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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, You are the strength of our lives. Use us to tell of Your wondrous works, inspiring others to glorify Your Name in the Earth. Help us to depend on You in the welter and variety of events we encounter each day. May we trust You to supply all of our needs, responding with gratitude to Your generous mercies.

Today, give our Senators an eternal perspective on the myriad issues they face. Infuse their hearts with faith, sharpen their minds with truth, and renew their spirits with courage. Bless the members of their staff who sacrifice so much for freedom's cause.

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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today we have an opportunity to take another step forward on the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, or CARA, a critically important and bipartisan bill to address the grow-

ing prescription opioid and heroin epidemic.

As we have worked through debate on this legislation, we have heard numerous stories from across our Nation about the toll this crisis is taking on Americans. Today, I want to take a moment to address the difference CARA can make in my home State of Kentucky, which has been among the hardest hit by this epidemic.

More people are dying from drug overdoses than car crashes in the Commonwealth, and that is largely due to prescription opioids and heroin. We know education and prevention programs can help reduce the number of people who experience drug addiction and overdose. One program I have been proud to support is the Drug-Free Community Program, which provides funding to local communities so they can promote education and awareness about the dangers of substance abuse.

I wrote letters of support on behalf of Oldham and Carter Counties, which have both received drug-free community grants. This funding helps them train community members, parents, and school officials in preventing youth substance abuse.

There are other programs in CARA that can help build on these efforts through community-based coalition grants that address local drug crises. Education is incredibly important, and it is great to see what we are achieving on that front. But for Kentuckians and Americans currently struggling with addiction, the cycle can be very difficult to break.

We have seen a staggering number of people lose their lives to overdose, and we know more must be done to stop that terrible trend. Fortunately, groups like the Harm Reduction Coalition are providing overdose prevention and naloxone training for drug treatment programs, recovery advocates, and health departments across Kentucky and several other States. Through State demonstration and first

responder grants, the group says CARA can give them a "stronger foundation to move from training to action."

Prescription drug monitoring programs are also instrumental in saving lives, and I have been a strong supporter of Kentucky's own program, called KASPER. Just last fall, I received confirmation from the CDC that the Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center had been awarded funds to combat the prescription drug and heroin epidemic in Kentucky. These funds are being used to improve KASPER, as well as target interventions in counties such as Jefferson, Fayette, Boone, Kenton, and Campbell—counties that have seen some of the highest rates of overdose deaths in the Commonwealth. The bill we are considering today also places an emphasis on prescription drug monitoring programs and will strengthen efforts already in place.

Perhaps one of the most heart-breaking aspects of this epidemic is its effect on newborns. Just last year, I sponsored the Protecting Our Infants Act to address this specific issue and was proud to see it become law. Our work to protect these fragile lives continues with the legislation we have before us today. CARA would improve treatment for both pregnant and postpartum women by reauthorizing an existing grant program. It would also authorize a pilot program to enhance treatment options for this specific population.

CARA can make positive strides in terms of keeping communities safe, too. It would bolster the efforts of law enforcement through the authorization of grant programs for collaborative investigative units. What that means is Kentucky's outstanding drug task forces stand to benefit when it comes to investigating illegal trafficking and distribution of heroin, fentanyl, and prescription opioids. I have strongly supported each of these efforts to intensify the Commonwealth's fight

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



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against our prescription opioid and heroin crisis.

So because of efforts like those I mentioned—to strengthen education and treatment programs, to improve prescription drug monitoring tools, and to enhance law enforcement efforts—differences are already being made in the lives of many Kentuckians. With the passage of CARA, we can build upon these and other initiatives that can help shore up the fight against prescription opioid and heroin addiction.

Kim Moser, Director of the Northern Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy, says CARA will “address the growing needs” of Kentucky communities and “expand treatment resources for those suffering.” She goes on to say that CARA “will allow individuals, families and communities to heal from this scourge.”

I want to thank Senator GRASSLEY, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, for working with Senators to move this bill by voice vote in a timely manner, and I want to also acknowledge Senator PORTMAN and Senator AYOTTE for their responsiveness to this urgent problem and for their dedication to advancing the bipartisan bill that is before us now.

Remember, although this is an authorization bill, Congress has already appropriated \$400 million—funds that are still available today—for opioid-specific programs. We will have more opportunities for funding through the next appropriations process, but it is important we act on this legislation right now.

CARA will bring us closer to ending a national epidemic. It will help lift communities like those in Kentucky out of the throes of prescription opioids and heroin addiction. It will help save lives.

