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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, who rules over humanity and nations, we ask You to support the Congress in its manifold tasks. Uphold our Senators, that their daily work may be performed with diligence and fidelity to our heritage under You.

Lord, raise up those who will unite in serving You with their whole heart and mind and strength. May our lawmakers fear only to be disloyal to the best they know, as You make them forgiving and forbearing. Teach them to value a conscience void of offense and the royalty of self-respect above all the pedestals, prizes, and preferments Earth can give.

We pray in Your Holy 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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the President put forth a mighty ObamaCare spin effort yesterday. We have to give him credit for trying to salvage a law that only one—one—out of every nine Americans thinks is actually working. But I don't think condescending to ObamaCare's victims was the best approach for him to take.

Consider this cringe-inducing assertion: Americans who already had health insurance “may not know that they’ve got a better deal now [under ObamaCare] . . . than they did, but they do.”

In other words, he knows what is best for you, so quit complaining.

It is the very mindset that led this partisan law being forced through over the objections of the American people in the first place. It is the very mindset that said it was OK to cut a few corners and tell a few white lies to sell the country a law it didn't want.

So what, the Obama crowd seems to think, if Americans couldn't keep the plan they had and liked—so what. So what, ObamaCare's defenders must reason, if Americans see costs rise after being told they would fall.

To our friends on the left, it is just the cost of doing business. These days they have all but given up the ghost of empathy. They just talk past the middle class instead.

Consider some of the statements we have heard from top Democrats. “ObamaCare has been wonderful for America.” “None of the predictions about how [ObamaCare] wouldn't work have come to pass.” The implementation of this is “fabulous.”

We have heard all of that from Democratic leaders.

These are the kinds of statements that raise our blood pressure all across America. But quotes such as these betray more than just a certain incongruence from reality. This is also a signal of a party that has lost confidence in the force of its own arguments—one that seems more intent on reassuring itself than convincing others.

Why else would they be saying things they know aren't true?

Now, I have spoken broadly over the past week about how ObamaCare has failed Americans in terms of higher costs especially, but allow me just to touch on the assertion that ObamaCare's implementation has been “fabulous” too.

Fabulous? That is certainly one way to describe how ObamaCare has been plagued by failure since day one. Consider the disastrous rollout. Many Americans won't forget the crashing Web sites, the hours on hold, the instructions to “fax in” their applications while at the same time seeing reports of ObamaCare contractors sitting idle, waiting for work to come through the door.

The White House tried to spin it all away as nothing more than a glitch—just a glitch—on the Web site. But the American people knew it pointed to broader systemic challenges in an unworkable law.

Consider the many pro-ObamaCare States that launched exchanges with great enthusiasm. These true-blue administrations did everything they could to make ObamaCare work, but they often ended up exposing ObamaCare's tragic realities instead.

Take deep blue Vermont. Many on the left looked to Vermont's extra-ambitious ObamaCare experiment as the crown jewel in their ideological crown, but it turned out to be little more than “an unending money pit,” as one Vermonter put it.

In Oregon, officials spent over \$300 million taxpayer dollars to launch an ObamaCare exchange and marketing campaign. That is a big investment. But ObamaCare has been an even bigger flop. Millions of dollars down the tubes and Oregon has little to show for it beyond a couple of bizarre marketing videos and a criminal investigation.

Hawaii just announced it will be the latest State to shutter—close, shutter up—its faltering exchange.

In Kentucky, a Democratic administration poured one-quarter of a billion dollars into an exchange that placed nearly 80 percent of the enrollees into an already broken Medicaid system. Many of the remaining 20 percent or so now find themselves stuck with unaffordable ObamaCare coverage, such as a constituent from Ashland,

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



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who wrote to let me know that his monthly premium increased by more than 30 percent.

So it is hard to disagree with the top Vermont health official who said: "Good God, this just wasn't set up for success." That is from the top health official in Vermont. Given the spectacular flop in his State, he would certainly know, and he certainly seems to have a point. Of the 17 original ObamaCare exchanges, some have failed outright, and half of those that remain are struggling financially.

So the truth is this: ObamaCare never had a Web site problem; it had an ObamaCare problem.

No amount of wishful thinking or fast talk is going to change that reality. It is not going to change the failures I just mentioned, and it is not going to change the failures I haven't, such as the failed CLASS Act, the troubled co-ops, the debacle of giving people the wrong amount of subsidy or what we just learned yesterday—that the IRS may not even be able to verify that many of the people who received the tax credit for health insurance actually bought the health insurance.

I am asking ObamaCare's defenders in the White House and in Congress to redirect their efforts away from the spin and toward the reality instead. We all know that ObamaCare is a law filled with broken promises, higher costs, and failure. So let's work together to start over with real health care reform instead.

