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Senate

The Senate met at 4 p.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.

Almighty God, great is Your faithfulness. We find strength in difficult times because our thoughts about Your mercy and providential care sustain us.

Lord, guide our lawmakers to make You their sure foundation. From this foundation, may they gain strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Help them to base their hope on Your exceedingly great and precious promises, as You do for them more than they can ask or imagine. May they have such an inner sense of Your presence that they will desire to commune with You throughout this day.

And, Lord, bless our incoming summer page class. May these young people increase intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually.

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 (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

SANCTIONS LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, last week, the Senate voted on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis to advance the Iran sanctions bill currently before

us, and we will take another vote today to proceed to that bill. I want to thank the chairs and ranking members of the Foreign Relations and Banking Committees—Chairman CORKER, Chairman CRAPO—for their efforts to craft additional, much-needed sanctions on Russia as well. I would encourage Members of both parties to keep working together so we can pass the critical Iran sanctions legislation very soon.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, 7 years ago, Senate Democrats and the Obama administration forced ObamaCare on the American people, but ObamaCare never actually lived up to what Democrats had promised. From rising costs to shrinking choices and collapsing markets, the problems associated with ObamaCare grew across the country as the years passed, leaving the American people to literally pick up the pieces.

ObamaCare's years-long legacy of failure will only get worse unless we act. Consider the latest examples of how it is threatening to hurt more Americans. In Washington State, people in two counties just learned they could have zero insurance options under ObamaCare plans next year. Thousands of Ohioans across 18 counties just found out they could also be left with absolutely zero choices under ObamaCare. Iowans could be left without a single major insurance option to choose from statewide as well. And in Nebraska, nearly 100,000 residents learned they could be left with just one insurance option on the ObamaCare exchanges next year or potentially none at all.

At the rate things are going, Americans living in nearly half of all counties could be left with just one or even zero insurance options under ObamaCare next year. Think about that. Millions of people in nearly half of all the counties across America are

at risk of having no options or a single option of insurance plans because of ObamaCare.

Worse still, as choices continue to drop, premiums keep rising, often by double digits, meaning those lucky enough to have a choice under ObamaCare may not even be able to afford the plan they select. It is a fact underlined by reports released just this afternoon by the Centers for Medicare and Medicare Services, or CMS. These reports show that hundreds of thousands of Americans who selected an ObamaCare plan ended up canceling their coverage after just a few weeks, and the most common reason they cited for doing so was because it was too expensive. Is it any wonder? As another groundbreaking report revealed last month, premiums have on average doubled—and in some cases even tripled—in the vast majority of States on the Federal exchange since ObamaCare's full enactment in 2013.

You would think the Democrats would want to work with us now to clean up the years-long mess they created. Instead, they are defending the status quo or trying to shift the blame for the failures of their own law—a law Democrats designed, a law Democrats forced on our country, a law Democrats defended year after year as it hurt Americans over and over. There is just no serious way to try to spin these years of ObamaCare failures at this late date.

It is also clear that the status quo is simply unsustainable and demands action. That is why Republican Senators have been working hard on solutions that could help rescue American families who have been hurt by this law's failures. Members will keep working this week because bringing relief from ObamaCare may not be easy, but it is necessary. We are going to keep working hard to get this done.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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



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The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam 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.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE PULSE NIGHTCLUB MASS SHOOTING IN ORLANDO

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, before I begin, I would like to take a moment to remember the victims of the shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando that occurred 1 year ago today. It was the deadliest shooting by a single gunman in our Nation's history. Forty-nine Americans died that night, and 53 more were injured. They were children, parents, sisters, brothers, and friends. They went out that night to celebrate with their friends and instead came face to face with a soul twisted by an inexplicable hate.

The best way I can see to honor their memory is to honor them with action. We should redouble our efforts to make this country safer from the scourge of terrorism and gun violence to ensure that our schools and our churches, our theaters and our nightclubs are safe places where all Americans can be who they truly are. Let that be our mission as we remember the 49 victims of the Orlando attack and keep their families in our prayers.

SANCTIONS LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, on Russia sanctions, soon we will move to a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to the Iran sanctions legislation. The two leaders, Chairmen CORKER and CRAPO, the two ranking members, BROWN and CARDIN, continue to negotiate a package of strong Russia sanctions that can be offered as an amendment to the bill. I am hopeful we can come to an agreement soon, one that at the very least includes legislation put forward by Senators GRAHAM and CARDIN that would establish a process for Congress to review any Russia-related sanctions relief. Senator MCCAIN, along with Senator CARDIN, has also submitted an amendment for tough, new sanctions, which I very much support. Democrats feel strongly that Russia sanctions should move alongside Iran sanctions, and we are prepared to do what we can to make sure we get a vote on a good amendment and hopefully a bipartisan one.

