

Over the past several years, the Senate Democratic leadership has stifled debate, ignored the regular order of business, and wasted the Senate's time on partisan pieces of business that Democratic leaders knew would not pass. That means that very little time has been spent on American families' priorities.

Even many Democrats have grown frustrated with the highly partisan direction the Senate has taken under Democratic leadership. Republicans intend to chart a different course.

Starting in January, we will ensure that the Senate returns to the committee process and that the Senate floor once again becomes a forum for debate and amendments and votes. I am encouraged that this week a number of rank-and-file Democrats abandoned their leadership and joined Republicans to support legislation to approve the Keystone Pipeline and the more than 42,000 jobs it will create. Republicans hope we can continue to have that kind of collaboration in the new Congress.

Americans have had a rough time over the past several years, including a weak economy, few jobs, high prices on everything from health care to electricity, and the list goes on and on. Our first priority in the 114th Congress will be enacting policies that will help create jobs and increase economic opportunity for American families. A good place to start is the dozens of House-passed jobs bills that have been gathering dust on the Senate Democratic leader's desk. Many of these bills passed the House with bipartisan support, and it is high time they get a vote in the Senate so they can get on the President's desk.

We hope the President will work with us on priorities such as expanding trade to open new markets for American agriculture and manufacturing overseas.

I have to say I am a little concerned that the President has indicated his intention of continuing to operate on his own. The American people made it clear on election day that they have rejected his policies, and I hope the President will take that message to heart and rethink his plans to go it alone on important issues such as immigration.

Finally, Republicans will get to work on some of the big-ticket items that need to get done in Washington, including issues such as reforming our Tax Code to make it simpler and fairer and to make us more competitive in the global marketplace, eliminating the hundreds of inefficient regulations that are driving up prices for American families and killing jobs, and issues such as conducting oversight of the executive branch to ensure that the cycle of abuses such as the IRS scandal and the Veterans Affairs scandal stops now.

Republicans understand the opportunity we have been given and we don't intend to waste it. We are going to make Washington work again, we are

going to make government more efficient and effective and stop the waste of taxpayer dollars, and we are going to get our economy going again to put our Nation on a path to growth and shared prosperity.

Divided government has been historically a time when great things have been accomplished. We can go back to Social Security reform in 1983 when we had a Republican President working with a Democratic House or tax reform in 1986 when we had a Republican President working with a Democratic House or 1996 when we had a Democratic President working with a Republican Congress on welfare reform. There are lots of examples throughout our history where divided government has led to big accomplishments and big results for the American people.

I submit that we can do that again. The American people are counting on us. Republicans are ready to roll up our sleeves and get to work, and we invite Democrats and the President to join us.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

PRESIDENT'S HEALTH CARE LAW

Mr. BARRASSO. Madam President, this past Saturday the open enrollment period for the Obama health care law opened in terms of the health care exchange. People who bought health insurance through healthcare.gov or through their State's exchange are finally allowed to see how much their insurance is going to cost next year. Things were pushed back beyond the election so people wouldn't be able to find out before the election what it was going to cost. So the Obama administration had all of this information for awhile, but they intentionally kept it secret until after election day. Now people get to see the prices, and many people across the country are absolutely in shock at the increased costs of the health care law.

Millions of Americans are learning their health insurance is going to cost them a lot more. As a matter of fact, when the exchanges opened November 15, on the front page of the *New York Times*: "Cost of Coverage Under Care Act Set to Increase." The article says:

The Obama administration on Friday unveiled data showing that many Americans with health insurance bought under the Affordable Care Act could face substantial price increases next year—in some cases as much as 20 percent.

Substantial price increases, 20 percent.

For some people it is going to be even higher than that.

The *Wall Street Journal* took a look at it and they had a large story with a picture on Friday and the headline is: "Consumers Still Confused Ahead of Insurance Sign-ups."

The article describes a man named Bob Sorey, who is a real estate salesperson in Mount Juliet, TN. He had a

plan through Blue Cross Blue Shield, and he says his premiums are going up nearly 25 percent next year. He told the newspaper, "I just can't absorb that."

