

been talking about this for too long. We have wrestled with this issue. We have watched the consequences of the status quo. The people who sent us here expect us to begin this debate, to have the courage to tackle the tough issues. They did not send us here just to do the easy stuff. They expect us to tackle the big problems. Obviously, we cannot get an outcome if we do not start the debate, and that is what the motion to proceed is all about.

Many of us on this side of the aisle have waited for years for this opportunity and thought that it would probably never come. Some of us were a little surprised by the election last year, but with a surprise election comes great opportunities to do things that we thought were never possible. All we have to do today is to have the courage to begin the debate with an open amendment process and let the voting take us where it will.

That is what is before us, colleagues. Will we begin the debate on one of the most important issues confronting America today? It is my hope that the answer will be yes.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, following the vote, Senator MCCAIN be recognized to speak for debate only for up to 15 minutes and that the time not count on H.R. 1628.

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

#### AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT OF 2017—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to Calendar No. 120, H.R. 1628.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 120, H.R. 1628, a bill to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2017.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

(Disturbance in the Visitors' Galleries.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Sergeant at Arms will restore order in the Chamber. The Sergeant at Arms will restore order in the Chamber, please.

(Disturbance in the Visitors' Galleries.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Sergeant at Arms will restore order in the Chamber.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to proceed.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 50, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 167 Leg.]

#### YEAS—50

|           |           |          |
|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Alexander | Flake     | Perdue   |
| Barrasso  | Gardner   | Portman  |
| Blunt     | Graham    | Risch    |
| Boozman   | Grassley  | Roberts  |
| Burr      | Hatch     | Rounds   |
| Capito    | Heller    | Rubio    |
| Cassidy   | Hoeven    | Sasse    |
| Cochran   | Inhofe    | Scott    |
| Corker    | Isakson   | Shelby   |
| Cornyn    | Johnson   | Strange  |
| Cotton    | Kennedy   | Sullivan |
| Crapo     | Lankford  | Thune    |
| Cruz      | Lee       | Tillis   |
| Daines    | McCain    | Toomey   |
| Enzi      | McConnell | Wicker   |
| Ernst     | Moran     | Young    |
| Fischer   | Paul      |          |

#### NAYS—50

|              |            |            |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Baldwin      | Gillibrand | Murray     |
| Bennet       | Harris     | Nelson     |
| Blumenthal   | Hassan     | Peters     |
| Booker       | Heinrich   | Reed       |
| Brown        | Heitkamp   | Sanders    |
| Cantwell     | Hirono     | Schatz     |
| Cardin       | Kaine      | Schumer    |
| Carper       | King       | Shaheen    |
| Casey        | Klobuchar  | Stabenow   |
| Collins      | Leahy      | Tester     |
| Cooms        | Manchin    | Udall      |
| Cortez Masto | Markey     | Van Hollen |
| Donnelly     | McCaskill  | Warner     |
| Duckworth    | Menendez   | Warren     |
| Durbin       | Merkley    | Whitehouse |
| Feinstein    | Murkowski  | Wyden      |
| Franken      | Murphy     |            |

The VICE PRESIDENT. As a reminder to our guests, expressions of approval or disapproval are not permitted.

On this vote, the yeas are 50, the nays are 50. The Senate being equally divided, the Vice President votes in the affirmative.

The motion is agreed to.

#### AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ACT OF 2017

The VICE PRESIDENT. The clerk will report the bill.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1628) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2017.

The VICE PRESIDENT. The senior Senator from Arizona is recognized.

#### ROLE OF THE SENATE

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I have stood in this place many times and addressed as "President" many Presiding Officers. I have been so addressed when I have sat in that chair, and that is as close as I will ever be to a Presidency. It is an honorific we are almost indifferent too; isn't it? In truth, presiding over the Senate can be a nuisance, a bit of a ceremonial bore, and it is usually relegated to the more junior Members of the majority.

But as I stand here today—looking a little worse for wear, I am sure—I have a refreshed appreciation for the protocols and customs of this body and for the other 99 privileged souls who have been elected to this Senate.

I have been a Member of the U.S. Senate for 30 years. I had another long, if not as long, career before I arrived here, another profession that was profoundly rewarding and in which I had experiences and friendships that I revere. Make no mistake, my service

here is the most important job I have had in my life. I am so grateful to the people of Arizona for the privilege—for the honor—of serving here and the opportunities it gives me to play a small role in the history of the country I love.

I have known and admired men and women in the Senate who played much more than a small role in our history—true statesmen, giants of American politics. They came from both parties and from various backgrounds. Their ambitions were frequently in conflict. They held different views on the issues of the day. They often had very serious disagreements about how best to serve the national interest.

But they knew that however sharp and heartfelt their disputes and however keen their ambitions, they had an obligation to work collaboratively to ensure the Senate discharged its constitutional responsibilities effectively. Our responsibilities are important—vitaly important—to the continued success of our Republic. Our arcane rules and customs are deliberately intended to require broad cooperation to function well at all. The most revered Members of this institution accepted the necessity of compromise in order to make incremental progress on solving America's problems and to defend her from her adversaries.

That principled mindset and the service of our predecessors who possessed it come to mind when I hear the Senate referred to as the world's greatest deliberative body. I am not sure we can claim that distinction with a straight face today. I am sure it wasn't always deserved in previous eras either. I am sure there have been times when it was, and I was privileged to witness some of those occasions.

Our deliberations today, not just our debates but the exercise of all our responsibilities—authorizing government policies, appropriating the funds to implement them, exercising our advice and consent role—are often lively and interesting. They can be sincere and principled, but they are more partisan, more tribal more of the time than at any time I can remember. Our deliberations can still be important and useful, but I think we would all agree they haven't been overburdened by greatness lately. Right now, they aren't producing much for the American people.

Both sides have let this happen. Let's leave the history of who shot first to the historians. I suspect they will find we all conspired in our decline, either by deliberate actions or neglect. We have all played some role in it. Certainly, I have. Sometimes, I have let my passion rule my reason. Sometimes I made it harder to find common ground because of something harsh I said to a colleague. Sometimes I wanted to win more for the sake of winning than to achieve a contested policy.

Incremental progress, compromises that each side criticizes but also accepts, and just plain muddling through to chip away at problems and to keep