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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 Eternal God, who rules the raging of the sea, You are our guardian and friend. Place Your arms of protection and wisdom around our lawmakers, shielding them from life's pitfalls and using them for Your glory. Lord, be their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. May they rejoice because of Your mercies, serving You with grateful hearts. Turn the night of their distress into the morning of Your hope, causing them to wait patiently for the unfolding of Your loving providence. May they feel Your everlasting arms beneath them and find peace in Your presence.

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. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

CONGRATULATING THE NKU NORSE MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to start by taking a moment to congratulate the men's basketball team of Northern Kentucky University for an impressive accomplishment.

My home State of Kentucky is without a doubt known for college basket-

ball, and now we have another reason to be proud. With last night's win, the NKU Norse secured the Horizon League championship and earned a ticket to the NCAA Tournament. With their recent entrance into Division I play, this is the first year the Norse have been eligible for a spot in the tournament, and their season of hard work has paid off.

I would like to congratulate the team, Head Coach John Brannen, and the entire program, and I look forward to watching them continue their incredible season.

CONGRESSIONAL REVIEW ACT RESOLUTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act was one of the great triumphs of the last Congress. It represented the most significant education reform in over a decade. It heralded "the largest devolution of federal control to the states in a quarter-century," as the Wall Street Journal put it, empowering parents, teachers, and schools at the expense of Washington bureaucrats. It passed the Senate with wide bipartisan support, 85 to 12; President Obama signed it into law.

Yet just a few months later, his administration set to shift power back from parents and schools to the Washington bureaucracy by regulation. The Obama administration's so-called accountability regulation was written in direct—direct—contradiction to the law that passed Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support and is a prime example of the Executive overreach we in Congress are working to overturn.

Today, however, thanks to the Congressional Review Act, we have the opportunity to move past this overreaching regulation and empower those closest to our kids once again to ensure our schools are held to the highest standards.

We will also have the opportunity to move past another Obama-era regula-

tion that hurts students and those seeking to go into the teaching profession. I am talking about a regulation that allows the Federal Government to insert itself into the way States choose to prepare their teachers for the classroom. States are supposed to be the leaders on core curriculum and decisions on how to prepare teachers to best meet the needs of their students—not Washington bureaucrats. By repealing this regulation, we could help restore that process. Further, this regulation increases administrative burdens that only divert much needed resources and focus away from students.

As the Kentucky Association of Colleges for Teacher Education put it, voting to remove the harmful teacher preparation regulation "will allow Kentucky universities and colleges to continue developing and supporting outstanding teachers who positively impact P-12 children."

"Teacher preparation programs have limited and shrinking resources," the letter said. "[Our] members want to spend those resources on developing exemplary teachers rather than working on compliance regulations that have not been shown to result in better prepared and higher quality teachers."

That is from the Kentucky Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Groups like this know firsthand that more flexibility is the key to improving our schools. They know that those closest to students are best positioned to help our children succeed. They know that the one-size-fits-all education policies of the past are unsustainable for the future. So it is time to move past both of these harmful education regulations.

In particular, I want to recognize Senator SASSE and Senator ALEXANDER, the HELP Committee chairman, for their leadership on these issues. They introduced legislation similar to the House-passed proposals that we will vote on this week to overturn these unfair regulations.

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



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I encourage colleagues to support both CRA resolutions so that we can continue building upon educational policies that put America's students and educators first.

REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, just before the election, CNN ran an article with the following headline. This is CNN: "Is ObamaCare really affordable?" Answer: "Not for the middle class." It was true then, it is true now, and it will continue to get worse unless ObamaCare is repealed and replaced.

In places like my home State of Kentucky, relief cannot come soon enough. Because of ObamaCare, premiums in Kentucky shot up by as much as 47 percent this year. Almost half of the counties in Kentucky have only one option for insurance providers on the ObamaCare exchange. Families are losing their doctors and are being forced into junk plans. The list of broken promises goes on and on.

I have said it before; I will say it again: The status quo is unsustainable. We cannot sit on our hands and do nothing. We must act before the market collapses.

Americans have repeatedly demanded the repeal of ObamaCare, and Republicans are fulfilling our promise to do just that. The bill unveiled in the House this week represents an important step toward that pledge. It will bring much needed relief to families and small businesses. It will give Americans more control over their own healthcare choices. It will help stabilize the marketplace. And just yesterday, Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Tom Price sent a letter expressing the administration's support for it. Here is what he said: "These proposals offer patient-centered solutions that will provide all Americans with access to affordable, quality, healthcare," he wrote. They will also "promote innovation, and offer peace of mind for those with pre-existing conditions," he said.