That is the kind of health care outcome that actually would be "fabulous" for our constituents. It is something that really would be "wonderful for America." And it is what we can work together to achieve once Washington politicians move past the failure of ObamaCare.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the massive cyber attack Americans just read about reminds us all of the need for action on this issue. Building America's public and private cyber defenses won't be easy. But the bipartisan cyber security measure that passed out of the Intelligence Committee with the support of every single Republican and every single Democrat but one, 14 to 1, will increase the ability of the public and private sector to share information and to make us safer. That is why we are going to take it up as part of the Defense authorization bill now before us.

I hope Senators of both parties will come together to support that bipartisan amendment when it comes to a vote, just as we saw the Senate come together to keep the Defense authorization bill intact and consistent with the budget resolution by standing against the Reed amendment yesterday. It keeps us on track to pass bipartisan legislation that will support the men and women who keep us safe every day.

There is something else worth noting about the vote, too. It means we have now taken twice as many amendment rollcall votes on this year's Defense authorization bill as we were allowed on the last two bills combined. Again, it means we have now taken twice as many amendment rollcall votes on this year's Defense authorization bill as were allowed in the last two bills combined. It is just the latest reminder of a new majority that is getting the Senate back on track and back to work.

Unfortunately, some leaders of the previous majority seem bound and determined to get us back into their gridlock comfort season. At a time of grave threats to our Nation, these Democratic leaders think it is a good idea to hold brave servicemen and brave servicewomen hostage to partisan demands for more waste at the IRS and bigger congressional office budgets for themselves. Let me repeat. At a moment of dangerous and gathering threats, here is the position of these Democratic leaders: They want to hold hostage the funding needed to make our troops combat ready so they can spend more on bureaucracies such as the IRS.

These Democratic leaders just can't seem to kick the gridlock habit, even on legislation with the exact same level of funding President Obama asked for in his own budget. They just can't shake their passion for partisanship, even on a bill that sailed out of committee on a hugely bipartisan vote of 22 to 4. That is how the Defense authorization bill came out of the committee: 22 to 4.

That doesn't mean the rest of their party has to go along with it. I am appealing to every commonsense Democrat—every Democrat uncomfortable with the thought of holding our troops and our families to ransom for unrelated partisan demands—to keep working across the aisle in good faith, instead, because many of our colleagues understand the true sacrifice and unparalleled value of the nearly 1.5 million Active-Duty men and women who proudly wear our country's uniform, the 1.1 million members of the Reserve and National Guard, and the more than 700,000 civilian officials who stand in support, not to mention the many veterans and families who enrich our country and our communities.

We certainly understand their value in Kentucky. We are proud to host several important military bases across the Commonwealth. I wish to tell my colleagues about just one of them today.

Fort Campbell is home to approximately 30,000 Army personnel, including vital Special Operations units and the famed 101st Airborne Division. Units from Fort Campbell have bravely served as the tip of the spear in executing the U.S. global war on terror, with the 101st Airborne deploying as the first conventional unit in its support.

It was soldiers from Fort Campbell who proudly answered the call to assist

with the delicate Ebola mission in West Africa, and it is Fort Campbell's unrivaled aviation infrastructure that provides the Army with the critical ability to rapidly deploy servicemembers to volatile regions.

It is obvious that Fort Campbell means a lot to our country, and I can't tell my colleagues how much it means to Kentucky. It means a lot to its local community, too, especially considering the fact that it has an annual economic impact of \$5 billion to the surrounding area.

This, of course, is hardly a unique story in America. From coast to coast, there is no end of examples of how our troops and our military enrich the fabric of our communities while at the same time keeping us safe. They are our neighbors. They are our friends. They are our daughters. They are our sons. They are not chess pieces for Democratic leaders to wield in some partisan game.

If Democratic leaders are really that worried about fattening up the IRS or adding a new coat of paint to their congressional offices, we can have that discussion, but let's leave our troops out of it and leave their families out of it.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is very difficult to respond to fiction, and that is what we just heard. We heard a speech based on fiction, a speech based on no facts, a speech based on made-up facts.

It is so hard to comprehend the different areas the majority leader spoke of with no basis in reality. On the subject of health care, it is as if he doesn't realize that 16.5 million people have health insurance.

He denigrates people who aren't insured. Because of Obamacare, they now have the ability to go to a doctor or a hospital when they are sick because of Medicaid. Is there anything wrong with that? In America everyone is not rich. In America not everyone is middle class. Some people are falling through the cracks, and the fact that in the State of Kentucky a lot of people there now have the ability to go to doctors when they are sick or hurt shouldn't be anything that people make fun of.

Health care has changed dramatically. I walked into a drugstore near my home here in Washington—CVS. As a result of ObamaCare and other reasons, you can go into that drugstore now and have a test for strep. If you need medicine, they can give it to you. That is progress in medicine in America.

My friend the Republican leader talks as if he would like to return to the time prior to ObamaCare, when insurance companies defined the people