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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.

Gracious Lord, who has given us life, we praise You for Your faithful reliability.

Bless our lawmakers today in the work they will do. May they seek in all their labors to please and glorify You as You fill them with Your grace. May they not become weary in doing what is right, knowing that in due season they will reap if they faint not.

Lord, let Your peace flood their hearts and help them to realize that it is by Your permission that they will breathe their next breath. May they permit life's problems to make them more dependent on Your guidance and strength.

We pray in Your Holy 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. SASSE). The majority leader is recognized.

### HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we have been debating ObamaCare's failures and what to do about them for so many years now. We have heard so many distress stories from constituents who have been hurt. Thankfully,

the Senate will soon have the chance to turn the page on this failed law.

As I said yesterday, the entire Senate Republican conference has been active and engaged on legislation to move beyond the failures of ObamaCare for quite some time. We have had many productive discussions on the way forward. We are united in our belief that the American people deserve better than ObamaCare's unsustainable status quo.

While it is disappointing that our Democratic colleagues decided early on that they didn't want to work seriously with us on finding solutions, Senate Republicans remain focused on the following: stabilizing insurance markets, which are collapsing under ObamaCare; improving the affordability of health insurance, which is spiking under ObamaCare; freeing Americans from ObamaCare's mandates, which force them to buy insurance they don't want; strengthening Medicaid for those who need it the most; and preserving access to care for patients with preexisting conditions.

Insurance markets are collapsing under ObamaCare. We want to stabilize them. ObamaCare's champions said that the law would bring more healthcare choices, but for far too many, just the opposite has occurred. In the years since ObamaCare's passage, we have read story after story about co-ops collapsing, insurers fleeing, families losing the plans they liked, and trusted doctors and hospitals slipping out of reach.

Today ObamaCare is nearing full collapse. Americans in nearly one of every two counties could find themselves left with just one option under ObamaCare next year—which of course really isn't a choice at all—or even worse, find themselves without any option, period. This long-term ObamaCare trend is not sustainable. We have to act, and we are.

Healthcare costs are spiking under ObamaCare. We want to improve af-

fordability. ObamaCare's champions said that the law would make healthcare more affordable, but for too many just the opposite has occurred.

In the years since ObamaCare's passage, we have received so many calls and letters from families who have been hit with soaring out-of-pocket costs and skyrocketing premiums. In fact, a recent Health and Human Services report showed that premiums in the individual market rose by an average of 105 percent since the law was fully implemented in 2013.

Today the situation continues to spiral out of control. Americans in States across the country could find themselves facing more double-digit premium increases next year—as high as 30 percent, we learned just yesterday, in Washington State or 32 percent in North Carolina or 40 percent in Maine.

Another recent report found that nearly 2 million Americans who selected an ObamaCare plan ended up canceling their coverage after just a few weeks, and the most common reason they cited for doing so was that it was too expensive. This long-term ObamaCare trend is not sustainable. We have to act, and we are.

Americans are being forced to buy insurance they don't want under ObamaCare. We want to free them from that mandate. When ObamaCare's champions pushed their health law on the American people, they enacted onerous mandates that forced too many families into plans they didn't like or couldn't afford. In the years since ObamaCare's passage, we heard from Americans who decided it was simply more affordable for them to take their chance and pay the fine and go without insurance altogether.

Today ObamaCare's collapse is making the situation even more unfair. Insurance markets are collapsing, leaving Americans with fewer options. Health costs are spiking, making many of the remaining options even more expensive. That means Americans could

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



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