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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JOHN E. WALSH, a Senator from the State of Montana.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, we would rest in You, who alone can bring order to our world. Reveal yourself to our Senators, guiding them on the path of peace. May they place behind them disappointed hopes as they lean on You for comfort and strength. Lord, rebuke their doubts, strengthen the good in them so that nothing may hinder the outflow of Your power in their lives. Direct them to make a commitment to work together for Your glory.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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. LEAHY).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 27, 2014.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN E. WALSH, a Senator from the State of Montana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WALSH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 333.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion. The bill clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 333, H.R. 3979, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO PETER D. ROBINSON

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have said often that people who work here in the Capitol are some of the most intelligent men and women anywhere in the world. They come here—as I explained to a group of people from Nevada this morning—dedicated to public service. They are not here to see how much money they can make. They are here to change people's lives. Today, the Senate is losing one of its brightest and most seasoned minds.

A lawyer by trade, Pete Robinson came to the Senate in 2002. I knew Pete because he had worked in the House previously, when I served over there. I

knew him as someone I always admired—people who are good runners. I saw Pete out running and I was amazed at his gracefulness and speed. I did a lot of running. I wasn't very graceful and didn't have a lot of speed, but I did a lot of running. Pete was the captain of his high school cross-country team. He was a good athlete, which I admire very much.

From the moment he came to the Senate, the Office of Parliamentarian became a better place. He was as close to being indispensable as anyone. He has an incredible work ethic and tremendous experience—having been the Parliamentarian in the House and here and having been in the private sector. He has a great memory and has made the Senate function as it should. Not many people can make that claim, especially today. So he will be missed. I will miss him personally.

I love to joke with him and talk to him about his running days, like I talk about my running days, as if we were both still out running. But that is what life is all about. We look back at the things that we did. I am sure, just as the Presiding Officer knows, things you do as a younger man become better every day, and that is the way I look back on my athletic endeavors in that regard. Of course, talking just about myself, maybe I wasn't as good as I thought I was, but that didn't matter at the time. It made me feel good, and that is what athletics is all about—trying to build character.

So Pete is going to be missed in his retirement, but he is going to have plenty to do. He has lots of hobbies: an avid gardener, a good cook—some say an amateur chef. I won't go that far, but he is a good cook, as I understand it. He can make his own furniture. So he is going to keep busy feeding and furnishing his wife Connie, their daughter Tara, son-in-law Ethan, and grandson Milo with the good things he has done.

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



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We will truly miss him. I appreciate his courtesies all the time to me, and, as far as I know, to everyone else.

SCHEDULE

Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority the final half.

Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to H.R. 4152. At noon there will be up to three rollcall votes: the Menendez-Corker substitute, passage of the Ukraine bill, and confirmation of Maria Contreras-Sweet to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration.

Last night I filed cloture on John Owens to be a U.S. circuit judge, and on the motion to proceed to the legislative vehicle for the unemployment insurance bill. Under the rule the first cloture vote will be tomorrow morning.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO PETER D. ROBINSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to say a word about our longtime colleague Peter Robinson, who is retiring this week.

Peter joined the Office of the Senate Parliamentarian in 2002 and quickly distinguished himself as a standout talent. He brought a remarkable breadth of knowledge to a job that really requires it and a legendary facility for reading and digesting complex legislation in record time. His colleagues describe him as kind of a genius, actually—somebody who can remember not only where he read something but the exact page on which he read it. According to Senate legend, one staffer actually showed up one day asking for the software program that he just assumed Peter had been using to analyze complex bills. He was that fast. He was that good.

Peter has all sorts of interests and hobbies, so I am sure he will make very good use of his retirement, but he will be missed around here. Pete's colleagues will miss his professional skill and mastery of precedent and procedure, but they will also miss the good humor and the equanimity which have made him such a great colleague and such a valuable and respected member of the Senate family over the years. We wish Peter all the best.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

UKRAINE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today is an important day for Ukraine and for all nations supporting international law, democracy, and decency. Later today

the Senate will pass a bipartisan bill that provides much needed aid to stabilize Ukraine's economy.