In the coming weeks, committees in the House will publicly debate this bill. I hope Members will take the time to consider the bill and continue to ask questions.

Once we receive the bill from the House, the Senate will act because here is what we know: ObamaCare is a direct attack on the middle class. It will continue to get worse unless we act to repeal and replace it, and we are determined to keep our promise to the American people to do just that.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. 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.

TRUMPCARE

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, the House Republicans have finally unveiled their healthcare plan after nearly 8 years without a plan of their own.

TrumpCare is finally public, and each hour that goes by brings a new set of concerns and new groups that oppose the bill, from all places along the ideological spectrum. Even a growing number of conservatives are expressing their distaste for the legislation.

The fact of the matter is that TrumpCare is a mess. It will mean higher costs and less care for most Americans. When you look at the details, you can see that TrumpCare amounts to two separate systems of healthcare in America: cheaper healthcare for the rich, more expensive healthcare for everybody else.

Under TrumpCare, if you make more than \$250,000 a year, you will get a huge tax break. The average is \$200,000 a year, because most people are way above that \$250,000. If you are in the middle class, the cost will increase by \$1,500 annually, and by 2020, over \$2,000 a year.

Let me repeat that. If you make over \$250,000, your average tax break is \$200,000. If you are in the middle class, your average increase in costs is \$1,500 up. What kind of plan is that?

Donald Trump has talked about helping working America. The plan he has embraced, TrumpCare, helps the rich and hurts the average American. That is not surprising given all the other things they are doing the same way. This administration continues—and healthcare is part of that—to talk like populists but act like those helping the wealthy special interests time after time.

Let me repeat that. Under TrumpCare, if you make more than \$250,000, you will get a tax break on average of \$200,000 a year. If you are in the middle class, the cost will increase by about \$1,500 annually, and after 2020, by \$2,000 a year.

TrumpCare is a healthcare handout for the wealthiest Americans and fake healthcare for everybody else. Under TrumpCare, if you are a member of the Trump Cabinet—stocked with billionaires—you are going to get a tax break, but if you are 60 years old, on the cusp of retirement but still waiting because you are not yet eligible for Medicare, TrumpCare would allow insurers to charge you more simply because of your age—discrimination against the elderly, against those 50 to 65, who have worked so hard but don't yet have Medicare. That is wrong.

If you are between 55 and 64, the total cost for you will increase \$5,269 a year. Let me repeat that. If you are between 55 and 64, the total cost would increase

by \$5,269 a year. That is only the next 2 years. By 2020, it goes up to \$6,000 a year.

For a working family, they can't afford that. What is this all about? They said it would be better care and cost less. It is worse care and it costs more.

How about this? Under TrumpCare, a wealthy insurance executive making over \$500,000 a year is allowed a tax break. If you are struggling to make it into the middle class with an income of 250 percent below the poverty line, your costs are going to go up by nearly \$3,000 a year, and by 2020, \$4,000 a year—once again, helping the wealthy special interests, in this case insurance executives, and hurting those struggling, climbing the ladder to get into the middle class.

If you are a working mother and you get healthcare from Planned Parenthood, too bad, TrumpCare cuts all Federal funding for Planned Parenthood for a year.

I am wearing my red tie today to honor the Day Without Women. Unfortunately, TrumpCare is the healthcare bill that forgot about women. Women are an essential part of our workforce in America. They ought to be able to go to the doctor or provider of their choice, even if that is Planned Parenthood.

When you look at the fine print of this bill, it has jagged edges. TrumpCare shifts the costs and burdens from the wealthy to the poor, from the insurance executive to the middle-class family.

The more Americans hear about this plan, the less they are going to like it. They were already against repeal before this plan came out. Can you imagine what is going to happen now as they read the details? I believe the Congressional Budget Office, when they score it, will ultimately show America everything America needs to know—how this bill would likely hurt overall coverage numbers and affordability and, at the same time, explode the deficit.

You are getting worse healthcare and increasing the deficit. What kind of combination is that? No wonder the Republican leadership in the House is trying to rush through the bill even without a score. They don't want the American people to see it. I don't think they even want their own Members to have a chance to study it because it is a near certainty that this bill will cause millions to lose insurance as well as blow a gigantic hole in the Federal budget.

In conclusion, it is reckless for Republicans to make Congress vote on this mess of a plan before we have those answers from CBO. Simply put, TrumpCare is a mess for the American people. We Democrats will fight it tooth and nail.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.