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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.

Eternal God, our helper, as a tragic pattern of insane violence continues to bring pain to our Nation and world, we turn our eyes to You. Thank You that though evil seems undeniably strong, You continue to rule in Your universe. May we refuse to be intimidated by the adversaries of freedom, as we remember Your sacred words, "There is no fear in love."

Lord, lead our Senators with Your wisdom. As they focus on Your presence and power, shield their hearts with Your peace. When they seek Your guidance, direct their steps in the path of truth.

Give us all the sensitivity to comprehend the holy meaning and the sacred mysteries that reside in every moment. And, Lord, be near to all who are affected by the mass shooting in San Bernardino, CA.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

### GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I hope all Members of Congress—Democrats and Republicans, Members of the House and Senate—take a long, hard look this morning, maybe in the mirror, and ask themselves: Where do I stand?

Yet again our country is faced with another sickening act of gun violence. Yesterday's shooting rampage took the lives of 14 people and wounded at least 17 more, a number of those grievously injured. That wasn't the only shooting yesterday; a gunman in Georgia killed a woman and injured three others.

So where do we stand? We have an epidemic of gun violence in America, and it is nothing less than sickening.

Fort Hood, 13 dead; Tucson, 6 dead; Carson City, 4 dead; Aurora, 12 dead; Newtown, 20 little children, 6 educators; the Navy Yard in Washington, DC, 12 dead; Las Vegas, 3 dead, two of whom were police officers. And I have heard this talk: Oh, it is so unusual, a husband and wife. These three people killed in Las Vegas were killed by a husband-and-wife team. In Charleston, nine dead; Moneta, VA, two dead—on live television, he came to kill two people. At Umpqua Community College, nine dead; Colorado Springs, three dead.

That tragic list is nowhere close to being comprehensive. The one in Georgia yesterday—one dead, two wounded. It hardly made the press. But the ones I just mentioned are a few that we picked up earlier this morning in my office.

It would be very difficult to list all the mass killings that have taken place in recent years. Why? Because we are 337 days into 2015 and we have had at least 355 mass shootings—355 mass shootings in 337 days. We are averaging more than one a day.

Two months ago I came to the floor very sad. I was here mourning the murder of innocent community college students attending class in Roseburg, OR. I said then that each time our Nation endures one of these mass killings, we go through the same routine. First we are shocked. Then we ask questions about the killers, their motives, and how they got their hands on those guns. Then we wonder, what could we have done to prevent this terrible thing from happening?

As I said, the disturbing part is that we don't do anything. We don't do anything. We, as the legislative body of this country, do nothing. So I have a question for every Member of this body: How can we live with ourselves for failing to do the things that we know will reduce gun violence? Will it get rid of all of it? Of course not. But will it reduce it? Yes. We are complicit through our inaction, and if we continue to fail to act, we will be complicit today and every day into the future. We will keep ending up right where we are, mourning innocent victims in San Bernardino, CA, or Charleston or Newtown. When victims turn to us for leadership and help, we will have nothing to show but empty hands and a few empty gestures. It is despicable.

For far too long we have done nothing, even as the gun violence shakes our Nation to its core. We must do something. We can start by passing improved background check legislation. Is it asking too much that if someone is crazy or a criminal, they shouldn't be able to walk into any gun shop and buy a gun? Of course not. But that is the law in America.

I know the thought of upsetting the National Rifle Association scares everybody—oh, especially my Republican colleagues. Do you know what scares the American people? Gun violence. These mass shootings at holiday parties frighten the American people. Is it unreasonable that they are frightened?

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



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Of course not. People are afraid to go to a movie theater or to a concert.

The bill before the Senate today is to get rid of ObamaCare, and everybody knows it is just a gesture in futility. They have tried it 60 times or 48 times—I don't know; we lost track—in the House, and every time, the same answer: No. In the Senate, we have done it 14, 15 times—always the same answer. Einstein said the definition of “insanity” is when someone does the same thing over and over again knowing they are going to get the same result. So we are wasting our time today. Everyone knows the result.

But we have the opportunity to cast a vote here today—or we will shortly—because we are focused on doing something. People on this side of the aisle are focused on doing something to stop this gun violence, and we are going to force amendments to that end today—not many but a few. We will try to do something, anything.

Are we going to vote on expanded background checks? Shouldn't we do that at least? We are going to vote to prevent criminals convicted of harassing women's health clinics from buying a gun, owning a gun.

Senators will have to decide where they stand on these amendments. Do they stand with babies who were killed in Connecticut, families who want to do nothing more than go about their day without the daily threat of shootings? My friends in Nevada, two police officers in uniform sitting down to have a lunch break, and two people walk in behind them and shoot them in the back of the head and kill them. They went over to Walmart and killed another person.

People are afraid.

