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## Senate

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.

O God, who renews our strength and guides us along right paths, we honor Your Name. We do not fear what the future may bring, for You are close beside us.

Send our Senators forth today to do right as You give them the ability to see it. May their deeds fit their words and their conduct match their profession. By Your sustaining grace, may their hearts be steadied and stilled, purged of self and filled with Your peace and poise.

As Memorial Day nears, we pause to thank You for those who gave their lives that this Nation might live.

And, Lord, today we thank You for the more than four decades of service on Capitol Hill by Ruby Paone. We are grateful for the joy she has brought to our lives. As she prepares to leave us, bless her more than she can ask or imagine.

We pray in Your mighty 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. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

### NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, after 2 days of needless delay from across the aisle, this morning we will vote to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to the National Defense Authorization Act and hopefully adopt that motion quickly thereafter.

This critical defense bill passed committee on a strong bipartisan basis; there is no reason for further delay from our Democratic colleagues. The National Defense Authorization Act authorizes funds and sets our policy for our military annually. It is always an important bill. It is especially important today.

Consider the multitude of threats facing us from nearly every corner of the world. Consider the need to start preparing our armed services for the many global threats the next President will be forced to confront.

As I have noted before, some of the most senior national security officials within this administration—such as Secretary of Defense Carter and General Dunford or those recently retired from service, such as retired General Campbell—have spoken of the need to better position the next President in theaters from Afghanistan to Asia to Libya.

So whoever that President is, regardless of party, we should take action now to help our next Commander in Chief in this year of transition. That is what this defense legislation before the Senate will help us do.

No. 1, it will support our allies and partners, authorizing funds to combat ISIL, preserve gains in Afghanistan, increase readiness at NATO, and assist friends like Ukraine.

No. 2, it will enhance military readiness, providing more of the equipment, training, and resources our servicemembers need.

No. 3, it will help keep our country safe, getting us better prepared to confront emerging threats like cyber war-

fare, terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Critically, this bill will also honor our commitment to servicemembers, their families, and veterans, authorizing raises, supporting Wounded Warriors, and delivering better health care and benefits for the men and women who stand on guard for us every single day.

This bill contains sweeping reforms designed to advance American innovation and preserve our military's technological edge. The funding level it authorizes is the same as what President Obama requested in his budget.

As I said earlier, it passed the Armed Services Committee on a strong bipartisan vote, 23 to 3, including every single Democrat on the committee. The Armed Services chairman, Senator MCCAIN, knows what it means to serve. He is always on guard for the men and women of our military. This bill is a reflection of his commitment. It is a commitment to them, and it is a commitment to every American—to preparing our country in this year of transition for both the threats we face today and the threats yet to emerge.

### OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week Senators came to the floor to highlight the continuing broken promises of ObamaCare. We did so in the shadow of proposed double-digit ObamaCare premium increases in States across our country, everywhere from Tennessee, to Oregon, to New Hampshire.

Americans have gotten further bad news since, including ObamaCare premium spikes that could reach as high as 83 percent in New Mexico. Each day seems to bring more and more troubling news, which could mean heartbreak for even more Americans. Take, for instance, some headlines from just last night:

“Most Arkansas insurers propose double-digit hikes for 2017.”

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



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"Some rates in Georgia insurance exchange could soar in 2017"—and by "soar," they are talking about as high as 65 percent.

As one paper put it, there is "no end in sight for higher Obamacare premiums."

These are not just abstract numbers; they can represent real pain for families already stretched to the limits under the ObamaCare economy. A recent survey showed that health care costs are now the top financial concern facing American families, ahead of concerns about low wages and even job loss. And what does the Democratic response too often seem to boil down to? They say: Just get over it. Get over it.

Just the other day, the Democratic leader in the Senate said that health care costs are now the top financial concern facing American families, ahead of concerns about low wages and even job loss. And what does the Democratic response too often seem to boil down to? They say: Just get over it. Get over it.

I would ask Democratic colleagues to listen to the Americans who continue to share heartbreaking ObamaCare stories with us, like these Kentuckians:

Should the Elizabethtown man who says he can't afford to see a doctor under his ObamaCare plan, despite the fact that he pays more for his premium than his house payment, just get over it?

Should the dad from Owensboro who said he has seen his family's health costs increase by nearly 250 percent under ObamaCare just get over it? "What happened to being rewarded for working hard in America?" this dad asked. "What happened to the American dream?" Many Americans are wondering the same thing.

ObamaCare continues to write a record of broken promises at the expense of the American people. Instead of lowering premiums by up to \$2,500 for a typical family, as then-Senator Obama talked about on the campaign trail, ObamaCare has raised many families' rates. Instead of making health care costs more affordable for all, ObamaCare has led to unaffordable out-of-pocket costs for families all across our country.

