesn't include the tens of thousands more who are sick or dying because they have health insurance but still can't afford the care they need.

After the rest of the affordable care act has taken affect over the next 1½ or 2 years, no American will have to bear what President Lyndon Johnson called "the injustice which denies the miracle of healing to the old and to the poor." President Johnson knew that living in a country with the best medical care in the world doesn't matter if people can't access that care.

That is why almost 47 years ago he signed Medicare into law. On that day in July, President Johnson celebrated an American tradition that "calls upon us never to be indifferent toward despair. It commands us never to turn away from helplessness. It directs us never to ignore or to spurn those who suffer untended in a land that is bursting with abundance."

So we saved \$500 billion in wasteful programs and other things in Medicare, we extended the life of it for a dozen years, and gave seniors the things I have talked about today: Filling the doughnut hole, prescription drugs, wellness checks, and all the other things that are so important to them.

The affordable care act continues the tradition President Johnson celebrated because it calls upon us never to be indifferent toward despair, commands us to never turn away from helplessness, and directs us to never ignore or to spurn those who suffer untended in a land that is bursting with abundance.