There was a time in my legislative career that I tried to work with the National Rifle Association, but the NRA today is a far cry from the sportsmen's organization I once supported. The NRA once called mandatory background checks “reasonable.” That is what they said; I am not making this up. But now its leadership and organization have transformed into a quasi-militant wing of the Republican Party. They are being pushed more and more into the camp of guns for everybody anytime they want them, and they are being pushed by the—they have a competitor now: Gun Owners of America.

Those who choose to do the NRA's bidding will be held accountable by our constituents. Their vote against these sensible measures will be a stain for all of the American people to see.

Something has to be done. We must take a stand. The American people are desperately looking for help—some help, any help. It will never be possible to prevent every shooting. We know that. But we have a responsibility to try. There are certain things we can do. If someone is mentally deranged and a criminal, should they be able to walk in and buy a gun anyplace? Of course not. We have a responsibility as lawmakers to enact commonsense re-

forms that have been proven to stop attacks and save lives. I hope Republicans will find the courage to join with us and pass meaningful legislation to prevent further gun violence.

I apologize for speaking before the Republican leader, but I was told he was going to be late.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### TRAGEDY IN SAN BERNARDINO

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the senseless loss of life in San Bernardino continues to defy explanation. We have faith that law enforcement will continue working hard to uncover the truth behind this tragedy. Today, what we should all agree upon is that we will keep the victims and the families in our thoughts, that we as a Senate offer condolences to them, and that we as a Senate recognize the continuing efforts of law enforcement officials and first responders.

#### OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, middle-class Americans continue to call on Washington to build a bridge away from ObamaCare. They want better care. They want real health reform. For too long, Democrats did everything to prevent Congress from passing the type of legislation necessary to help these Americans who are hurting.

Well, today, Mr. President, that ends. Today, a middle class that has suffered enough from a partisan law will see the Senate vote to build a bridge past ObamaCare and toward better care.

The Restoring Americans' Healthcare Freedom Reconciliation Act we are debating deserves the support of every Member of this body because here is what we know. ObamaCare is a direct attack on the middle class. It is riddled with higher costs and broken promises. It is defined by failure. It is punctuated with hopelessness. And the scale of its many broken promises is matched only by the scale of its defenders' rigid and unfeeling responses to it.

Let us consider just a few right now. Americans were promised they could keep their health plans if they liked them. It was a promise Democrats made to sell ObamaCare and it is a promise they broke. Americans could only keep their plans if the President liked them, not if they liked them. Americans could only keep their plans if the President liked them.

Millions saw the coverage they liked ripped away as a result of a callous and partisan law.

Democrats' response to their broken promise? They tried to dismiss stories about folks losing insurance by saying they had lousy plans anyway and that they should be grateful the government

was taking them away. The American people took a different view.

Here is a note I received from a constituent in Caldwell County when her family lost their plan. Here is what she said:

I was lied to by the President and Congress when we were told the “Affordable” Care Act would not require us to switch from our current insurance provider. My husband and I work hard, pay a lot of taxes and ask for little from our government. Is it asking too much for government to stay out of my health insurance?

Americans were promised that ObamaCare would lower costs and even bring down premiums by \$2,500 per family. It is a promise Democrats made to sell ObamaCare, and it is a promise they broke.

Just last night, we learned from the government's own actuaries that ObamaCare is leading to higher health care costs. We also know that premiums continue to shoot up by double digits in many areas, including Kentucky.

Democrats' response to their broken promise? President Obama said 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.” Obviously, the President thinks he knows more about our health insurance than we do. Of course, the American people took a different view.

One Kentuckian wrote me after being forced into an ObamaCare plan she called “subpar” with a nearly \$5,000 deductible. “I cried myself to sleep,” she said. “I work hard for every penny I earn,” and this “is unacceptable.”

Americans were promised ObamaCare would create millions of jobs. It is a promise Democrats made to sell ObamaCare, and it is a promise they broke. ObamaCare is leading to fewer jobs, not more of them. In Kentucky, our Democratic Governor once declared it an “undisputed fact” that ObamaCare's Medicaid expansion had added 12,000 jobs to Kentucky's economy. But as Kentuckians now know, he was undisputedly wrong. Not only did those jobs fail to materialize, but health care jobs have actually declined in Kentucky since the passage of ObamaCare.

Democrats' response to their broken promise? I think this headline about the comments of a senior Democrat captures it perfectly: “ObamaCare allows workers to ‘escape’ their jobs”—to escape their jobs. Well, the American people took a different view.

A constituent from Somerset wrote to tell me that ObamaCare's mandates were causing her to lose up to 11 hours—up to 11 hours—per week at work, which meant about \$440 less in her pocket every month. “ObamaCare,” she said, “[is] causing us to lose hours [and] lose wages, yet expecting us to spend more.”

Now, Americans were promised ObamaCare wouldn't touch Medicare. Americans were promised that taxes