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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, July 31, 2015, at 1 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2015

The Senate met at 10 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.

Eternal God, enthroned above all other powers, thank You for the gift of this day. Use our lawmakers for Your glory. May they find obedience to You not a burden but a delight. May they find the cost of loyalty to Your precepts not a trial but a privilege, as they discover in Your Words wings to uplift our Nation and world.

Lord, inspire our Senators to make decisions that will build monuments of moral excellence and courage for generations to come. Open their eyes to Your wisdom, as You continue to uphold our Nation with Your powerful hand.

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. ROUNDS). The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL WHISTLEBLOWER APPRECIATION DAY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 236, which was submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 236) designating July 30, 2015, as “National Whistleblower Appreciation Day.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The resolution (S. Res. 236) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

THE HIGHWAY BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, many thought we would never get here, but we have. Later today, the Senate will pass a multiyear highway bill that does not raise taxes by a penny, and we will do it on a broad bipartisan basis. This is more than just another accomplishment for the Senate. It is a win for our country because the bill would

cut redtape and streamline regulations, it would modernize infrastructure and advance research and innovation, it would enact new transparency measures to empower Americans to see how much of their tax money is actually being spent, and because it is a multiyear bill it would give States, cities, and towns the certainty they need to better plan road and bridge projects well into the future.

The multiyear nature of this legislation is one of its most critical components. It is also something the House and Senate are not united on. We all want the House to have the space it needs to develop its own bill because we all want to work out the best possible legislation for the American people in conference later this year. So we will take up a measure this afternoon to give them that space, while also delivering important relief to veterans.

The bill will extend a helping hand to heroes who need it by covering unfunded requirements the administration failed to budget for. I hope we will rally in support of veterans when that measure is considered, just as we continue to rally in support of a multiyear bipartisan and fiscally responsible highway bill we will pass today.

Some never thought this day would come, but thanks to the enduring dedication of Senators on both sides of the aisle—in particular, Senator INHOFE, Senator BOXER, as well as Senator THUNE, Senator NELSON, and Senator HATCH—it is here.

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



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NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, the purpose of the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act is to ensure Congress has a fully informed understanding of any comprehensive agreement reached between the administration and Iran. These are principles both parties endorsed when they voted overwhelmingly to pass that measure earlier this year. These are principles President Obama endorsed when he signed it into law. These are principles that need to be upheld.

That is why I recently joined Speaker BOEHNER, Senator COTTON, and Congressman POMPEO in calling on the administration to comply with the terms of this law by providing the Senate with the text of the two side agreements reached between Iran and the IAEA. That was more than a week ago, but we still have yet to receive it. Without this critical information, Republicans and Democrats in Congress may not be able to properly assess such a highly consequential deal with Iran. That is simply not acceptable. The administration needs to turn over the side agreements without delay. Let me say that again. The administration needs to turn over the side agreements without delay.

Even considering all this, the Senate has already begun its necessary oversight of the deal that will soon be before us. The Armed Services Committee held a hearing yesterday on the strategic and military implications of the deal. The Foreign Relations Committee also held a hearing yesterday to consider the alternatives to this agreement.

Today it will consider the implications of sanctions relief for Iran, along with Congress's ability to impose additional sanctions if Tehran persists in its support of terrorism. The Intelligence Committee has already embarked on a series of briefings and hearings that will help Congress determine whether the deal can even be verified.

As the review moves forward, we will continue working to assess the relative threat posed to the Greater Middle East and to the United States by an Iranian regime empowered with a threshold nuclear program and billions of dollars of additional resources. I know this worries a lot of Members in both parties.

Consider what the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee said just this week:

I'm troubled that what this essentially does is after fifteen years it legitimizes Iran as a nuclear threshold state. After fifteen years Iran can produce weapons-grade highly-enriched uranium without limitations and that is disturbing because what that means to me is it really doesn't prevent Iran from having a nuclear weapon. It just postpones it.

That is the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He is not the only Democrat or Republican with these types of concerns. We will keep working for answers.

