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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Be exalted, O God, above the highest Heavens, for we look to You each day for our protection and peace. Fulfill Your purposes by using our Senators as agents of Your grace. Lord, surround them with Your favor, as their labors bring honor to You. Deliver them from the traps set by their enemies. Give them hearts filled with confidence in Your prevailing providence, sustaining them with Your unfailing faithfulness and love.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SALUTING THE FLAG

Mr. REID. Mr. President, just by chance last night I was reading a book and it included a speech given by JOHN MCCAIN, our fellow Senator. What Senator MCCAIN talked about was some of his experiences in the prison camp in Vietnam where a man by the name of Mike Christian had spent an inordinate amount of time sewing on the inside of the pajama-like outfit they gave him to wear, and he put a flag inside his jacket—his shirt. This jacket was discovered, the flag was discovered by the

prison officials, and he was beaten really very much. He was beaten severely. Of course, they ripped the flag out of his coat.

We take for granted saluting the flag. We come in here and we do it every morning. By rote, we stand and do it. I am not too sure that we shouldn't think a little bit more about what we are doing when we salute the flag. I am going to bring that excerpt from home and I am going to submit it for publication in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for everybody to see, about people who have been—for example, Senator MCCAIN was in prison for 5½ years. As we know, he was, on many different occasions, tortured. So when JOHN MCCAIN salutes the flag and when Mike Christian, a fellow pilot—he was actually a navigator on an airplane—salute the flag, it means a lot to them, and we should encapsulate that when we think about saluting the flag.

I will submit that excerpt for the RECORD tomorrow. I read that last night, late. I thought, when we salute our flag, we should think about it more than, I am sure, we do all the time.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour. The majority will control the first 30 minutes and the Republicans will control the final 30 minutes.

Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2363, the Bipartisan Sportsmen's Act, postcloture.

The Senate will recess from 12:30 until 2:15 today to allow for our weekly caucus meetings.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the majority control the time from 2:15 until 3:15 and the Republicans control the time from 3:15 to 4:15.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIPARTISAN SPORTSMEN'S ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is no secret that the Senate, as of late, has been beset by partisan rancor and obstruction: one Republican filibuster and then another, and then another, and still more filibusters. That is why the legislation that is before us today represents a rare opportunity for the Senate to complete work on a bill that enjoys broad bipartisan support.

Senator KAY HAGAN's sportsmen's bill is overwhelmingly popular with Democrats and Republicans around the country, and for good reason. Forty million Americans who hunt and fish stand to benefit from this legislation.

The sportsmen's package represents years of bipartisan work—years—combining some 20 bills important to the sportsmen's community. The bill expands opportunities for sportsmen, promoting an industry that contributes almost \$200 billion annually to our Nation's economy. In Nevada, over 200,000 people hunt and fish every year. It is good for tourism. People come to Nevada to hunt for game, including antelope, elk, and bighorn desert sheep. We have wonderful fishing. We don't have a lot of lakes and rivers, but what we have is terrific. That is why fishermen come from around the country to fish in Nevada. To Nevada, it is a \$1 billion industry.

I was talking to my friend Senator BENNET from Colorado and he said in Colorado it is a \$4 billion industry. I would bet that even in a heavily populated State such as New Jersey there is a lot of hunting and fishing that goes on. It is good for the economy.

Senator HAGAN's legislation promotes hunting, fishing, and recreation, all while fostering habitat conservation through voluntary programs. Because of her tireless efforts building bipartisan consensus, Senator HAGAN's

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



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bill is cosponsored by 25 Republicans and 19 Democrats. This legislation also enjoys the support of more than 50 national sportsmen and conservation groups all over this country.

As Benjamin Disraeli, the famous statesman from Great Britain, said, "The secret of success is to be ready when your opportunity comes." This bill is ready and the opportunity is now. After years of hard work by Senator HAGAN and others, now is the time to consider and pass this legislation. But, as always, our success in moving this legislation will depend on the co-operation of all Senators in putting aside political games and petty disputes over amendments in order to pass a bill that will benefit millions of Americans.

This is a bill that is as much a Republican bill as it is a Democrat bill. So why should this bill be killed for procedural reasons? This is a bill they have worked on for many years.

I am hopeful that through bipartisan support we can get this bill over the finish line, as we were able to do with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act earlier this year, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act a few weeks ago.