For those Russian leaders who have played a role in the destabilization of Ukraine, this legislation contains much needed repercussions against them. Remember, Russia is run by an oligarchy. One of the oligarchs is the President of that country—Putin. This bill is a reality check to him that the United States will not stand idly by while Russia plays the role of schoolyard bully.

It seems to me that President Putin does not understand the way the world works today. It is almost as if Putin yearns for the days of Joseph Stalin. Times have changed since Stalin was around, the world has changed since Stalin was around, and it has changed for the better. The Cold War is over, along with fixtures such as the Iron Curtain, dueling superpowers, and brinksmanship. Yet it is almost as if Putin is living in a time warp. Russia's place in the world has transformed. It does not wield the global power it once did. The rest of the world has changed since Stalin's era, with other countries in leading roles.

But the United States of America remains a beacon of hope to the whole world. Our economic, our military, our political power, and our influence are strong because we stand for freedom, democracy, and economic prosperity. Russia, on the other hand, led by this man who yearns for Stalin, is a nation of immense resources and potential for good. Yet they have chosen to wield its influence solely for self-interests.

Earlier this week President Obama said the following about Russia:

Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors—not out of strength, but out of weakness. The fact that Russia felt compelled to go in militarily and lay bare these violations of international law indicates less influence, not more.

President Obama is absolutely correct. Instead of using its influence to bring stability to neighboring countries, Putin has instead played the role of an antagonist. Look at what has taken place in Crimea and the country of Georgia. For what does Russia stand? For what does President Putin stand?

As the world gets closer and closer to looking at Putin, it doesn't like what it sees. The product of Putin's two decades in leadership seems to be a disregard for national law, more corruption, and increased suppression of basic human rights. While countless of his own citizens have rallied in the streets pleading for more freedom, Putin and his cronies have concerned themselves with getting richer—not only with power but with money. These oligarchs have been ruthless in protecting their power and their money.

Inside and outside of Russia, the President of Russia has displayed a penchant for being a bully. He imprisons political rivals and locks them up.

He seizes the wealth from Russians who have displeased him. If they don't say or do exactly what he wants, he puts them in jail and takes their wealth. He has singlehandedly rolled back years of progress on equality. He has endorsed the persecution of his own country's gay and lesbian community. And once again he has invaded and occupied a nation for choosing democracy. Are these acts of a statesman? No. They are acts of a bully.

As billions tuned in to the Olympics, I believe few were deluded by the fake veneer of Putin's Sochi show. In fact, all we saw was that Putin's Russia isn't working.

I say every time I get on the floor that if he so likes the vote that took place in Crimea, why doesn't he have a vote of the people in Chechnya? Everyone knows why.

I say to Mr. Putin: Operating by intimidation and belligerence will not work. In today's world, nations should work together through diplomacy and the rule of law.

He has a choice to come back into the international community and honor international law or to continue to isolate Russia.

Russian troops continue to mass at the border of Ukraine, but he should understand this: The consequences for his continued bullying will not end today and certainly not with this bill. His chest-thumping aggression is leading Russia only to isolation and irrelevance.

My colleagues and I will continue to work to strengthen Ukraine's Government and its 46 million people. The bill before the Senate today sanctions and further isolates Putin and his inner circle. What we are doing here today is just the beginning.

I support this legislation, and I am proud of my Senate colleagues who join in standing for the people of Ukraine. This is what we are doing.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

REAL SOLUTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I will start by acknowledging the majority leader's candor yesterday in outlining his party's agenda for the rest of the year—in admitting he actually asked his party's "political arm," the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, to come up with it. Maybe he didn't intend to admit that his party's so-called agenda is actually a political gambit or that it basically has one intent—to bail out imperiled Democrats, Democrats desperate to distract from how ObamaCare is devastating the middle class—but it slipped out anyway.

But that wasn't the only Freudian slip we heard at yesterday's press conference. Here is a quote from one of the majority leader's top lieutenants:

When we play the political games that we're playing here, [middle-class families] feel that we are detached from their priorities.

