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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN, a Senator from the State of Delaware.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, Lord of all, give us the things that will enable us to make life worthwhile. Give to the Members of this body a sense of proportion to seek the things that matter. Help them to appreciate the long view that they may refuse to sell what is precious for temporary short-term gain. Lord, remind them that laudable goals often require perseverance. Impart to our Senators a teachable spirit that is willing to learn and a humble spirit that accepts advice and will not resent rebuke. Give them also a diligence that whatever their hands find to do, they may do it with all their might. We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN 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. BYRD).

The assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 19, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable EDWARD E. KAUFMAN,

a Senator from the State of Delaware, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. KAUFMAN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. There will be no rollcall votes today.

Senators DORGAN and MARTINEZ, the managers of the travel bill that is before the Senate, have indicated they are ready to move forward on amendments being laid down. We will have a series of votes Monday night and move toward completing that legislation as quickly as possible. It is important legislation, and we look forward to the completion of it.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as the debate escalates over the best way to ease the crushing burden of health care, it is easy to become sidetracked by misrepresentations, distracted by minor details or tempted to point fingers. When we do those things, we lose sight of what is at the heart of this effort, this debate, and this reform.

I wish to take a moment at the end of this week to remind all of us what this is all about—the health care debate. It is about hardworking Americans because they are too often the casualties of our broken health care system. They deserve better than to be also casualties of misleading politics.

To the millions of Americans without health care, this is a concrete and critical crisis that affects children, families, small businesses, and big businesses every single day. It is about the parent who can't take a child to the doctor because insurance is prohibitively expensive. It is about the family who lives one accident or one illness away from financial ruin. It is about a small business that had to lay off employees because it couldn't afford the skyrocketing cost of health care premiums or that small business that had to cancel health insurance for its employees because it couldn't afford it. It is about the three-in-five families who put off health care because it simply costs too much.

As Democrats in the Senate, we are committed to lowering the high price of health care, ensuring every American has access to that quality, affordable care and, finally, letting people choose their own doctors, hospitals, and health plans. We are committed to protecting the existing coverage when it is good, improving it when it is not, and guaranteeing health care for the millions—including 9 million children—who have none. We are committed to preventing disease, reducing health disparities, and encouraging early detection and effective treatments that save lives.

No matter what Republicans claim, the government has no intention of choosing for you any of these things or meddling in any of your medical relationships. If you like the coverage you have, you can choose to keep it.

Health care is not a luxury. It shouldn't be a luxury. We can't afford another year in which 46 million people have to choose between basic necessities and lining the pockets of big insurance companies just to stay healthy.

I hear every day from Nevadans—through e-mails, phone calls, letters, and other means of communication—that people are turned down for health

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



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