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Senate

The Senate met at 9:31 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Rabbi Shea Harlig, spiritual leader of Chabad of Southern Nevada.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Almighty G-d, the Members of this prestigious body, the U.S. Senate, convene here in the spirit of one of the seven Noahide Laws which were set forth by You as an eternal universal code of ethics for all mankind; that every society be governed by just laws which shall be based in the recognition of You, O G-d, as the Sovereign Ruler of all peoples and all nations. We, the citizens of this blessed country, proudly proclaim this recognition and our commitment to justice in our Pledge of Allegiance—"One Nation, under G-d, with liberty and justice for all."

Grant us, Almighty G-d, that those assembled here today be aware of Your presence and conduct their deliberations accordingly. Bless them with good health, wisdom, compassion, and good fellowship.

On this 25th day of June, 2009, which corresponds to the third day of the Hebrew month of Tammuz, we are 15 years—to the day—from the passing of our esteemed spiritual leader, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of blessed memory, who consistently extolled the virtues of this great land as a "Nation of Kindness."

I beseech You, Almighty G-d, to grant renewed strength and fortitude to all who protect, preserve, and help further these ideals so essential to the dignity of the human spirit. Please grant that our beloved Rebbe's vision of a world of peace and tranquility—free of war, hatred, and strife—be realized speedily in our days.

G-d bless this hallowed body. G-d bless our troops who stand in defense of this great land. G-d bless the United States of America.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 25, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, a Senator from the State of New York, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

WELCOMING RABBI HARLIG

Mr. REID. Madam President, with the Senate Chaplain, Admiral Black, standing by, we all listened to a prayer from one of our Jewish brethren in Las

Vegas, Rabbi Harlig. I am sure the Chaplain was pleased with the prayer. Those of us in attendance were pleased with the prayer. It was a meaningful, wonderful prayer for our Senate and the country. So I welcome Rabbi Harlig and thank him for helping us open the Senate with the beautiful prayer he uttered.

Rabbi Harlig and his wife Dina breathed new life into the southern Nevada Jewish community when they opened a Chabad center in their living room in 1990. It has grown dramatically since then, and successfully grown, and there are now five such community centers in southern Nevada. The organization Rabbi Harlig founded has taught so many children and adults and has done so many mitzvot—or good deeds—for so many people.

As Rabbi Harlig mentioned in his invocation, today is significant for the Chabad community because it is the day of the passing of The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, one of the great Jewish leaders of our time.

So thank you, Rabbi Harlig, for joining us in the Senate today.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, there will be a period of morning business for up to 1 hour. Senators will be permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Republicans will control the first 30 minutes and the majority will control the final 30 minutes.

Following morning business, the Senate will turn to executive session to resume debate on the nomination of Harold Koh to be Legal Adviser to the Department of State. We hope some of the postcloture debate time will be yielded back and we are able to vote on the nomination as early as possible. If we are unable to yield any time, the vote will occur at about 5:30 this evening.

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



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We are also working on an agreement to consider the Legislative Branch appropriations bill. Senators will be notified when votes are scheduled or agreements are reached.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1344

Mr. REID. Madam President, it is my understanding that S. 1344 is at the desk and due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1344) to temporarily protect the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to this legislation at this time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The bill will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, Americans are insisting that Members of Congress work together on reforms which make health care more affordable and accessible but which don't force people off their current plans or add to an already staggering national debt. Yet the Democratic plan now being rushed through the Senate would do just the opposite. It would force millions of Americans off their health care plans and bury our Nation deeper and deeper in debt.

Democrats have repeatedly and incorrectly declared that under their plan Americans who like their current insurance will be able to keep it. This morning, I would like to explain why that is, unfortunately, not the case.

Just last week, the independent Congressional Budget Office said that the incomplete Democratic HELP Committee proposal would cause 10 million Americans who currently have employer-based insurance to lose that coverage. Let me repeat that. Before the Democratic bill is even complete, we know that it will cause 10 million Americans to lose their health care insurance they currently have. But 10 million would just be the beginning. One key section missing from the HELP bill is the government plan Democrats say they want, and according to one study, 119 million Americans could lose their private coverage if a government plan is enacted.