I look forward to joining my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this important legislation.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as Senators, we pride ourselves in making sure that we vote when we are required to vote, and we are always very aware of when the votes occur and what happens with the votes. I missed a vote yesterday at 4 o'clock.

My staff has told me the clerks here are concerned that they did something wrong. I missed the vote. It was my fault. It was no one's fault but my own. I had a doctor's appointment at 4:30, and I got here too late.

So everyone should understand that I have missed other votes, and I have already announced how I would have voted had I voted, and it wouldn't have changed the outcome of the vote. So all the clerks, who serve us so well all the

time, shouldn't worry at all about my not being recorded on that vote.

So calm down, everybody. I don't care. You shouldn't care.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have heard my friend the Republican leader the last couple of days talking about what a good bill we have here. He is right. It is something that is important to do. We have this opioid problem sweeping the Nation. It is in Nevada, as well as in all other States. All the other 49 States have the problem. So I understand the importance of this legislation. I only wish the Republicans had joined with us yesterday in voting for the Shaheen amendment, which would have provided real money to meet the requirements of this legislation, if it passes.

I also know my friend keeps talking about the money we have already appropriated. We did it because there was an emergency then, and there is one now. The programs we have appropriated money for are totally separate and apart from this legislation. That is why Senator SHAHEEN offered her amendment. It was emergency funding that we badly need. So it is too bad my friends on the other side of the aisle are talking about taking money from other programs and funding this program. That isn't how it should be.

This is a scourge sweeping the country. We have programs in this new legislation that need to be funded, otherwise it won't have any meaning whatsoever to the problem we are facing in the country.

A number of Democrats have also tried to offer amendments. To this point, they have been able to offer one amendment and vote on one amendment. We have had more than 60 amendments filed over here. I know we are not going to have the ability to debate and vote on 60 amendments, but my friend the Republican leader has been out here boasting time and again about this robust amendment process, and it is only talk. We haven't had a robust amendment process.

I wouldn't think robust would mean having seven or eight amendments. We would accept a new definition of robust, I guess, if we got to offer a few amendments, but we should be able to offer amendments on this legislation.

So I hope the Senate will be able to have a full and open amendment process on this legislation. If not, we may not be able to proceed to vote on this legislation, and it would be too bad. Even though the legislation is not funded properly, we should pass it. We are not going to pass it if we get jammed, and that is what is happening.

FILLING THE SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, listen to these words: fair, respectful, delibera-

tive, and thorough. These are the words the senior Senator from Iowa, Mr. GRASSLEY, once used to describe the way Supreme Court nominations should be considered by the Senate—fair, respectful, deliberative, and thorough.

In June 2010, he said something more:

I have always been of the opinion that the Senate needs to conduct a comprehensive and careful review of Supreme Court nominees. It is important that the nominee be given a fair, respectful, and also deliberative hearing.

That same month, in June 2010, he also said:

I am committed to ensuring that this process is fair and respectful but also thorough. The Constitution tasks our Senate with conducting a comprehensive review of the nominee's record and qualifications.

Fair, respectful, deliberative, and thorough. I don't think refusing to meet with a nominee, refusing to hold a hearing of a nominee, refusing to vote on a nominee is fair, respectful, deliberative, and certainly not thorough.

He was not yet chairman of the Judiciary Committee when the senior Senator from Iowa made those comments. As I have noted, he has said on more than one occasion that the Constitution tasks our Senate with conducting a “comprehensive review of the nominee's record and qualifications.” He made those statements when he wasn't chairman of the committee. He is now chairman of the committee—the committee he has served on for decades. Now his response for the Senate's consideration of Supreme Court nominations sets the standard. He runs that big and powerful committee, and he has chosen an approach that could not be further from the fair, respectful, deliberative, and thorough that he has urged on more than one occasion.

Instead of exercising his once-respected independence, my friend the senior Senator from Iowa is taking his marching orders from the Republican leader and refusing to give President Obama's Supreme Court nominee a meeting, a hearing, or a vote.

Within an hour after Justice Scalia's death was announced, the Republican leader hijacked the Supreme Court nomination process in the Senate by declaring that the Republicans would not consider the President's nominee.

Then the Republican leader decided to seize control of the Judiciary Committee—I don't know if he twisted arms, but that certainly conveys the message I want to convey—twisting the arms of the senior Senator from Iowa and his committee members to get them to forfeit their independence and fall in line. Behind closed doors, the Republican leader compelled the 11 Republicans who make up the majority of the committee on the Judiciary to sign a loyalty oath. This loyalty oath, which abdicated the role of this once-dignified committee, took the form of a letter promising to follow the Republican leader's demands and block consideration of President Obama's Supreme Court nominee.