Boy, I couldn't agree more with that. Maybe that is why even the press isn't taking this "agenda" seriously. The New York Times reported that helping struggling Americans is "not really the point" of Democrats' agenda and that a main goal is actually just "to motivate the Democratic base" and drive turnout in places they need to win in November. The Times also noted that the show votes associated with the Democratic agenda "will be timed to coincide with campaign-style trips [by the President]." According to the Washington Post, "Democrats hope to use the votes . . . as fodder . . . in hopes of staving off potential losses in several states."

Look, it doesn't get any more cynical than that—to demonstrate such a total lack of seriousness in such troubling times for the middle class.

At this point Washington Democrats are in the sixth year of trying to fix the economy, and the middle class continues to suffer. It is just not working.

As I have been saying for months now, this presents Washington Democrats with a choice. One option they have is to try something different. This means coming to the middle and working with us on bipartisan solutions that can create jobs, increase take-home pay, and give a leg up to the middle class. The other option is to double down on failed ideology and political gimmicks—the kinds of things that get the Democrats' leftwing base all excited.

In short, Washington Democrats have a choice between helping the middle class and pleasing the left. So when they release a poll-tested, campaign-crafted ObamaCare distraction "agenda" packed to the brim with "lefty show votes," I think middle-class families can tell whose side Washington Democrats are really on. It is certainly not their side.

The people we represent all deserve better than this. They are hurting, really hurting, and all Washington Democrats seem to have for them is a bunch of show votes. I mean, how will show votes help our constituents? How will they help the people who have been writing to me about the impact of ObamaCare on themselves and their families?

One woman who wrote me from Louisville had been enrolled in Kentucky's high-risk pool for people with pre-existing conditions. She said she had been battling cancer for years and that in 2012 her cancer metastasized and moved into her liver, pelvis, lung, and diaphragm. Just imagine hearing devastating news like that. Now imagine hearing a year or so later that you are going to lose the insurance you liked too, insurance that had helped you manage your cancer treatment, and, worse, that your new ObamaCare plan was going to classify your chemo medicine as a specialty drug that costs more than \$1,000 for a 3-week supply. ObamaCare, this constituent wrote, "is about as helpful in saving my life as a

wet paper sack to help cover me from the rain."

I would note she contacted me because she wanted me to know that ObamaCare stories like hers are anything but "lies," despite what some in this Chamber might imply.

Does anyone really think constituents like her care about some show vote? No. What she needs is relief from ObamaCare.

So does another Kentuckian, who wrote me from Henderson County, whose premium will jump \$400 a month to over \$1,100 a month under ObamaCare. He wrote:

Americans were told that we could . . . keep our existing policy [if we chose]. . . . Not only was [this] a lie—[it's] a lie that will cost me an additional \$700 per month!

How is a political show vote going to help him? Of course it isn't. And there is not a thing the Democratic Party's "political arm" can do to fix these problems.

Kentuckians and countless Americans suffering under ObamaCare need real solutions—not gimmicks, not base-pleasing ideology. Solutions are what is needed. Look, Washington Democrats forced America's middle class into this impossible situation. They basically blocked every reasonable attempt to reform this law or to change it in any meaningful way. Yet now ObamaCare is becoming politically difficult for them. They are deflecting blame. Just this morning we saw several imperiled Obama Democrats spin an op-ed that underscores the point, but Americans are not going to be fooled by any of this. Americans agree it is time for Washington Democrats to work with us to remedy the mess they created, and that means repealing this law and replacing it with real reform.

It is time for them to work with us on a real jobs agenda too, and to take up the numerous bills the House has already sent over and get them onto the President's desk.

Americans are fed up with the games and the tricks. They want serious solutions. They don't need a campaign poster to figure that out, and Republicans believe it is about time the American people got those solutions.

REMEMBERING SERGEANT MICHAEL C. CABLE

Mr. President, I want to pay tribute to a Kentucky soldier who tragically has been lost while serving his country. SGT Michael C. Cable of Philpot, KY, was killed by the enemy while guarding American and Afghan officials in Afghanistan on March 27, 2013, exactly 1 year ago today. He was 26 years old.