SPECIAL COUNSEL MUELLER

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, as we continue to grapple with last week's

testimony from former Director Comey, it seems the new strategy by some on the right is now to question the credibility of Special Counsel Mueller. Already, former Speaker Gingrich and others have said negative things about Mueller just weeks after praising his selection. They know that Mr. Mueller is the man now responsible for following up on Mr. Comey's testimony so the hard right is trying to discredit him in advance. They know they can't debate the facts or the issues or defend the actions of the White House on the merits, so what do they do? They attack the referee and try to besmirch the reputation of someone like Mr. Mueller.

Mr. Mueller is a man of integrity. That is agreed to by just about everybody. He has devoted his entire career to his country. He came out of private life to do a job on behalf of his country and be right down the middle. Even Attorney General Jeff Sessions has praised Mr. Mueller for his service and credibility, saying his "integrity is undoubted," as is his "experience and love of country." Those are Jeff Sessions' words. Now the political right has pulled out their partisan knives to try and defame his reputation.

It is a shameful, shameful ploy. The right must be afraid of what Mr. Mueller is going to find. I would ask Speaker Gingrich a question. Is he afraid of what Mr. Mueller is going to find out? Is that why he is attacking his reputation? The baseless attacks on former Director Mueller ring hollow. Former Director Mueller has been hailed as a paragon of public service by people of all political stripes. This country comes to a low point when that kind of attack is issued.

Despite what Speaker Gingrich may try to imply, we should have every confidence that he will investigate the matters at hand with integrity and thoroughness.

I can tell you one thing, the little bit I know about him, Speaker Gingrich's attack and attacks like that will not do a thing to deter Director Mueller from finding out the truth.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Finally, Madam President, a word on healthcare.

The Republicans continue to work on their healthcare bill behind closed doors, and now it seems they are looking for a vote on a final bill before the July 4th recess.

To all of America, this should be a red alert. This is not a drill. This is a red alert. In a very short time, maybe only 2 weeks, the Republican majority may try to jam through a healthcare bill that no one in America has seen—no committee hearings, no public debate. According to some reports, the Republicans will not publicly release the text until the very last moment.

What Senate Republicans are doing on healthcare is one of the most outrageous examples of legislative malpractice in decades.

Senator MCCONNELL, who believes in regular order, ought to think long and hard before he does this because it will not go down as a fine moment in history for him, for his party, or for the Senate. This is the party that chanted "Read the bill, read the bill," when ObamaCare was being debated, and now they will not even show the bill.

Democrats spent over a year on the Affordable Care Act, the ObamaCare bill, with multiple committee hearings. We actually accepted dozens of Republican amendments. Show us the bill. Senators GRASSLEY, HATCH, and others had amendments that were added to the bill. Show us the bill so we have the same opportunity.

Why would the majority so starkly depart from the normal legislative procedure? Why would they seek to pass in the dark of night a bill that affects one-sixth of the economy, millions of people's lives?

Leader MCCONNELL used to stress the importance of regular order in the Senate. Why is he proceeding with the Republican healthcare bill in the most irregular way? I know why. It is because Republicans don't want the American people to see the bill. They are so ashamed of their healthcare plan, they want to pass it in the dead of night, with no hearings, no amendments—rushing it through.

It is not a bill they are proud of. If they were proud of the bill, they would say: Let's debate it. They are ashamed of the bill. They know they have the hard right on their backs saying: You have to do something. But at least have the decency, the honor, a little bit of courage to put the bill out there and let us debate it and let us amend it.

The Republicans don't want the American people to know their bill will likely gut Medicaid to finance a massive tax break for the wealthiest of Americans, hurt the healthcare of average Americans, middle-class Americans, elderly Americans, those who abuse opioids, so they can have a big tax break for people whose income is above \$200,000 a year.

The Republicans don't want the American people to know their bill will make older and sicker Americans pay more for less coverage. Someone 63 or 64 could see their premiums go up three, four, five times, while millionaires and billionaires get a break on their taxes. If it were my bill, I would be ashamed of it too. Thank God it is not.

Republicans don't want the American people to know their bill will cause their costs to go up, their care to go down, while leaving millions of Americans without health insurance. Why are Republicans working so hard in secret for a bill they are clearly not proud of? Because the ideologues on the hard right are pushing them to just repeal and give a tax break to the rich.

It is because they repeated the political slogan "repeal and replace" to their base for 7 years without coming