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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, Father of Mercies, we open our hearts to You, the source of all that is good and holy. Renew and revitalize our Senators for their service to You and country, surrounding them with the shield of Your Divine favor.

Lord, help them to remember that You continue to have final control of all things, ever able to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows, and to bring order out of chaos. Remind our lawmakers that to whom much is given, much will be required. May they see their lives as a privilege to be lived to the fullest in serving with humble gratitude.

We pray in Your sacred 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 MINORITY LEADER

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

ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am glad to see the Presiding Officer is my colleague from Nevada.

Yesterday I said Republicans should not play loose with Zika funding. What is Zika? For the first time in recorded history, we have mosquitoes that are

causing birth defects. Mosquitoes have plagued this world for centuries—perhaps forever—but they have never ever caused birth defects. They have caused death and a lot of terrible sickness but never birth defects. Now they are moving forward. We need to do something to stop this dreaded spread of this virus.

I said yesterday the Republicans shouldn't play loose with Zika funding, but that is exactly what they have done. We had an appropriations bill on the floor, and in that there were a number of things that were very important. We had money to do something about Zika. There was money in there for lots of different issues—a very broad bill, having a lot of things in it—one of our appropriations bills.

The Republican agreement on the MILCON-VA is a disgrace. It is a mockery of how Congress should treat an emergency. The conference report was jammed through the House with no debate, with a rule that was questionable. They are supposed to give a certain number of days' notice on anything they do on the House floor. Of course, they did this within a few hours. We don't know the exact time, but it happened around 3 o'clock in the morning—something like that—when they jammed through this bill. That bill provides \$1.1 billion in Zika funding, which is \$800 million short of the President's request.

Remember, the President's request was more than 4 months ago, and we have learned since then how awful the spread of this virus is. We knew quite a bit 4 months ago, but we know more now. There is a report also, in addition to being short in that respect—remember, this is an emergency bill as it relates to Zika. All emergencies—flood, fire, earthquake, all of the many things we face every year, we take care of as emergencies. It is part of the responsibilities of the American people that they pay for that, and they have always been happy to do it. When there

was a situation with a devastating windstorm, a deluge of water with Katrina in Louisiana and all that part of the country—it doesn't matter what the emergency is, we have taken care of it in the past, but not this Republican Congress, no, no.

They also, in this so-called conference report, stripped \$120 million from Ebola funding. Remember, 2 years ago, Ebola was the thing that frightened Americans. All over America people were afraid of Ebola, this terrible disease originating in Africa. Well, 2 years have gone by, Ebola has been contained but not eliminated, and there is still, according to the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control, lots and lots of work that needs to be done, but the Republicans keep taking away from the funding. It is really unfortunate, but that is not the half of it.

They cut a half a billion dollars from the Affordable Care Act—ObamaCare. The Republicans have tried 67 times to defund ObamaCare—67 times—and that has failed, but the stripping of Ebola money and ObamaCare money—it gets worse than that.

The conference report would completely undermine access to birth control for women in Zika-affected areas by restricting money for Planned Parenthood. This is all some women have. It is the only care they have, the only place they can go. So women are disproportionately affected by Zika. At a time when it is more important than ever for women to plan their families, we are appalled at this partisan attack on health centers women rely on to get the care they need.

Instead of responding to this emergency that is threatening American women, Republicans are using this awful virus as an excuse for another attack on women's health. Republicans have voted repeatedly in this Congress to defund Planned Parenthood. The Republican Zika bill is just more of the same anti-women—something I am

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



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sorry to say is part of the McConnell-Trump tactics we have found lately, but it gets worse even than what I have already outlined.

Republicans slashed funding for veterans by one-half billion dollars—not million, \$500 million—for veterans. It allows more pesticides into our environment. Republicans even used this conference report—listen to this one—to block the prohibition of Confederate flags at Federal facilities.

We should be working together to fight Zika. We should be providing public health experts the tools they need to fight this virus.

As we speak, we really don't know for sure because it changes daily, but there are almost 3,000 women who are now affected with the virus here in America, and 400 of them are pregnant. We have already had half a dozen born with birth defects.

