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Senate

The Senate met at 4 p.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.

Eternal God, sovereign of nations, answer our lawmakers even before they call, and hear them even before they speak. Give them the wisdom today to commune with You. May this fellowship bring them Your gifts of knowledge, judgment, and wisdom for these turbulent times.

Lord, help them to yield their minds, hearts, and wills to the flow of Your Divine intelligence, using Your might to solve problems in our Nation and world. Give them the power to handle the pressures of legislative labor as they find fuel from a fresh flow of Your strength. May they think clearly, serve creatively, and endure consistently.

We pray in Your sacred 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 (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

BETTER CARE RECONCILIATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, 7 years ago, the Democrats forced an unfair healthcare system on our country that they called the Affordable Care Act. It turned out to be anything but that.

They told Americans that it would lower their premiums, but ObamaCare has increased premiums by an average of 105 percent in the vast majority of States on the Federal exchange since 2013. Unless we act, we can expect similar trends for years to come.

They told Americans that it would expand choice in the healthcare marketplace, but ObamaCare has left Americans in 70 percent of U.S. counties with little to no options for insurance this year. Unless we act, we can expect things to get worse.

They told Americans that it would allow them to keep their doctors, their plans, and their ability to make the smartest healthcare decisions for their families. Instead, ObamaCare forced millions off the plans they liked and forced millions into plans they either did not want or could not afford. Unless we act, more Americans will be left trapped, forced by ObamaCare to buy insurance but left without the means to actually do so.

This is the ObamaCare status quo as millions of Americans have come to know it. It is unacceptable. It is unsustainable. The American people need better care, which is exactly what we are working to bring them.

Through dozens of meetings and through conversations with every Member of our conference, we have had the opportunity to discuss many different ideas and approaches for bringing relief from ObamaCare. Ultimately, we found there were a number of areas in which we all agreed when it comes to what the critical issues we need to address are and how we can do that. Those solutions are what make up the draft legislation that was released last week and that we will continue working to consider now.

Better Care will preserve access to care for patients with preexisting conditions, strengthen Medicaid, and allow children to remain on their parents' insurance through the age of 26.

Better Care will lower costs from where they are under ObamaCare by,

among other things, eliminating taxes on the middle class, by giving Americans more power to control and reduce their medical costs and out-of-pocket expenses, and by giving States significant new tools to drive down premiums.

Better Care will free Americans from onerous mandates under ObamaCare by repealing the employer mandate that reduces hours and take-home pay for too many workers and by repealing the individual mandate that forces Americans to buy unaffordable ObamaCare insurance, freeing them to make the best healthcare decisions for their families on what types of plans they want and can afford.

Better Care will help stabilize insurance markets that are collapsing under ObamaCare by first implementing stabilization policies and then carefully transitioning away from ObamaCare completely so that more families are not harmed by its collapsing markets.

As one major insurer observed just today, this bill "will markedly improve the stability of the individual market and moderate premium increases." That is from a major insurer today.

We should keep working so that we can move forward with robust floor debate and an open amendment process here on the Senate floor. I would encourage all 100 Senators to participate because the American people need better care right now, and this legislation includes the necessary tools to provide it.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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



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