Here is why this so-called government option would lead to Americans losing their current plans and why it would soon become the only option.

First, a government-run plan would have unlimited access to taxpayer dol-

lars and could operate at a loss indefinitely, which could force private insurers out of business. Private health plans simply wouldn't be able to compete, and millions of Americans could be forced off their health plans whether they like it or not. At that point, people would have to enroll in a government plan or any surviving private health care plan, if they could afford it. I say if they could afford it because another unintended consequence of creating a government plan is that it would cause rates for private health plans to skyrocket, leaving most Americans unable to afford them. They would simply be too expensive. Right now, government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid pay hospitals and doctors less than private insurers do, and hospitals and doctors then pass on the difference to private insurers. If a government plan was established, doctors and hospitals would shift more of their cost onto private health plans, making them even more expensive and making it even harder for them to compete with a government plan. In the end, only the wealthiest would be able to afford private health plans and the kind of care most Americans currently enjoy.

Some say safeguards could be put in place to create a level playing field. But the very nature of the government running a health insurance plan in the private market is the problem. Any safeguard could easily be eliminated, and one look at the government takeovers in the insurance and auto industries shows that when the government is involved, there is really no such thing as a fair playing field.

Let's take a look at the auto industry. The government has given billions of dollars to the financing arms of Chrysler and GM, allowing them to offer interest rates that Ford, a major manufacturer in my State, and other private companies struggle to compete with. This means the only major U.S. automaker that did not take a bailout is at a big disadvantage as it struggles to compete with government-run auto companies. When Ford needed money, it had to raise it in the open market and pay an 8-percent interest rate. But GM could just call up the Treasury—just call up the Treasury—and have them wire over some taxpayer money. No company can compete with that.

So contrary to their claims, if the Democratic plan is enacted, millions of Americans will lose the health insurance they have and that they like. Again, that is not what I say, it is what the Congressional Budget Office says, it is what independent analysts say, it is what America's doctors say, and it is even what President Obama now says. The President now acknowledges that under a government plan, some people might be shifted off of their current insurance.

This isn't the only Democratic claim about health care that is increasingly suspect. Democrats have also promised their health plan will be paid for and

won't add to the deficit. But the facts just don't add up. Right now, just one section—one section—of the HELP bill would spend \$1.3 trillion. It is not plausible that this won't add to the deficit, which has already swelled by more than \$1 trillion thanks to bailouts and the stimulus money.

So when Democrats predict their health care plan won't cause people to lose their current insurance and won't add to the national debt, Americans are certainly right to be skeptical. They made the same kinds of predictions about the stimulus bill. They said the money wouldn't be wasted. Yet we are already hearing about a \$3.4 million turtle tunnel and \$40,000 to pay the salary of someone whose job is to apply for more stimulus money. The administration also predicted that if we passed the stimulus, the unemployment rate wouldn't rise above 8 percent. Now they say unemployment will likely rise to 10 percent.

Americans, indeed, want health care reform, but they do not want a so-called reform that takes away the care they have and stands in the way of their relationships with their doctors or that buries their children and grandchildren deeper and deeper in debt. I think we can do a lot better than that.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. REID. Madam President, one-sixth of every dollar that is spent in America goes to health care today. If we do nothing with health care, by the year 2020 it will be 35 percent. Think about that. That is just 11 years from now. So it is obvious that crushing health care costs leave many families uninsured and underinsured and drive far too many into bankruptcy or foreclosure.

When we discuss our country's health care crisis with our constituents next week when we go home for the July 4th break and when we debate it with our colleagues in this Chamber in the coming months, they will talk about how best to relieve that burden. There are a lot of good ideas, but one of the best ways to bring down the cost is by preventing disease and illness in the first place.

Prevention and wellness are based on a simple premise: The less you get sick today, the less you will have to pay tomorrow. Part of reforming health care means making it easier for Americans to make healthier choices and live healthier lives. We are far from that goal and need to do a better job of making that possible. More than half of all Americans live with at least one chronic condition, and those conditions cause 70 percent of all deaths in America. So doesn't it make sense to stop them before they start? The obvious answer is yes.

It is not just a health issue, it is also an economic issue. Prevention isn't