We will also keep pressing for a more fulsome revelation of the true extent of the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program.

Understanding Iran's relative trustworthiness in the past will be critical to determining Iran's potential for trustworthiness in the future—whether, for instance, it can truly be trusted to live up to its commitments in today's agreement. Getting a fuller picture of Iran's past nuclear activities and research will also be important to ensuring the U.N. Security Council, which rushed to approve the comprehensive deal, has a more comprehensive understanding moving forward.

We will continue working hard to assess this agreement on behalf of the American people who absolutely deserve a say in a deal of this magnitude. At the end, Congress will take a vote and answer a simple but powerful question: Will this agreement actually make America and its allies safer?

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Republicans called it "the beginning of socialized medicine." The Wall Street Journal accused Democrats and the President of "politicking with a nation's health." One Republican Senator called the health care law "brazen socialism."

Further:

It is not needed. It is socialism. It moves the country in a direction which is not good for anyone, whether they be young or old. It charts a course from which there will be no turning back. . . . It is not only socialism—it is brazen socialism.

You would think that based on the 50-plus times of trying to overturn ObamaCare, that is what the Republican Senators were talking about, but, no, that was Medicare. They weren't talking about ObamaCare; Medicare is what they were talking about.

Fifty years ago, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law Medicare and Medicaid. At that time, conservatives believed that access to health care through government was the worst possible decision any elected official could make—and so many Republicans, the same thing. In fact, Republicans still do feel that way. Even after decades of Medicare's success, they are still clamoring for the program's elimination or massive changes.

Jeb Bush—a frontrunner for the Republican Presidential nomination—called for "phasing out" Medicare. Where did he do this? At a Koch brothers rally in New Hampshire. Jeb Bush—a frontrunner for the Republican Presidential nomination—said let's phase out Medicare. How about that one?

For half a century, Republicans have continued to attack Medicare, despite all the good it has done. They have tried to privatize Medicare and turn it into a voucher system and reduce benefits for seniors. Republicans attacked the closing of the prescription drug doughnut hole and elimination of cost-sharing for preventative coverage simply because they were improvements made by the Affordable Care Act.

Republicans have repeatedly sought to destroy Medicaid, and Republican Governors have turned back millions of Federal dollars and denied their citizens, the most needy of all, coverage simply because of ideology.

This week they renewed their never-ending assault on women's health by trying to defund Planned Parenthood in reaction to a radical rightwing crusade by an extremist group. American women value Planned Parenthood because they know Planned Parenthood provides vital health care services to millions of women, but Republicans are choosing to disseminate access to the health services of women. Women need this health care to stay healthy.

Why are they doing it? I guess, to further their political agenda. When will the Republican attack on effective health care programs end?

Medicare and Medicaid have positively affected and even saved millions of Americans' lives. Before Medicare, nearly half of all seniors age 65 and older were uninsured. The elderly were discriminated against simply because of their age. If you were fortunate enough to have health insurance, you paid over 50 percent of the cost straight out of your pocket.

My first elected job was from Clark County. That is in Las Vegas, NV. I was chosen to be a member of the board of trustees of Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital—the largest hospital district in Nevada. After a year or so, I became chairman of the board of trustees. I was there when Medicare came into being. Prior to Medicare, more than 40 percent of all seniors who came into our hospital were required to have a brother, a son, a daughter, a mother, a father, a husband, a wife or a neighbor sign on the dotted line, saying: If that bill is not paid, we will guarantee it is paid.

We had a collection department in that hospital that was very aggressive and went after these people. That is how bad it was for seniors, but today, 50 years later, about 99 percent of seniors are insured and go to the hospital when they need care.

The cost during their working years is a small amount of out-of-pocket costs. The program that we call Medicare is a lifeline. Before Medicare and Medicaid, health care for millions of younger Americans was subject to racism and discrimination. A White American was 30 percent more likely to be admitted to a hospital than an African American. In fact, in many cases emergency response calls were subject to race confirmation before action. They