The bottom line is this: ObamaCare is too often hurting those it proposed to help. It is a direct attack on the middle class.

The Republican-led Senate sent a bill to President Obama's desk to repeal this partisan law so we can replace it with policies that actually put the American people first because, let's remember, the American people do not need to get over ObamaCare's failures. Our Democratic colleagues need to finally join us in working to end those failures.

#### TRIBUTE TO RUBY PAONE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, when Ruby Paone started her first day on the job in 1975, she was fresh out of

college. Today, she has served here longer than any current Senator, save one—the senior Senator from Vermont.

Ruby Paone, our Senate doorkeeper, has seen a lot in her 41 years in the Senate. She has watched legends, such as Baker and Mansfield, in action. She has acquired a lot of unique titles, such as card desk assistant and reception room attendant.

We are really going to miss her when she retires later this month. I think Ruby is looking forward to kicking back in Myrtle Beach after more than four decades of Senate service. More importantly, I think she is anxious to spend some time with her family, away from work. Her son Tommy works at the Senate appointments desk. Her daughter Stephanie works in the Democratic Cloakroom. Her husband Marty used to as well. The two of them even met right here in the Senate.

We are glad that Ruby will get to spend more quality time—that is, non-Senate time—with her family. And we are sure she would like to see a little more of her son Alexander as well.

As Ruby knows, she will be leaving a family behind here too. She has served as surrogate mom of sorts to many doorkeepers, pages, and interns. They have looked up to her for wisdom and for advice. And it is no wonder. She has a lifetime of stories and experiences to share in a retirement that is richly deserved.

We will miss Ruby Paone, but we wish her the very best, and above all, we thank her for her many years of service.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

#### OBAMACARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is really unfortunate that the Republican leader comes here often and continues to harp and complain about ObamaCare, even though it is continuing to work. More than 9 out of 10 Americans now have health care. This is the best it has ever been. It has never been this way before.

They say they want to repeal ObamaCare. They have tried scores of times. It hasn't worked. So I guess what they are saying is that they just want to get rid of this, and have people go back to the way it used to be. I remember and people in America remember canceling insurance if they were sick. If they had a real serious illness, they would cancel because their bills were too high. If they had a preexisting disability, forget about it—they couldn't get insurance. If they were a college student, they were cut off quickly; they couldn't stay on their family's insurance policy. Many men and women can stay on the insurance of their parents.

So we would be much better off with ObamaCare and with helping the Amer-

ican people if, rather than complain, as they have for 6 or 7 years, they worked with us to try to improve the bill. We know it can be improved, but we can't do it alone.

So that is how unfortunate this argument has been. We need everything ObamaCare does. We don't have anything better. And we are not going to do anything to help the poor. That is a strange way to conduct business, but that is the way it has been in the filibuster-laden Republican Party since Obama was elected.

#### DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION AND DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, over the next few weeks, the Senate will be voting on both the Defense authorization and Defense appropriations bills, these two very important pieces of legislation. We need to take the time to understand them and, of course, to read these bills and make sure we are doing the right thing. Just reading the Defense authorization bill is not going to be an hour-long deal. It is not going to be done watching a ball game or watching television programs. Why? It is a very big piece of legislation. This is it. Try reading that between innings—1,664 pages.

Chairman MCCAIN may have read this. He may understand every line in it. He would have a better chance than most of us because he is the one who conducted the hearings behind closed doors—secret sessions. Few outside the committee probably know what is in this monstrous bill, this big bill.

Even though the chairman came here on Monday and started complaining about this legislation, if you want to get an idea how the bill was hastily put together, consider this. The bill was put together behind closed doors. At 5 p.m. last night, Senator MCCAIN's committee voted on the classified annex to the Defense authorization bill. He had been ranting and raving about Democrats holding up this bill. That is what the Republican leader did here today. He didn't rant and rave, but he did say we are holding it up. But the committee hadn't finished its work as of last night. The bill wasn't done. They just finished it last night at 5 p.m. Unfortunately, it appears that this massive bill is everything Senator MCCAIN has in the past complained about. He says he hated what has gone on in the past.

This bill is loaded with special projects—loaded with them—sprinkled with special favors and many different flavors. It has extraneous provisions, and who knows what else. If there were ever anything that could be identified as an earmark or two or three or four or a few hundred, it is in this bill. I thought Senator MCCAIN didn't like that. I can understand why some would want to rush this bill through the Senate without a lot of public scrutiny, but we are not going to do that. This legislation is far too important.