

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, MAY 9,
2017

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Tuesday, May 9; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; further, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Gottlieb nomination, with the time until 12:30 p.m. equally divided in the usual form; further, that the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly conference meetings; finally, that all time during recess, adjournment, morning business, and leader remarks count postcloture on the Gottlieb nomination.

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

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senators Thune and Sullivan.

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

The Senator from South Dakota.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, it has been said that nothing is certain but death and taxes. To that, nowadays, we might add bad news about ObamaCare because if there is one thing we can count on, it is bad news about this fatally flawed law—high premium costs, huge deductibles, customers losing health plans, customers losing doctors, fewer choices, failed co-ops, unraveling exchanges, and I could go on.

There is no question that our healthcare system had problems before ObamaCare was passed. Clearly reforms were needed. But as the past 7 years have made clear, ObamaCare was not the answer, and this law is rapidly collapsing under its own weight.

Here is a sampling of recent ObamaCare headlines.

This is from Bloomberg: “Thousands of ObamaCare Customers Left Without Options as Insurers Bolt.”

This is from CNBC: “Aetna will exit ObamaCare markets in Virginia in 2018, citing expected losses on individual plans this year.”

From the Arizona Republic: “Consumers seek relief as ‘ObamaCare’ rates rise.”

From USA TODAY: “Iowa may be without individual health plans if insurer pulls out.”

In February of this year, Mark Bertolini, the CEO of health insurance company Aetna, asserted that

ObamaCare is in a death spiral. There is good reason to think he is right in that significant losses are driving health insurers out of the exchanges. Last year, Aetna announced that it would withdraw from 11 of the 15 States in which it offered exchange plans, Humana said it would exit several exchanges, and mega-insurer UnitedHealthcare announced that it was pulling out of most of the 34 States in which it offered exchange plans.

Roughly one-third of U.S. counties have just one choice of health insurer on their exchanges for 2017, and the situation looks likely to get much worse next year. In February, health insurer Humana announced its decision to completely withdraw from the ObamaCare exchanges for 2018. Aetna is pulling out of two of the four States in which it will still offer plans in 2018, and it has indicated it may pull back even further. Wellmark is leaving Iowa. UnitedHealthcare is leaving Virginia. Other insurers are contemplating similar exits.

The New York Times reported in March that “ObamaCare Choices Could Go from One to Zero in Some Areas.”

“Parts of the country,” the Times notes, “are in jeopardy of not having an insurer offering ObamaCare plans next year.” The quote goes on: “Many counties already have just one insurer offering health plans in the ObamaCare marketplaces, and some of those solo insurers are showing signs that they are eyeing the exits.” That is from the New York Times.

What that means is that tens of thousands of Americans may have ObamaCare subsidies next year without insurance plans to spend them on. As my colleague Senator ALEXANDER, who does so much good work on healthcare as the chairman of the HELP Committee, has said, it is like having a bus ticket in a town with no buses running.

While Americans’ health insurance options dwindle, their premiums are rising. Midlevel ObamaCare plans saw an average 25 percent premium increase for 2017—a 25-percent increase for just 1 year, which is on top of years of premium increases under ObamaCare. And what are Americans with those plans paying for? The odds are good that they are paying for plans with limited choices of doctors and hospitals. A 2016 study of 18 States and Washington, DC, found that 75 percent of their exchange plans for 2017 would likely be health maintenance organizations or exclusive provider organizations—two types of plans that tend to offer narrow provider networks.

In his joint address to Congress at the end of February, the President said of ObamaCare: “Action is not a choice—it is a necessity.” He is exactly right. ObamaCare is collapsing, and the status quo is not sustainable. Unless we want millions of Americans to face healthcare disaster, we have to repeal and replace this law.

Last week, the House passed an ObamaCare repeal and replacement

bill. This legislation repeals ObamaCare’s tax increases, penalties, and mandates and starts the process of restoring control of healthcare to States and individuals.