President Obama promised the American people they would save \$2,500 per year per family under his health care law. NANCY PELOSI, the former Speaker of the House, went on "Meet the Press" at one point and said everyone's rates would go down—everyone, she said. What does the President have to say now? What will he tell those people whose rates have continued to go up? What does he say to this real estate broker in Tennessee who can't absorb a 20-percent increase?

In Anchorage, AK, a typical plan is going to cost 28 percent more next year. That is for the second cheapest silver plan, what they call the benchmark plan.

In Minneapolis rates are going up almost 19 percent, and that is just for the premiums. For many people their copays are going up and their deductibles are going up as well. In some parts of Georgia 70 percent of the plans sold on the exchange have deductibles of at least \$2,500. Is that affordable for people? Millions of Americans will be paying more in premiums as well as more out of their pocket—millions of people such as Bob Sorey, the real estate broker in Tennessee, who, as he said, just can't absorb the cost.

These skyrocketing premiums may explain why the President's health care law is more unpopular right now than ever before.

According to the latest Gallup poll, only 37 percent of Americans approve of the law. It was supposed to get more popular. That is what the Democrats on this floor told people across the country and told us. Instead, the opposite has happened. People see how much their costs have increased because of the law, and many people are learning that having coverage under the law is not the same as having care. There is a difference between coverage and care.

That is what USA Today found out. They had a front-page article last Friday with the headline: "Rural Hospitals in Critical Condition."

So not just the cost of coverage under the care act set to increase, but rural hospitals are in critical condition.

Obama critics say the law is speeding up the demise of rural facilities, of rural hospitals. That is the problem.

The article talks about a small hospital in Georgia that had to close in the spring of last year because of all the new burdens of the health care law. People in that town now have to travel many miles to get to another hospital in another town. One of those people was Bill Jones. He was a peanut and cotton farmer who lived about 9 miles away from the old hospital. Bill suffered a heart attack 1 month after the hospital had to close. The ambulance had to take him to another hospital in

a town further away. I can tell my colleagues, as a doctor who practiced medicine for 25 years, when someone has a heart attack, every minute counts. Bill Jones didn't survive his heart attack. Maybe he wouldn't have survived a trip to a closer hospital; we won't know that. But the hospital is gone now and it is gone because of the President's health care law. For people living in rural States such as Georgia and my own State of Wyoming, this is a terrifying prospect.

The article says that since January of 2010, more than 40 rural hospitals have closed across the country. There is a map of the country of all the places where hospitals have closed. Ezekiel Emanuel, who worked on the health care law, says that 40 hospitals is not enough. He is one of the architects of course of the President's health care law. He says that over the next 6 years, more than 1,000 hospitals will close. In more than 1,000 American communities, people will be further away from medical care. That is precious lost time for people who have heart attacks or for women with high-risk pregnancies who are further from the help they need to deliver a healthy baby. They may have coverage under the President's health care law, but that is not the same as getting the care they need.

We are also seeing that for people whom the law has pushed into Medicaid—because Medicaid, of course—the President's goal was to push more and more people into Medicaid—that pays less for services than traditional insurance companies pay. A lot of doctors and other providers can't afford to take new Medicaid patients.

There was a front-page story in the Wall Street Journal last Friday that says as more join Medicaid, health care systems feel strained.

As more join Medicaid—the President's goal—health systems feel the strain. The article says that about one-third of all primary care physicians aren't taking new Medicaid patients. One of them is Dr. Holly Abernathy. She is a family physician in Farmington, NM, and she says she just can't afford to take any new patients under the program. She says: "I would love to see every Medicaid patient that comes through my door." She also says: "If you give people coverage, they should be able to utilize it."

Premiums are going up, out-of-pocket costs are going up. Hospitals are closing. Doctors are having to turn away patients—all because of the President's health care law.

