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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal and merciful God, in the midst of our labors, we are grateful for this time to talk to You and to be refreshed by Your presence. At a time when vast issues are at stake, remind our lawmakers of the great traditions in which we stand. Empower them to rise to the greatness of vision and soul that energized the Founders of this land. May they embrace and support the great causes that will mold the future into the pattern of Your desire and design.

Lord, use our Senators to heal and rebuild our world. In the darkness of our time, may their lives be Your candles to illuminate our Nation and world.

We pray in Your loving Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MARK R. WARNER 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, July 27, 2009.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable MARK R. WARNER, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNER 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, there will be a period of morning business for up to 1 hour. At 3 p.m., the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the Energy and Water appropriations bill, which will be managed by Senator DORGAN. There will be no rollcall votes today during the session. There should be votes tomorrow morning prior to the caucus luncheons.

FINISHING THIS WORK PERIOD

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there are many who suffer from our broken health care system, and many who will benefit when we fix it. Counted among those are the increasing numbers of Americans who go to work every day in small businesses. The vast majority of jobs in America today are not with the huge companies but with small businesses. Owners and employees alike of small businesses are getting a raw deal. They are paying more for their health insurance, if they have it at all.

Small businesses in big cities and small towns across the country play an immeasurable role in sculpting how the future will look. These are the entrepreneurs who innovate, invent, and fuel our economy. They are the visionaries who help create jobs and cultivate ideas.

We, in turn, must help nurture these businesses. We should be making it easier for them to grow and to succeed. But if we keep the status quo—if we do not act—we will be making it harder. The White House's Council of Economic Advisers has found that when a small business buys the same health insurance plan as a big business, the small business pays significantly more per worker. The consequence of this inequity is very clear: A small business owner who has to pay more to keep his or her employees covered has to cut corners somewhere else. Maybe they pay their employees lower wages or salaries. Maybe they have to use more of their profits to pay for health care and have less to spend on the research and development that will help their ideas become realities. Maybe they need to buy new equipment or invest in new technologies but cannot because of the crushing costs of health care. Maybe they lay off more hard-working Americans than they ordinarily would.

What if the expense they choose to sacrifice is health care itself? And that happens so often. Almost 100 percent of large businesses—those with more than 200 employees—offer health benefits. But fewer than half of businesses with nine or fewer employees can afford to do the same, and that number is shrinking.

When we reform health care, we will level the playing field for small businesses. We will give employees more choices and better plans from which to choose. We will give owners tax credits so they can afford to cover their workers. We will make it easier for existing small businesses to succeed. We will make it easier for more entrepreneurs to start their own new companies. And we will make it easier for more Americans to afford to work there and stay healthy at the same time—all in this small business atmosphere.

Reforming health care—and doing it the right way—is not just a health issue, it is also an economic issue. That

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



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