The House has made a good start, and I am looking forward to getting to build on their bill here in the Senate. I want to make sure we amend the House tax credit to ensure that assistance is better targeted to those who need it the most. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues—Chairman ALEXANDER, Chairman HATCH on the Finance Committee, Policy Committee Chairman BARRASSO, and many others—to make sure we have a bill that will provide the American people with real relief.

ObamaCare was founded on the premise that government knows best when it comes to individuals’ healthcare and that a one-size-fits-all solution is somehow the best solution, but we know now that is not the case. Individuals know best, and their doctors know best. Government does not know best. It is absurd to think that a massive Federal bureaucracy can hand down one comprehensive solution that will somehow meet the needs of hundreds of millions of individuals in this country. We need to move control from Washington and give it back to the States so they can embrace healthcare innovations and solutions that work for the individuals and the particular needs in their States.

Republicans are working to implement the kind of healthcare reform the American people are looking for—more affordable, more personal, more flexible, and less bureaucratic. Americans have had enough of ObamaCare’s problems. They are ready for healthcare reform that actually works, and we are committed to giving it to them.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MINISTERIAL OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor to speak on a couple of important foreign policy issues.

I begin by talking about what is going to be happening in Alaska in just a few days. Really, the eyes of the world are going to be on Fairbanks, AK—the Golden Heart City in the middle of Alaska’s interior—for a major foreign policy event. The United States will be hosting the Ministerial of the Arctic Council and will be passing the chairmanship of that Council over to Finland.

The Arctic Council is an important foreign policy body. It consists of the

Arctic countries of the world—the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia. In just a few days, all of the Foreign Ministers of all of those countries will be in Fairbanks, AK.

This is not the first time in recent memory that the Golden Heart City of Fairbanks has been on the world stage in its hosting of a critical foreign policy meeting of world leaders. In fact, almost exactly 33 years ago to this very day in 1984, on May 2, in Fairbanks, AK, Pope John Paul II and President Ronald Reagan met in Fairbanks. It was a great meeting. You could see the chemistry between these two great world leaders. Right now, some historians believe that it was at the Fairbanks meeting of these two great leaders when the Pope and the great President Ronald Reagan laid out their vision and plans to vanquish global communism.

America is an Arctic nation because of Alaska, and we have very significant, strategic interests in the Arctic—economic opportunity, transportation routes, sea routes that are now beginning to open because of receding sea ice, responsible natural resource development—enormous natural resources of all types, including oil and gas—protecting the environment, and respecting the culture and way of life of the peoples in the Arctic, particularly of the indigenous peoples, including their subsistence hunting rights. After a substantial discussion I had just a couple of days ago with Secretary of State Tillerson about the upcoming ministerial, I am confident this ministerial will focus on these important issues.

In going forward, it is important to remember that right now in the Arctic, there are real people with real lives, real families, and real needs who live in this part of the world. They are my constituents. These are the people I represent. They are resilient, tough, hard-working, and very generous. The world is going to see them this week in their hosting of the Ministerial of the Arctic Council in Fairbanks. I thank all of them for their hard work in preparing for this event, and I thank Secretary Tillerson for rallying all of the world's Arctic Foreign Ministers to Alaska in the next few days. I will be there to support this very important event.

U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, in addition to the Ministerial of the Arctic Council, as I mentioned, the eyes of the world are on this—clearly on the important issue of U.S.-China relations.

We had the recent President Trump and President Xi meeting in Mar-a-Lago, and this week Madam Fu Ying, who is one of the top Chinese Foreign Minister officials, is going to be in Washington to meet with a number of us. It is something I believe this body needs to focus on more, this important issue of U.S.-China relations.

Our country faces a lot of significant national security challenges around the world. In my view, however, the most significant long-term, geostrategic challenge we face is not ISIS, not al-Qaida, not Iran, Russia, or even North Korea. Those are very serious and immediate concerns, but the most significant long-term challenge we face as a country is the rise of China and the threat it poses to the post-World War II international order, led by the United States.

