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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.

Everlasting God, our light and salvation, You remain our strength and shield. Today, we claim Your great and precious promises as You sustain us with Your presence. Thank You for promising to supply our needs and to lead us toward abundant living.

Continue to sustain our Senators with Your eternal presence. Remind them that Your hand is on the helm of human affairs and that You still guide Your world. Renew their strength as You provide them with the courage to carry on. May they refuse to do anything which could bring them regret, remorse, and shame.

We pray in Your strong 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.

THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, tonight we will welcome the President of the United States for the State of the Union Address. It is his final address, and it gives us cause for reflection.

Many of us recall the moment in Boston when a State senator became a na-

tional star. His rhetorical gift was undeniable. It was a soaring elocution bathed in confetti that promised a new and more inclusive beginning. It inspired many. It propelled Barack Obama to the highest office in the land.

Americans assumed the campaigning would eventually come to a close and the serious work of governing would eventually commence, but it is now many years later, and the Obama for President campaign never really ended. Speeches still substitute for substance. Straw men still stand in for serious debate. Slogans still surrogate for governing.

We have been promised even more campaigning tonight, this time for the candidate President Obama would like to see succeed him. It leads Americans to wonder: When is the serious work of governing ever going to begin? Governing isn't easy. Governing often requires serious engagement with the Congress the American people elected, not the one the President wishes they had elected.

Here is a simple fact. "You don't make change through slogans." That is something President Obama once said. I wish he had taken his own advice because here is what we know as we enter the twilight of his Presidency. He has presided over a sluggish and uneven economic recovery that is failing too many of our citizens.

Health premiums and deductibles have continued to shoot ever higher. Wages have flatlined for too many. Inequality has grown. Manufacturing has shrunk. Poverty seems to entrench. The middle class has continued to collapse, to the point where it no longer even constitutes a majority of our country.

The Obama administration says it wants to help the middle class, but its policies often tell a different story. We have seen the negative impact ObamaCare has had on so many middle-class families. We have also seen

this administration declare a war on coal families who just want to get ahead.

I have invited a Kentucky miner from Pikeville, Howard Abshire, as my State of the Union guest tonight. He has watched as the Obama administration's heartless approach has helped contribute to devastation in his community and to the loss of thousands of jobs in Kentucky, one of which was his own job.

Here is what his message has been to President Obama. Howard Abshire said: "We're hurting [and] we need help," but "we don't want to be bailed out, we want to work."

Many Kentuckians feel the very same way. Many Americans feel similarly too. Today only 20 percent of our citizens think things are headed in the right direction in their country. Nearly three-quarters want the next President to take a totally different approach from the current one. These are the simple facts, and they present the President with a choice.

President Obama can try to blame others for it. He can try to convince Americans they are wrong to feel the way they do or he can take responsibility and chart a new course. Americans are losing faith in the future. They are losing hope that their children can lead a better life. They watch as challenges continue to mount around the world—like those from ISIL, Iran, Russia, Al Qaeda, an ever-aggressive China, North Korea, and of course the Taliban—while this administration seems to have no plan to deal with any of it.

This hurt in our country and the failing approach from the White House should be disheartening to all of us. Perhaps the worst part is, it didn't have to be like this. It really didn't have to be like this. I believe that when the American people elect divided government, they are not telling us to do nothing. They are telling us to work together in the areas where we

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



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can agree so we can make progress for our country.

This Congress has racked up a growing list of bipartisan accomplishments for the American people over the past year. Some thought the major reforms we passed in areas such as education, transportation, Medicare, and tax relief were all impossible in the current political climate. We proved those pundits wrong. We showed how significant bipartisan accomplishments can be achieved when good policy is the goal.

Perhaps we have inspired the President to finally try his hand at bipartisan achievement as well. We will see tonight when he delivers his last State of the Union Address. If he proposes real plans to do things such as defeat ISIL, grow economic opportunity, and strengthen the middle class—plans actually designed to pass this Congress, not just provide talking points for the next campaign—we will know he is ready to join us in meeting the challenges of tomorrow because Republicans aren't afraid of the future, and we don't think President Obama should be either. We want him to join us in recognizing the challenges of today while working for the solutions of tomorrow. It is true that we as a nation have a lot of challenges to confront. The pain and the worry in our country is real, it is palpable, but none of it is insurmountable.

