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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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.

Eternal God, our sustainer, You know the mistakes and wrongs we sometimes do. We are sometimes selfish, stubborn, and unkind. Send Your Spirit to empower us to live worthy of Your great Name.

Lord, guide our Senators as they confront the struggles of our times, bringing them confident assurance that Your purposes will prevail. In the hectic pace of their living, help them to slow down long enough to hear Your still, small voice of wisdom. Eviscerate the tensions that pull them apart and keep them from being whole.

Lord, You know us better than we know ourselves, so have Your way in our world.

We pray in Your Holy 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 MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Republican leader is on his way.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, days before ObamaCare passed the Senate in 2009, the senior Senator from New York predicted that Americans would come around soon on the unpopular bill his party was trying to force through the Senate. "The reason people are negative is not the substance of the bill," he mused, "but the fears that the opponents have laid out. When those fears don't materialize, and people see the good in the bill, the numbers are going to go up."

Today, years later, one need only read the headlines to see just how wrong that prediction was. "One-third of the US won't have a choice between Obamacare plans in 2017." Other headlines:

"Frustration mounts over ObamaCare co-op failures."

"Insurers propose massive increase in individual health insurance rates."

Here is the latest headline my constituents read just recently: "Get ready to pay more for health insurance in Kentucky."

These headlines tell a story of a failing, partisan law and its continuing assault on the middle class. When Republicans warned of predictable consequences like these, Democrats waved off our concerns and forced their partisan law through anyway—with the middle class forced to bear the consequences ever since.

It is time Democrats started to finally listen, and that is why last week Senators came to the floor to share the heartbreaking stories of how ObamaCare continues to hurt their constituents and impact their States.

Senator CAPITO called ObamaCare "nothing short of devastating" in her home State of West Virginia. "Working families," she said, "are being faced with skyrocketing premiums, copays, and deductibles."

Senator ISAKSON warned that "the numbers do not lie" in Georgia. "ObamaCare," he said, "is forcing insurance carriers to leave the market, eliminating competition and choice, all . . . while placing the burden of higher costs on the backs of working taxpayers in this country."

Senator McCAIN explained how "Americans have been hit by broken promise after broken promise and met with higher costs, fewer choices, and poor quality of care" and noted that his home State of Arizona "has become ground zero for the collapse of Obamacare."

Just last month, the Obama administration told Americans not to worry about rising costs because they could shop around to find the best plan and save money on health insurance, but many Americans in places like Ohio are "going to be severely restricted" when it comes to choosing an insurer next year, as the State's director of insurance pointed out. In fact, 19 of Ohio's counties are set to have just a single insurer in the exchange and another 28 counties will have only 2 options. Restrictions like these mean families could lose access to doctors they know and trust, face higher premiums, more out-of-pocket expenses, and have fewer options to shop around for more affordable coverage or plans to meet their changing needs.

One self-employed Ohioan summarized the pinch facing so many across the country. She said: "They fine you if you don't have insurance, and then they take your options away." That is what she said after learning she would lose her plan. Her frustration is one felt across Ohio and across America.

More than 2 million people could be forced to find a new plan next year. A

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



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