This has been made clear in a series of writings by the well-known and respected Harvard professor, Graham Allison, beginning 2 years ago in 2015. In an article in *The Atlantic* magazine, he started to write about what he called the Thucydides Trap. Professor Allison is set to publish a book this month on the same topic. In the book, he writes that the defining question of global order for this generation is whether China and the United States can escape the Thucydides Trap.

I have had the privilege over the last few weeks to review the book, and I believe it will be a “must read” for those who care about the long-term security and economic interests of the United States.

What is he talking about? What is this issue, the Thucydides Trap? Why has Professor Allison been so focused on writing about it and addressing it?

Thucydides is the famed Greek historian. Many actually view him as the father of all history, who wrote an epic historical work about the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. In that 30-year war, which devastated both of those Greek city states, the rising power, Athens, challenged the established order of the ruling power, Sparta.

The “Thucydides Trap” is the term Professor Allison describes when he talks about the strategic dilemma and danger that occurs when a rising power threatens a ruling power in the international system. As his new book explores, in the last 500 years when this has happened—because it does happen a lot in history, and he reviews the last 500 years—of the 16 times this has happened in the last 500 years, 12 of those times ended up having extensive war between the two countries. That is not good. Those are not great odds. Indeed, in his *Atlantic* article just 2 years ago, he concludes by saying that because of the seismic shifts and friction that is occurring between China and the United States, war between these two countries is more likely than is recognized at the moment. That is not good news.

There is some good news on this because it is not just Harvard professors who are talking about this, such as Professor Allison, who is talking about the Thucydides Trap; so, too, are the Chinese.

I, with a number of Senators, had the opportunity a few years ago, when President Xi Jinping visited the Senate, to meet with him. I went down to

the Senate floor to talk about some of the issues, some of the ways in which we need to think about the long-term challenges with regard to the United States and China. The article in the *Atlantic* had just come out, so I talked about it, the Thucydides Trap, and how we need to avoid it. Then I literally walked into a meeting with the President of China and some other U.S. Senators. In his opening remarks, he talked about the Thucydides Trap and how China and the United States need to avoid it. So that is the good news. At least on that issue, we are on the same sheet of paper.

There is other good news, and that is that this body—the U.S. Senate—in many ways, is the ideal place where we should be discussing, debating, developing, and, yes, implementing the kind of long-term strategic policies we need to address as a country and develop with regard to the rise of China.

In “*The Federalist Papers*,” Madison talks about one of the important roles of the Senate, with its Members having 6-year terms and having significant powers in foreign policy, is to be able to ensure stable and lasting relations between the United States and other nations. Indeed, perhaps more than any other part of the Federal Government, this institution—the U.S. Senate—has the opportunity to act and think and debate and implement policies—strategic policies—for the long-term interests of our Nation.

Contrary to some conventional wisdom, where we only hear about American “short-termism,” in terms of long-term foreign policy issues, our country actually has a history of developing long-term strategic frameworks that address significant challenges to America's security and economic interests. Just think of the Monroe Doctrine in the 19th century or George Kennan's strategy of containment in the 20th century, dealing with the threat posed by the rise of the Soviet Union and global communism. These were long-term, successful strategies for the United States in response to significant challenges facing our Nation, in part developed here in the U.S. Senate and implemented here, and we can do it with regard to the challenges we are facing now with China.

So as we work with the executive branch on developing an American strategy to address the rise of China and to avoid the Thucydides Trap, how should we be thinking about it? What principles should we be focused on? Let me suggest four that we should be focused on as a nation.

First, we must recognize and emphasize that the United States is an Asia-Pacific power; second, we must strengthen, deepen, and expand our comprehensive alliances with the Asia-Pacific region; third, we must engage with, not try to contain, China; and fourth—and perhaps most importantly—we must renew America's strength, particularly the economic power and vitality of this great Nation.