

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2013

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10:30 a.m. Thursday, October 3; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; that following any leader remarks, the Senate be in a period of morning business for debate only until 2 p.m. with the first hour equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the second 30 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it adjourn under the previous order following the remarks of Senator BARRASSO of Wyoming for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALTH CARE EXCHANGES

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, because Americans all across the country today are speaking out about their personal experiences with the ObamaCare exchanges yesterday. Instead of it being as easy as buying something from Amazon, which the President had promised, Americans ran into roadblocks and technical disasters State after State.

Instead of getting good coverage, their computers crashed. These were not just glitches, they were system failures to the point that in the Casper Star Tribune, on the front page today, it was talking about people spending time working their way just trying—on the computer—one little section had a little cartoon at the bottom. The one guy worked so hard trying to work the computer that he ended up getting carpal tunnel syndrome, while trying to get through the computer to find out more about the costs of the Obama health care law through the exchanges.

The Obama administration has had 3 years to prepare for the launch that occurred on October 1. Even if the technology finally gets fixed, the issue of health care will not. After people finally get a chance to examine what is being offered to them when they make a decision about enrolling or not under the mandates of the law, Americans are still going to find that the exchanges do not match the President's promise.

Let's think about what those promises were. Last week, the President was in New York with Bill Clinton. They had what seemed like an informal to me. What the President said is that: Most people will be able to shop and compare. For many people it is going to be cheaper than an average cell phone bill.

The people are not going to find that it is cheaper, even with government subsidies, than the average cell phone bill.

The President has also said: The process is going to be as easy as Amazon. Even if the administration is able to paper over the many problems with the exchanges, it is not going to be as easy as shopping on Amazon.

Remember, from the beginning the President said: If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. We are now seeing in State after State that the exchanges are such that, to try to get costs down, they are limiting the market in a way and the networks in a way that fewer doctors are included, fewer hospitals are included.

That is causing an uproar. Instead of doubling down on a broken system, the President should grant all Americans a 1-year delay—the exact same delay he gave their bosses.

The President talks a lot about a “fair shake” for all Americans. We heard it in his campaign speeches, and we hear it as he goes around and talks to groups. He uses the words quite frequently.

ObamaCare, unfortunately, delivers the exact opposite. What the President has done unilaterally is gone outside the law to grant special deals to almost everyone except to people who need it the most, which is the hard-working American public. He basically, I believe, shut down the Federal Government in order to continue his own policy of his health care law, picking winners and losers. This can't continue.

The good news is that today, after once again attempting to lead from behind in a crisis, the President is finally having congressional leaders down to the White House within the next hour to meet with him. This is an opportunity for the President to do the right thing, to open the government, and to finally deliver fairness for Americans under the health care law. After all, if we are going to give people's bosses a break from the mandates of the health care law, the President ought to give hard-working men and women of America the same break. The same for Members of Congress. If the President decides that his own administration, White House employees, and Members of Congress have special treatment under the health care law, that shouldn't be so. That should be eliminated.

I do want to talk for a minute specifically about the government shutdown. Over the past week Senate and House Republicans have voted overwhelmingly for legislation passed by the House of Representatives that

keeps government operations running. It keeps parks open, and it keeps Americans working. Senate Democrats have overwhelmingly rejected these proposals and have allowed to have the government shut down, to have the gates closed at America's national parks, and to have critical services for America's veterans go unfunded through the Veterans' Administration.

Today or tomorrow the Senate will have the opportunity to pass legislation from the House that will immediately open our parks, fund services offered through the Department of Veterans Affairs, and provide time-sensitive funding for the National Institutes of Health. We should pass these bills. We should make sure Americans can use these essential government services right now.

I also would like to talk for a minute about another looming issue that is important to the American people, to our Nation, and one that the President has recently addressed. Later this month Congress will begin debate on the President's sixth debt limit increase, the sixth time he has come to increase the debt limit in his 5 years of office. The President has said he is refusing to negotiate on this issue. Instead, I believe the President should accept that our country can no longer avoid a bipartisan agreement to reform entitlements. The President can no longer avoid a bipartisan agreement to reform entitlements. It is the President's job, responsibility, obligation, and opportunity to lead the effort.

If the President is unwilling to seriously deal with our country's debt, Congress is left with little choice but to use the debt limit to force him into fiscal solutions. The debt ceiling is merely a symptom of a much larger illness, which is Washington's addiction to spending. On spending, the status quo is not sustainable.

It is interesting how the President has seemed to change his tune. The President gave a number of speeches in the Senate when he was a Senator. We can go back and see what he said about raising the debt ceiling. He said that adding to the debt—of course, this was when George W. Bush was President—his key word was “irresponsible.” President Obama as a Senator said it was unpatriotic—raising the debt ceiling—unpatriotic and unacceptable. This was Barack Obama in this body, in this Chamber, in 2006. President Obama—at the time a Senator—actually called raising the debt ceiling “a failure of leadership.” Isn't that what the President himself should be accused of right now as he tries to do what he so vehemently objected to when he was in the Senate?

How bad is the situation? Well, in September the Congressional Budget Office reported that in the long term defense, education, infrastructure, and all discretionary spending will be squeezed by entitlement programs as well as interest on the debt. Over the next 75 years discretionary spending

will increase by 39 percent. This makes the sequester cuts look like child's play. Medicaid and other health spending increases will be by 159 percent; interest on the debt increases 823 percent; Social Security spending rises by only 37 percent only because CBO assumes drastic benefit cuts in the year 2033.

The President recently spoke about making cuts, though, to discretionary spending. That number is underestimated. The President failed to mention that by refusing to make much needed changes to entitlement programs, he is guaranteeing that these investments, as he calls them, will continue to shrink.

Entitlement reform is needed not only to preserve other Federal spending but in order to slow our ever-expanding debt. President Obama has bragged that he is no longer setting up the record-setting deficits he did in his first 4 years. Those self-congratulatory

statements will be short-lived, as the Congressional Budget Office has predicted that deficits will soon start to rise unless real reforms are made today. Without real reform, America's debt will continue to grow, and America's interest and entitlement payments are on course to overwhelm the entire Federal budget.

The American people deserve to hear the truth about the tough choices we must face together as a nation. They also deserve an open and honest discussion about how we are going to make those choices. The President and congressional Democrats ought to rethink their strategies of leadership via blame game and saving via spending.

The President and Democrats have an opportunity today at the White House to put the games aside and work with us on opening the government, on delivering fairness for all Americans, and on actually reducing our debt. I hope they use this meeting to finally

do what is right and to help the American people.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate now stands in adjournment until tomorrow at 10:30 a.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 5:06 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, October 3, 2013, at 10:30 a.m.