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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.

God of grace and glory, shine Your light on our dark paths. Teach us to not lean solely on our understanding but to look to You to direct us on life's journey. May we not limit ourselves by our anxieties, but by releasing the power of fervent prayer discover that Your peace will guard our hearts.

Surround our lawmakers with the shield of Your Divine favor, preparing them for whatever the days may bring. Infuse them with the confidence that comes from knowing that their times are in Your hands. Lift us all above the clouds of care and fear into the bright sunshine of Your great mercy and might.

And, Lord, comfort each person who has felt anguish from the Dallas tragedy. Lord, bring healing to our land.

We pray in Your merciful 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.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 1270

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1270) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to repeal the amendments made by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act which disqualify expenses for over-the-counter drugs under health savings accounts and health flexible spending arrangements.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

LEGISLATION BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, we have recently made progress on issues of importance to the American people. We have also seen some very regrettable decisions from our colleagues across the aisle. This week offers the opportunity for all of us and for our country to move forward. Every Senator will have a chance to advance important solutions on behalf of the American people this week, and some colleagues will have a chance to reconsider partisan mistakes that hurt our country. So let me explain.

This week, Democrats can reconsider their decision to block funding for the men and women serving and protecting

us overseas. These Americans selflessly and voluntarily put themselves in harm's way to help keep our country safe. They do not ask for much in return. What they do not deserve is for Democrats to filibuster the bill that supports them as part of some partisan political gain.

At a time when we face an array of terror threats around the globe, we cannot afford to play politics with the men and women serving and protecting us overseas. The bill Democrats are now filibustering respects the budget caps, was reported out of committee at the earliest point in more than a decade, and earned the support of every single Democrat in committee.

The top Democrat on the Defense Subcommittee said it "takes a responsible approach to protecting our country . . . [that honors] the bipartisan budget deal in place." That was the top Democrat on the Defense Subcommittee, and he warned colleagues not to "take chances when it comes to funding the men and women serving in forward positions."

Well, he was certainly right. There is no excuse for Democrats to continue blocking this bill. They will have another chance to make the right decision later this week.

This week, Democrats can reconsider their decision to block funding to fight Zika. Either Democrats believe Zika is a crisis that requires immediate action or they do not. Either Democrats think protecting pregnant women and babies from Zika today is more important or they think holding out for an earmark for their favorite partisan special interest group is more important.

Even though the administration has acknowledged they haven't spent the anti-Zika money already available to them, Republicans believe we ought to pass this bill now because this is indeed an emergency. Our friends across the aisle will have to decide if they feel the same way.

I would remind colleagues the rules don't allow for a conference report to

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



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