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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 Lord, our God, merciful and holy, clear away from our lives anything that would hinder Your providential purposes.

Enter the hearts of our Senators, guiding them with Your truth. May Your truth fill them with hope and faith even when they seem surrounded by exasperating experiences. Supply them with what they need to persist and endure in spite of obstacles. Lord, provide them with creative thoughts and energy to accomplish Your will on Earth, even as it is done in Heaven. Give them the integrity to say what they mean and mean what they say.

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. JOHNSON). The majority leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, ObamaCare is a direct attack on the middle class of our country. It is a partisan law that puts ideology before people, that hurts many of the very Americans it was supposed to help. It resulted in millions of cancellation no-

tices for hard-working Americans who had plans they liked and who had done nothing wrong. It raised premiums, it raised copays, and it raised deductibles and taxes for Americans who were already struggling. It restricted choice and access to doctors and hospitals for patients in need.

We see the pain and the hurt of this law all across the country. We see it where we live. In my home State of Kentucky, health costs have spiked. ObamaCare first caused tens of thousands of Kentuckians to lose the health care plans they were promised they could keep during the first year of implementation, then victimized 50,000 more when the Commonwealth's much-vaunted ObamaCare co-op completely collapsed. ObamaCare has also contributed to Kentucky hospitals being forced to cut jobs, reduce wages, and even shut down altogether.

Some in Washington may have cheered when a Democratic administration in Frankfort poured one-quarter of a billion dollars of tax money into Kentucky's ObamaCare exchange or when our Democratic Governor confidently declared it an "undisputed fact"—this is what he said: an "undisputed fact"—that ObamaCare's Medicare expansion had added 12,000 jobs to Kentucky's economy. But like so much of ObamaCare, it was just another broken promise. Those jobs numbers were not an undisputed fact at all; they were just projections, and they failed to ever materialize. Health care jobs have actually declined in Kentucky. They did not go up; they declined.

Today, few of those ObamaCare cheerleaders are cheering anymore. Nearly 80 percent of Kentucky's enrollees were simply shoehorned into an already-broken Medicaid system, and many of the remaining 20 percent found themselves stuck with unaffordable ObamaCare coverage.

Listen to what this mom from Breckinridge County wrote to say:

My family is being pushed out of the middle class by the Obamacare law. How can we

pay almost \$1,200 a month on health insurance?

Listen to what this father of two boys from Owensboro wrote to tell me:

Before the Affordable Care Act, we paid around \$100 bi-weekly for the family plan. That has now increased to \$235 during the same timeframe. It seems these days there is no incentive to work. We are punished for working hard and trying to provide for our children while others are encouraged to not further themselves because if they do they would be in our particular situation. What happened to being rewarded for working hard in America? What happened to the American dream?

This Kentucky dad is not the only one wondering this; Americans across the country continue to demand a better way forward. Americans made that clear last November. Kentuckians made that doubly clear again last month.

This is simply the reality. Democrats cannot deny it. They cannot deny it. They can try to deny it. Democrats can again dismiss Americans' real-life experience as lies. Democrats can continue to lecture Americans about their supposed inability to understand just how great ObamaCare has been for them. But Americans are intimately familiar with the painful reality of ObamaCare.

Americans want a fresh start. Americans want to see Washington build a bridge away from ObamaCare and toward better care for them. That is what the bill before us would do. It is something every Senator should support, Republicans and Democrats alike. Democrats may have forced this law on the middle class. Democrats may own the pain they have caused across the country, especially in States like Kentucky. But it is not too late for our Democratic colleagues to work with us to build a bridge to better care. This is their chance and President Obama's chance to begin to make amends for the pain and the hurt they have caused.

For all of the broken promises, for all of the higher costs, for all of the failures, this is America's chance to turn

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



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