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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. 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.

Everlasting God, our light and salvation, You remain our strength and shield. Today, we claim Your great and precious promises as You sustain us with Your presence. Thank You for promising to supply our needs and to lead us toward abundant living.

Continue to sustain our Senators with Your eternal presence. Remind them that Your hand is on the helm of human affairs and that You still guide Your world. Renew their strength as You provide them with the courage to carry on. May they refuse to do anything which could bring them regret, remorse, and shame.

We pray in Your strong 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 (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, tonight we will welcome the President of the United States for the State of the Union Address. It is his final address, and it gives us cause for reflection.

Many of us recall the moment in Boston when a State senator became a na-

tional star. His rhetorical gift was undeniable. It was a soaring elocution bathed in confetti that promised a new and more inclusive beginning. It inspired many. It propelled Barack Obama to the highest office in the land.

Americans assumed the campaigning would eventually come to a close and the serious work of governing would eventually commence, but it is now many years later, and the Obama for President campaign never really ended. Speeches still substitute for substance. Straw men still stand in for serious debate. Slogans still surrogate for governing.

We have been promised even more campaigning tonight, this time for the candidate President Obama would like to see succeed him. It leads Americans to wonder: When is the serious work of governing ever going to begin? Governing isn't easy. Governing often requires serious engagement with the Congress the American people elected, not the one the President wishes they had elected.

Here is a simple fact. "You don't make change through slogans." That is something President Obama once said. I wish he had taken his own advice because here is what we know as we enter the twilight of his Presidency. He has presided over a sluggish and uneven economic recovery that is failing too many of our citizens.

Health premiums and deductibles have continued to shoot ever higher. Wages have flatlined for too many. Inequality has grown. Manufacturing has shrunk. Poverty seems to entrench. The middle class has continued to collapse, to the point where it no longer even constitutes a majority of our country.

The Obama administration says it wants to help the middle class, but its policies often tell a different story. We have seen the negative impact ObamaCare has had on so many middle-class families. We have also seen

this administration declare a war on coal families who just want to get ahead.

I have invited a Kentucky miner from Pikeville, Howard Abshire, as my State of the Union guest tonight. He has watched as the Obama administration's heartless approach has helped contribute to devastation in his community and to the loss of thousands of jobs in Kentucky, one of which was his own job.

Here is what his message has been to President Obama. Howard Abshire said: "We're hurting [and] we need help," but "we don't want to be bailed out, we want to work."

Many Kentuckians feel the very same way. Many Americans feel similarly too. Today only 20 percent of our citizens think things are headed in the right direction in their country. Nearly three-quarters want the next President to take a totally different approach from the current one. These are the simple facts, and they present the President with a choice.

President Obama can try to blame others for it. He can try to convince Americans they are wrong to feel the way they do or he can take responsibility and chart a new course. Americans are losing faith in the future. They are losing hope that their children can lead a better life. They watch as challenges continue to mount around the world—like those from ISIL, Iran, Russia, Al Qaeda, an ever-aggressive China, North Korea, and of course the Taliban—while this administration seems to have no plan to deal with any of it.

This hurt in our country and the failing approach from the White House should be disheartening to all of us. Perhaps the worst part is, it didn't have to be like this. It really didn't have to be like this. I believe that when the American people elect divided government, they are not telling us to do nothing. They are telling us to work together in the areas where we

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



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