ObamaCare was too long, too complicated, too expensive, and it took away too much from the people who like the care and the coverage they had before the law was passed. That is why Republicans are going to vote to repeal the entire health care law.

Meanwhile, we will also vote to strip away the worst and most destructive parts of the law—parts such as the employer mandate, the arbitrary 30-hour

workweek, that has been devastating to part-time workers across the country and others such as the unfair medical device tax that sends American jobs overseas and threatens lifesaving innovation.

Republicans are going to keep fighting for Americans who have been harmed by the President's health care law. We are going to keep offering the real solutions that people wanted all along—access to the care they need from a doctor they choose at lower cost. That is what the American people are demanding, and that is what they deserve. It is what Republicans are going to give them.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

INNOVATION AGENDA FOR THE 114TH CONGRESS

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I rise today to emphasize the importance of keeping our technology industry in the forefront of our global economy. America has made extraordinary strides in innovation. For decades we have been the world's leader in developing new technologies and advancing the Internet age, but we are not the only nation in this hunt.

Across the globe, and particularly in China and other parts of Asia, our international competitors are working furiously to catch up. If the United States is to enjoy continued success in the technology arena, the policymakers must ensure that we have a legal and regulatory landscape that will enable our innovators to thrive.

As chairman of the Senate Republican High-Tech Task Force, I have been working with colleagues and stakeholders to develop an innovation agenda for the coming Congress. Today I would like to highlight several bipartisan initiatives that we should prioritize early next year to help ensure the continued success of our high-tech economy.

First, Congress must act to protect America's innovation and inventive-ness. An essential part of fostering innovation is protecting legitimate intellectual property rights. In particular, we must enact legislation to combat abusive patent litigation.

Patent trolls—which are often shell companies that do not make or sell anything—are crippling innovation and growth across all sectors of our economy. It is estimated that abuse of patent litigation costs our economy over \$60 billion every year. With so much on the line, how can we afford not to act? Yet the current Senate did exactly

that and ignored the very real opportunity we had, to follow the House of Representatives and pass bipartisan legislation that would be supported by the White House.

Why would anyone walk away from the opportunity to enact pro-innovation policies that would do so much good for our economy?

It is no secret that trial lawyers and others told the current majority leader not to bring patent troll reform up for a vote. We all know when the trial lawyers say "jump," the only answer for some of my Democratic colleagues is "how high."

While I am disappointed the Senate failed to act during this Congress, I intend to help ensure we pass legislation next year. Fortunately, combating patent trolls is a priority for incoming Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY and House Judiciary Committee Chairman BOB GOODLATTE.

I look forward to working with them and others who are committed to making long overdue reforms to our patent laws—including mandatory fee shifting, heightened pleading and discovery standards, demand letter reforms, and a mechanism to enable recovery of fees against shell companies or those who are behind them.

In addition, we must improve the quality of patents issued by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Low-quality patents are essential to a patent troll's business model. I am optimistic we can reach agreement on how best to improve our patent process.

We also need a high-functioning and well-funded USPTO. A fully funded patent office would, at the very least, mean more and better trained patent examiners, more complete libraries of prior art, and greater access to modern information technologies to address the Agency's growing needs. All of these improvements would lead to higher quality patents that are granted more quickly. The good news is we can make these changes at no cost to taxpayers since the USPTO is a fee-generating agency.

Now, there are some who argue here that patent troll legislation is not necessary in light of the Supreme Court's decisions in the Octane Fitness and Highmark cases. Ms. Charlene Morrow and Mr. Brian Lahti, however, writing in the BNA's Patent, Trademark & Copyright Journal confirm that "nothing in these cases addresses the proposed reforms to make the real parties in interest who are managing patent assertion entities responsible for fees and costs." This is something I worked on for quite a few months. As these experienced practitioners acknowledge such legislation is essential to address fee-collection concerns faced by defendants in present patent litigation. One of the legislative approaches Ms. Morrow and Mr. Lahti proposed is to make bonding more readily available at an early stage of litigation. I could not agree more.

We must ensure that those who defend against abusive patent litigation