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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 God, You alone reign supreme in our Nation and world. May our lawmakers permit You to direct their steps. Give our Senators a renewed sense of Your sacred presence, filling them with reverence for You. May this reverence engender in them a spirit of profound gratitude for Your goodness and grace.

Lord, inspire them to live such exemplary lives that Your Name will be glorified in the Earth. Help them to relinquish all anxieties to You, as they remember Your promise to supply all their needs. May they dedicate themselves to providing opportunities and justice for all Americans.

And, Lord, bring comfort to the families of our military personnel killed in the C-130 crash in Mississippi.

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.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I have often come to the floor to relay

the stories of Kentuckians who have suffered under ObamaCare.

Under ObamaCare, Kentuckians have seen their premiums skyrocket—by an average of 75 percent since 2013.

Under ObamaCare, Kentuckians have seen their options for health insurance plummet. This year, families living in 90 percent of the counties in Kentucky will have little or no options of insurers to pick from; that is, two options or less.

We all know the statistics in our own States. We also know the pain of ObamaCare is about far more than just numbers on a page. Behind each of ObamaCare's unaffordable premium increases, there is a family struggling to make ends meet. Behind all the canceled plans and restricted choices, there are countless individuals who have been left behind by this failing law.

Today Vice President PENCE is traveling to Lexington in my State to hear directly from my constituents, including small business owners who have struggled under ObamaCare. As the Vice President knows, ObamaCare's pain is about more than just skyrocketing costs and plummeting choices; its taxes, mandates, and heavy-handed regulations hurt too. They have subjected small businesses across the country to serious challenges.

ObamaCare has been hurting the men and women we represent for many years in many different ways. I am thankful we finally have an administration that seems to care, an administration that has made a real effort to actually listen to those who have been forced to endure the negative consequences of this failing law.

ObamaCare has been spiraling toward collapse for years. Today it teeters on the brink of total meltdown, threatening to hurt even more of our friends and loved ones. We really can't allow that to happen.

Doing nothing about ObamaCare is simply not an option. That is why we

have been working hard to move beyond the failures of ObamaCare with Better Care legislation. We want to stabilize and reform the collapsing insurance markets, we want to put downward pressure on premiums, and we want to put upward lift on choice. We want to give States dramatic new tools that can drive a new era of improved health outcomes, especially for those most in need, and we want to put more affordable insurance in reach for Americans ObamaCare continues to leave behind.

If we sit on our hands, families will continue to suffer. If we let this opportunity to move beyond ObamaCare pass us by, what other options will there be? One idea from the Democratic leader is simply to throw money at insurance companies—no reforms, no changes, just a multibillion-dollar bandaid.

Another idea from many other Democrats is to quadruple down on ObamaCare with a government-run single-payer system. It is called single payer because there is just one payer—one payer: the government. Nearly every healthcare decision would be decided by a Federal bureaucrat. Taxes could go up astronomically. The total cost could add up to \$32 trillion, according to an estimate of a leading proposal.

Now, Americans deserve better than a massive expansion of a failed idea. Americans deserve better than a bandaid. Americans deserve better than ObamaCare. What they really deserve is better care, and we continue to work together to provide it. We are having productive discussions about the future of healthcare, just like we should be doing, and soon it will be time to move those discussions right out here to the Senate floor.

Once we proceed to the bill, Members—Republicans and Democrats alike—will have the opportunity to engage in robust debate and a robust amendment process right here on the Senate floor. I am sure Members will

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



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