That is the hopeful message I expect Governor Haley to deliver tonight. I expect her to contrast a failing Presidency that is stuck in the past with a Republican Party that is oriented to the future. Nikki Haley knows the American dream. She has lived the American dream. She believes in the continuing promise of our country, and she understands the importance of opportunity and upward mobility for our middle class. When Governor Haley talks about hope and change, she means it because she has actually worked to deliver it.

There is nothing wrong with inspirational speeches. We all need to be inspired, especially in trying times such as these. Soaring rhetoric matched with the right policies and hard work to actually achieve them is usually good for our country—just ask Ronald Reagan or Jack Kemp. Empty eloquence wrapped in leftwing ideas of yesterday that hurt the middle class—it is time to leave that behind. It is time to look to the future. We will see tonight if President Obama is ready to do so and move beyond the failed policies of the past.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE PRESIDENT'S LEADERSHIP

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if this were a card game, which it is not, I guess what I would do is trump what the Re-

publican leader has said. My friend lives in a world that doesn't exist. Let's talk about this person named Barack Obama. What has happened under his time in office, his 7 years, in spite of the unheard of, unrecognizable Senate that the Republicans have created—cloture had to be filed more than 500 times because they set out to block everything he wanted—in spite of that, the state of the Union now reflects the last 7 years. We have 14 million private sector jobs that have been created. During the Obama years, the economy has grown. The private sector created jobs for 70 straight months—the longest stretch in the history of our country. Unemployment is at 5 percent. When Barack Obama took office, in some States it was as much as 14 percent.

During the years of Barack Obama, 17 million uninsured Americans have gained access to health care—17 million—and the number is climbing. Renewable energy production has increased significantly. You drive across America today and you see wind farms in the middle part of this country, and farmers make more money from producing energy on their farms than they do harvesting corn and soybeans because of what the President suggested and what we legislated in the so-called stimulus bill.

Solar, wind, and geothermal has increased significantly, and it will continue to grow more because they have tax incentives now for as long as 7 additional years. You know what else we have done—not enough. The wealthiest Americans who don't mind paying more than their fair share—the only people in America today who believe that these rich people shouldn't pay a little more are the Republicans in Congress, not Republicans around the country, so we made sure the wealthiest pay a little bit more.

We have secured permanent tax relief that will help lift 16 million lower income, middle-income families out of poverty. The auto industry was on the brink of destruction. General Motors, this icon of American industry, was begging for help. Chrysler Motors was begging for help. The Republicans said no. We Democrats said yes. We were right. Republicans were wrong. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been created in the auto industry. Last year more American cars and trucks were sold than any time in the history of our country. Why? Because of Barack Obama's leadership.

Osama bin Laden is gone. He has been killed, and we destroyed and degraded terrorist organizations in our Nation. We have more to do. Of course we do.

There have been historic agreements on climate change. We have stopped Iran from getting access to nuclear weapons. Within the last few days, Iran has shipped 12 tons of uranium out of Iran because of Barack Obama. While we have a lot more to do for America on behalf of the American people, we

can't ignore the progress that has been made.

My friend talks about the new Senate, and there is a new Senate because there is a constructive minority. We Democrats have been willing to work with them. The issues that we have been able to pass with rare exception have been issues that we should have passed years ago but we couldn't because Republicans filibustered and obstructed everything we tried to do.

I repeat: We have a lot more to do for the American people. It is a wonderful country, and I am so pleased with the progress we have made during the 7 years of Barack Obama.

Mr. President, I see no one on the floor. Please state the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 12:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first hour equally divided, and with the majority controlling the first half and the Democrats controlling the final half.

The Senator from Missouri.

FLOODING IN MISSOURI

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I want to talk for a few minutes at the beginning of my remarks about what the response to the flooding has been in our State of Missouri. I was in St. Louis County with Congresswoman WAGNER on Saturday. I was in St. Charles County the week before that. I was in Cape Girardeau following up on the work Congressman SMITH has done there. I was in St. Genevieve, Perryville, Cassville, and Monette. If you know anything about the geography of our State, those places are spread pretty far apart, but we had a flooding situation that was almost totally generated in our State—different from the floods we normally deal with—and the communities reacted with very little time in an impressive way. The Corps of Engineers was also there to help. The National Guard was there to do what they needed to do. Now we see FEMA and the SBA stepping in to see who qualifies for assistance.

There was loss of life. More often than not, the loss of life occurred when somebody drove around a sign that said "Don't pass this sign" and then got caught in a situation they didn't anticipate or thought was less than it turned out to be. Some families clearly are grieving that loss of life. We had five international soldiers who lost their lives near Fort Leonard Wood.