Rather than doing something to help the public health experts with the tools they need, Republicans turned an emergency spending request into a wish list for all the anti-women, anti-veterans, anti-minorities, anti-environment, and anti-ObamaCare radicals in Congress.

Last night, the Republicans took this monstrosity of a conference report, rammed it through the House in the dead of night with no debate, and then immediately went on vacation but only until July 5. Is this how we should treat an emergency? Of course not. Is this how we should respond to a health crisis? Of course not. Shame on Republicans for turning a public health emergency into a partisan, political show.

GUN SAFETY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday I was privileged to join my Democratic colleagues in the House of Representatives for a protest on the House floor. House Democrats were demanding that Republicans close the terror loophole which allows suspected terrorists to legally buy guns. We wanted to stop that. In the Senate, we are also waiting for Republicans to act on gun safety just like they are in the House.

The senior Senator from Maine—a Republican—has proposed legislation to keep guns and explosives out of the hands of suspected terrorists and criminals. The Collins amendment isn't perfect, but it is a step in the right direction, and I will vote for it, but in order to vote for legislation, we need to be able to first have a vote scheduled on it. Yesterday the Republican leader said: "I'm going to be working to make sure she gets a vote on that proposal."

Frankly, I am an expert about what goes on here on the floor. I know the procedural problems my friend the Republican leader has so I understand that. I know sometimes it gets extremely difficult, but 48 hours ago, that is what he said, and we need to be shown a path forward. I don't see it, but we will wait and see.

The American people want us to prevent suspected terrorists from buying guns so I look forward to the Republican leader's plans for the day. As is the procedure here, the majority, the Republican leader, is allowed to speak first. He just wasn't here and his staff said I should go ahead.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 5447 AND H.R. 5456

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5447) to provide an exception from certain group health plan requirements for qualified small employer health reimbursement arrangements.

A bill (H.R. 5456) to amend parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act to invest in funding prevention and family services to help keep children safe and supported at home, to ensure that children in foster care are placed in the least restrictive, most family-like, and appropriate settings, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, in order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bills will be placed on the calendar.

ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, combating the spread of the Zika virus has been a priority for both parties so Republicans and Democrats deliberated and forged a compromise in committee. Senators debated that \$1.1 billion compromise on the floor and voted to pass it. Every single Democrat voted for it—every one of them.

We went to conference committee and the House agreed to fully fund the Senate-passed funding level. Now, with the House's action last night, we have a chance to send the \$1.1 billion in Zika funding to the President's desk.

This agreement will allow us to focus on immediate needs like mosquito control, while providing resources for longer term goals like a vaccine. It also takes a broader view that U.S. experts should also have the ability to address other emerging mosquito-borne diseases as well.

The administration has called for Congress to take action on Zika by July 4. They have warned of dire consequences if Congress fails to act. Many of our colleagues here have raised similar concerns.

The House did its part, and now the Senate needs to do its part. This agree-

ment represents our only chance to put Zika control money to work right now. Again, it contains the exact amount of Zika funding passed by the Senate last month with the vote of every single Senate Democrat.

Keeping Americans safe and healthy should be a top priority for all of us. We know pregnant women are at particular risk. Democrats should work with us to pass Zika control funding again, not block funding for combating this virus. Phony excuses and made up objections to the funding we have already passed will not help create a vaccine or eradicate the threat of Zika.

We also have an opportunity to support our veterans. This agreement substantially increases critical resources to ensure veterans receive benefits and health care they have earned. It will enhance the oversight and accountability at the VA. It will help improve quality of life on military bases for soldiers and their families. It will also advance critical national security projects like missile defense.

The Senate voted overwhelmingly to support ideas like these last month, too. We should now vote to get this critical veterans funding bill down to the President for signature.

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 10:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OPIOID ADDICTION EPIDEMIC

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, the Presiding Officer and I are colleagues from the same State, so she knows as well as I know about the problems we have with opioid addiction, prescription drug abuse throughout our State and all over this country. We have come to a crisis point in this country.

In 2014, 18,893 people died from a prescription opioid overdose. These are legal prescription drugs that are made by outstanding pharmaceutical manufacturers. They are approved by the Food and Drug Administration. They are prescribed to us by the most trusted person outside of our family—our