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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon 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 Spirit, our Counselor and Guide, give us the faith to believe in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness. Today, teach our lawmakers to do things Your way, embracing Your precepts and walking in Your path. Remind them that the narrow and difficult road eventually leads to abundant living. As You teach them to live abundantly, replace their fears with faith, their confusion with clarity, and their discouragement with optimism. Lord, remind them that no weapon formed against them will be able to prosper. Give them a strong faith in the efficacy of prayer, as they continue to commune with You throughout this day. May Your heavenly peace, which transcends human understanding, guard their hearts and minds today and always.

We pray in Your sacred 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.

OBAMACARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, when ObamaCare's supporters forced

their partisan law on our country, they promised an easy-to-use system—one that would lower premiums and out-of-pocket health care costs, one that would foster choice and allow families to keep the plans and doctors they liked.

But it didn't take long for the American people to discover the truth about ObamaCare. Too many have been personally hurt by this law. Too many feel they are worse off than they were before ObamaCare. Listening to their stories helps to explain why they might feel this way.

For instance, too many Americans say their ObamaCare plans are too expensive to actually use. Too many say their ObamaCare premiums have gone up and up, although their options have diminished. Too many say their choices on ObamaCare have deteriorated to just one or two insurers.

These are some of the realities of ObamaCare for too many families in Kentucky and across the country. These are some inconvenient realities that those who continue to defend this failed law must finally face up to. Remember, even former President Clinton called ObamaCare "the craziest thing in the world." This was Bill Clinton on ObamaCare.

So it is little wonder that 8 in 10 favor changing ObamaCare significantly or replacing it altogether. We must act quickly to bring relief to the American people. I hope Democrats will work with us as we take the next steps toward repealing and replacing this failing law.

Tonight, Senators from both parties will have an important opportunity to take a vote on the legislative tools necessary to repeal ObamaCare. Then we can send it to the House and begin taking the next steps to finally move away from ObamaCare, while we move ahead with smarter health care policies. This is what the American people have called for us to do. It is the best way forward for our country and the people we represent.

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. 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.

RUSSIA

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I rise today to speak on a matter of great importance to the foreign policy of this country: our relationship with Russia and the efficacy of international sanctions to achieve our international security goals.

The reports of the past 24 hours are extremely troubling. But one thing we now all agree on is that Russia is behind the hacking of our election, as even the President-elect has now just said. This makes it even more important that we not only keep the existing sanctions in place but that we institute a new, tough sanctions regime in response so Russia can't get away with what they did and other countries will know as well that they will suffer penalty if they try to interfere with our elections.

Unfortunately, this morning's Cabinet hearing on Mr. Tillerson's nomination is a very troubling sign of things to come. In one breath, Mr. Tillerson said that the invasion of Crimea is a violation of international law, and in the next, amazingly enough, he declined to commit to maintaining the existing sanctions regime against Russia. He said he wants to get classified briefings first and then consult with the President-elect. But I remind the

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



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S223