For his service in uniform, Sergeant Cable received several awards, medals, and decorations, including the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, the Iraq Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Non-commissioned Officers Professional De-

velopment Ribbon, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, the Combat Action Badge, and the Air Assault Badge.

A decade ago as a high school student, Michael was a star on the Daviess County High School cross-country team, and they won many races. "I sent out an e-mail this morning with this Bible verse," says Tony Rowe, Michael's former high school coach.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." He is a hero. He died fighting for us and trying to make life better for the people of Afghanistan.

What Tony Rowe says about Michael is absolutely true, and in fact the most important thing that Michael's family wants the world to understand is that Michael was performing a mission at the time he was attacked, and this important mission was protecting others. It was not only highly important work but highly dangerous.

Before leaving on his final deployment, Michael pulled his family members aside to warn them his mission would be dangerous. "He was prepared before he left for anything that happened," said Raymond Johnston, Michael's older brother. In that conversation Michael described his sisters and a close family friend as the most important people in his life, and he asked his family to take care of them if anything happened to him.

It is very hard. He was my little buddy. He wanted to make sure that no matter what, we continued to enjoy life. And we are trying to do that.

Michael's tragic loss was the first combat death for the 101st Airborne Division, based in Fort Campbell, KY, for that deployment to Afghanistan. He joined the Army in August 2007 and arrived at Fort Campbell in December of 2010. He served as a fire support specialist.

In his family Michael was known as a prankster. His last big prank was pulled on his younger sister Idalis. Michael promised he would buy Idalis a car. He had his older sister Wendy tell Idalis that Michael was determined to make good on his word but that he had bought her a really old and ugly car. Wendy told Idalis she would have to act excited so as not to hurt Michael's feelings. Far from a beat-up clunker, Michael gave his sister his own Jeep Cherokee just before he deployed to Afghanistan.

Michael loved sports of all kinds. He played golf to relax and won a golf tournament at Fort Campbell. His favorite professional sports team was the Green Bay Packers.

Michael had planned to leave the Army after his tour in Afghanistan to open his own home remodeling business. His family remembers Michael as always busy spending time with friends.

We are thinking about Michael's family today, including his parents, Vickie and Raymond Johnston, his siblings Raymond, Lisa, Wendy, Kennedy,

and Idalis, and many other beloved family members and friends.

I would like the family of SGT Michael C. Cable to know this Senate recognizes that Sergeant Cable was doing his job, and we are filled with gratitude. Without the men and women brave enough to wear our country's uniform and do the jobs our country asks them to do, I fear for what would become of our Nation.

I know my colleagues join me in honoring Sergeant Cable for his life of service and for his tragic sacrifice, and I extend my deepest condolences to Michael's family for their loss 1 year ago today.

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, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 10:30 a.m. Senators are permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half.

The Senator from South Dakota.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, yesterday the Democrats in the Senate held a news conference in which they rolled out their agenda, which has been described differently by different news organizations. The headline from the Washington Examiner said: "Majority threatened, Democrats take up populace agenda to distract from ObamaCare." The Wall Street Journal headline said: "Senate Democrats try to change subject from ObamaCare." The New York Times in reporting on that story, their headline was: "Democrats, as Part of Midterm Strategy to Schedule Votes on Pocketbook Issues." So that was a little more, perhaps, flattening headline.

In the story in the New York Times, it goes on to say:

The proposals have little chance of passing. But Democrats concede that making new laws is not really the point. Rather, they are trying to force Republicans to vote against them.

Later on in the story, the New York Times goes on to say:

Part of the goal is to energize the Democratic base, which will be crucial to turnout in the more conservative states where the party needs to win this year.

So everybody kind of gets the joke that this is really about the midterm elections. The agenda the Democrats are now rolling out is designed to try to create a distraction away from their economic record and from ObamaCare.

