



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 115th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 163

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2017

No. 84

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JAMES LANKFORD, a Senator from the State of Oklahoma.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Savior, lead us as a shepherd guides the sheep. We find consolation in the knowledge that You have gone before us to bring us to Your desired destination.

Lord, direct the steps of our lawmakers so that even when they fail to fulfill Your purposes, You will continue to uphold them with the right hand of Your righteousness. May they remember that nothing can separate them from Your love. As they face the heat of tough decisions, provide them with the watered gardens and living springs of Your presence. Lord, You have begun a good work in them; carry it on to completion.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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. HATCH).

The assistant bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 16, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable JAMES LANKFORD, a Senator from the State of Oklahoma, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. LANKFORD thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as ObamaCare continues to collapse, a new Gallup poll out last week showed "Healthcare Surges as Top Problem in US."

It is not hard to see why so many Americans feel this way. They turn on the TV and hear there will be even fewer options on the ObamaCare marketplaces in State after State. They pick up the newspaper and see that even more double-digit premium increases are being proposed for too many of the ObamaCare plan options that still remain. They know what these stories mean for their families: They will be left to pick up the pieces as ObamaCare continues to crumble all across the country. Unless we act, ObamaCare premiums will keep skyrocketing across the Nation, pushing the financial burden of this broken law onto the backs of more hard-working Americans.

We have seen the result of this already with last year's rate filings, which left many States with double-digit premium increases as even more insurance options left the market. Premium price hikes for some ObamaCare plans reached startling levels, averaging 53 percent in Pennsylvania, 63 percent in Tennessee, and a shocking 116 percent in Arizona, just to name a few.

Families are again awaiting projections for this year's filings and once again bracing for the very worst. In the coming weeks and months, proposed rate increases under ObamaCare will roll in across the Nation, and already ObamaCare customers in a handful of States have learned just how high their premiums could rise in 2018.

For example, consumers in Vermont just learned that premiums on the exchanges could increase by double digits next year. In Connecticut, requested premium rate increases are as high as 52 percent on the exchanges. In Maryland, one major insurer is asking for an average rate increase of nearly 60 percent. ObamaCare's marketplaces, that insurer warned, are in the "early stages of a death spiral."

Are our Democratic friends who promised to lower costs under ObamaCare OK with what looks to be yet another year of massive ObamaCare premium increases? This news is alarming not only for the families on the exchanges in the States I just named but for the thousands more across the Nation who may be hit with similar reports in coming weeks.

As one recent AP story, titled "More price hikes likely for government insurance markets," observed: "Early moves by insurers suggest that another round of price hikes and limited choices will greet insurance shoppers around the country when they start searching for next year's coverage on the public markets established by the Affordable Care Act."

Moreover, as the story went on to say, over 40 percent of counties could have just a single insurer to choose from on the exchanges next year. It is troubling news, especially given that so many States, like mine, have already experienced insurers fleeing the ObamaCare marketplace leaving families with limited options.

Let's just look at the chart behind me. In Kentucky, under ObamaCare, 49

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S2937