I urge my colleagues to respect the hard work of those Senators who have put this measure before us and allow this matter to pass—and quickly.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, just some information for my friend from Vermont. We had anticipated after my remarks of going to the comments of Senator ALEXANDER and Senator CORKER in connection with the life of Senator Howard Baker. So I ask unanimous consent at this point that the Senators from Tennessee follow my remarks on Senator Baker.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I shall not, of course, because as I told the press in Vermont last week, I had the privilege of serving with more than 10 leaders in both parties since I have been here, and it is impossible to find a finer leader than Howard Baker. I considered him to be a Senator's Senator and one of the finest people I have ever served with. So of course I will wait.

I would ask to amend the unanimous consent request so that following the remarks of the Republican leader and the two Senators from Tennessee I then be recognized for my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the leader modify his request?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes.

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. First, a few observations about ObamaCare. It may not have existed in the English language a few years ago, but in short order it has become a battle word for broken promises and almost cartoonish inefficiency. It is no wonder why: You can keep your plan. You can keep your doctor. Premiums will go down. The law will create millions of jobs.

We knew the promises wouldn't hold up. Many of us said so. One even earned the dubious distinction of being declared the "lie of the year." And that is why it is so hard to trust much of what the Obama administration claims about ObamaCare these days, such as back in December when administration officials issued another promise—that they would make sure any taxpayer-funded ObamaCare subsidies would go only to enrollees who actually qualify for them under the law.

We wanted this assurance not only because so many other promises had been broken; we wanted it because eligibility verification is so important. Middle-class taxpayers are feeling enough pain from this law already. They shouldn't have to subsidize inaccurate or even fraudulent ObamaCare claims on top of all the rest. So I helped pass a law that requires a non-partisan watchdog to keep an eye on the procedures the administration claimed would protect taxpayers to see how they will work and then report back to us in Congress.

Last week that watchdog, the inspector general, issued the first two reports on the issue, and it turns out we were pretty correct to be worried. The inspector general concluded that the administration was often ineffective at verifying such basic details about ObamaCare enrollees as their citizen status, their income, their Social Security number, and whether they were even eligible to purchase ObamaCare in the first place. The administration, the IG reported, didn't even follow its own eligibility verification procedures in many cases.

And that wasn't all. The IG also discovered nearly 3 million inconsistencies in the information ObamaCare enrollees provided in their applications, nearly 90 percent of which couldn't even be resolved because the necessary software—the necessary software—wasn't even operational.

It is completely ridiculous.

And the administration is still struggling to get a handle on the problem. Computer systems that should have been ready to go last October have not been built yet. It is the kind of scenario we would expect to see in a Leslie Nielsen movie, not in real life.

Worse still, administration officials are now indicating they are going to keep chugging ahead with their deeply flawed verification practices, even after everything the government's own watchdog uncovered. Many individuals enrolled with the current flawed enrollment process will automatically be en-

rolled for the same taxpayer subsidies next year.

They are defiant—defiant—in the face of all of this. This is precisely the kind of flippant attitude that is so infuriating to many of our constituents.

Many of us predicted these kinds of problems would be the likely outcome of giving government such expansive power over a huge segment of our economy. Of course we are going to have massive inefficiency and probable fraud and migraines for middle-class families who already have enough to deal with. Of course we are going to see all this. It seems inevitable.

That is why Republicans say we need to start over with actual health care reform—reform that can actually lower costs and increase the quality of care without resorting to this tired sort of government-centric approach.

ObamaCare is built upon the intellectually lazy idea that we can simply legislate a desirable outcome into existence, that we can tell a hulking Federal bureaucracy to simply bureaucratize affordable health care into being. Unfortunately, life does not work that way. Reality always intervenes, as we have been seeing with the pain of ObamaCare these past few years—pain that will only continue until Washington Democrats join us to enact a serious bipartisan solution that actually addresses many of our health care challenges and dispenses with the failed policies of this administration. Yet that is exactly the opposite of what we have seen from our friends on the other side so far.

Instead of working with us to solve massive problems, such as the ones the inspector general identified, Democrats in Washington are simply hiding from the issue altogether. They are trying to change the subject. Even hinting at it prompts the Democratic majority to shut down the legislative process altogether and cancel committee markups. They block votes and amendments. They will not allow the Senate to consider numerous bipartisan House-passed bills that would address some of ObamaCare's most glaring problems.

Even when a bipartisan group proposes a plan to address a flaw in the law that is reducing incomes for working families, they reject it. Instead, they schedule show votes designed to inflame one group or another.

As for the President, he is traveling around the country this week to give campaign speeches—not working with Congress to help middle-class families struggling under the weight of his policies. So the Democratic plan seems to be to double down on the mess they created and to hope Americans can be distracted enough to forget about it come November.

If that is the plan, it is not going to work. Middle-class Americans know who has been standing by their side throughout this entire ObamaCare fiasco. They know who has been standing against them, serving as a shield for the President and the hard left.