It is interesting to me because the Democrats have been the majority in

the Senate now for 8 years. So you would think by now this sort of an agenda would have been inactive. In fact, for a few years they had a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. They had 60 votes and could do literally anything they wanted. Most of these items now are being rolled out because it is, as I said, an election year, and they are saying: These are things that we can do for the American people.

Well, I think the American people are saying enough already. You have done enough to us. Please don't do any more.

The agenda is being described as a fair shot for everyone. Well, I think the American people, perhaps, don't see it as a shot for them as they do a shot at them.

If you look at the last several years as any indication of that, it hasn't worked very well. The agenda that has been advanced by the Democrats here in the Senate and by the President of the United States has left us with a sluggish economy, chronic high unemployment, massive amounts of debt, the lowest labor participation rate, literally, that we have seen in 35 years. In fact, last year the economy grew at 0.9 percent. So you have this sluggish economy sputtering along, and the American people are asking: Where are the jobs? Where is the take-home pay?

Since the President took office, household income in this country has gone down—not up—by \$3,700 per family. If you look at all the policies put in place by the Democratic majority, there isn't really anything that you could point to that helps create jobs mainly because it is heavy handed, top-down management from Washington, DC.

The American people need policies that will unleash the American free enterprise system and unleash the entrepreneurs and small businesses that would allow them to grow this economy and expand this economy. That is better for everyone. Every middle-class American in this country wants a better quality of life, a better standard of life for their children and grandchildren than what they have experienced. This may be the first generation of Americans where this is not true. Why? Because policies in Washington, DC, make it more difficult, more expensive, to create jobs.

You can go down the list. If you look at ObamaCare, according to the Congressional Budget Office, ObamaCare is going to result in 2.5 million fewer full-time workers. According to the CBO, there will be 2.5 million fewer full-time workers over the next decade and \$1 trillion in lower wages. Fewer jobs and lower take-home pay is what we are seeing as a result of the policies that have been put in place by the Democratic majority in the Senate and by the President of the United States.

Yesterday there was another announcement about yet another delay of ObamaCare—which will be, I think, the

30th delay that we have seen so far with regard to that legislation. In speaking about that delay, the majority leader of the Senate said yesterday that he thought the delay was necessary because people weren't educated enough about how to use the Internet. Only in Washington, DC—only in Washington, DC—do you see politicians blaming the American people for their failures because that is essentially what the ObamaCare legislation is. By and large I think most people would conclude it just isn't working. It didn't add up in the first place, and it is not working.

It is creating fewer jobs, higher premiums, higher deductibles, lower take-home pay for the American people, fewer choices for doctors and hospitals, and the idea that it is the fault of the American people because they are not educated enough to use the Internet—my dad is 94 years old. He lives in my hometown of Myrtle, SD, a town of about 500 people. He uses the Internet every single day.

I don't think the problem is the Internet or that people in this country aren't educated enough to use the Internet. I think it has a lot more to do with the fact that incompetence here in Washington, DC, led to a failed rollout that confused millions of Americans. That is not the responsibility of, nor should we blame, the American people for that. That is government trying to do big things and not doing them well. The government doesn't do complicated things very well.

So when you hear of the new agenda coming out from the Democratic majority in the Senate, that we are going to do this for the American people; we are going to do that for the American people and talk about a minimum wage increase—again, you have a Congressional Budget Office saying that raising the minimum wage by 40 percent, which is what is being proposed, would, in fact, cost the economy up to a million jobs and also would raise prices.

It is going to raise prices on the people that will be hurt the most by price increases—lower-income Americans. Instead of putting policies in place that cost the American economy jobs, we ought to be looking at things that actually create jobs.

We have a proposal called the Keystone Pipeline which the President's own State Department has said would create 42,000 jobs. So those are real jobs, shovel-ready jobs that would be available today. Instead we want to put policies in place that are actually going to cost the economy jobs. If you're an American citizen out there and you hear Washington, DC, is going to do more for you, yet again, you have got to be saying: Whoa, you know, hold the phone. We have seen enough of that already. We have seen this picture before, and we have seen what results when the government tries to do big and complicated things. It just doesn't work very well.

The Web site rollout is a perfect example of that, as is the 2,700-page