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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Gracious God, Ruler of all nature, protect our Senators from the seductive influences of power and prestige. Today, deliver them from the delusion of self-importance which their position and status subtly nurture. Remind them of the example of the greatest man who ever lived. He said: "Those who would be greatest must be servants of all." In disagreement and confrontation, help them to respect and esteem each other as they struggle together for the resolution of complex issues. Lord, give them the humility to know that no one has a monopoly on Your truth and that all need each other to discover Your guidance together.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS 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, June 23, 2009.

To the Senate:

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

appoint the Honorable ROLAND W. BURRIS, a Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BURRIS 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 for the transaction of morning business. Senators will be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Republicans will control the first 30 minutes and the majority will control the next 30 minutes. The Senate will be in recess from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m. today to allow for weekly caucus luncheons. We will continue to work on an agreement to consider the legislative appropriations bill today. Senators could expect votes in relation to that bill during today's session.

MAKING TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION ACT OF 1965

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the HELP Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1777.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1777) to make technical corrections to the Higher Education Act of 1965, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of this bill and our

need to make important technical corrections to the Higher Education Opportunity Act. I thank Senator KENNEDY for his willingness to approach this bill in a bipartisan manner, I always believe that working together we produce a better policy.

Any time this body considers a bill that has over 1,000 pages, there is bound to be a need to do some "clean up" and to correct unintended consequences. Fortunately, we were also provided an opportunity to broaden benefits to the children who have lost a parent in either Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001. It is important that we do all we can to support these individuals whose families have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. I am appreciative of Senators BURR and ALEXANDER for their leadership in getting this bill done.

A college education is not a luxury in the 21st century economy. It is a necessity. This bill will improve the ability of our student assistance programs to function and meet the needs of institutions of higher education, students and their families.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the substitute amendment, which is at the desk, be agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 1364) was agreed to.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Amendments Submitted.")

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill (H.R. 1777), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

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



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CONDOLENCES TO WASHINGTON METRO CRASH VICTIMS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before we turn to legislative matters, I wish to express my personal condolences and those of the Senate to the people affected by yesterday's tragedy, and that was a lot of people. That tragedy took place on the Washington Metro system. Nine people were killed and scores more injured yesterday evening as they simply made their way home during rush hour. The accident has shaken this city and this body. Like so many other commuters, many who work on Capitol Hill rely on the Metro system every day. It has been reliable, and it has been safe. My heart goes out to the families who lost loved ones and those who were injured. As we learn more about what caused this terrible accident, we will work to ensure it never happens again.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this new year began with so much hope. When we began the 111th Congress, I had hoped Republicans would leave their Republican games in the 110th Congress. I had hoped they would have listened when the American people reviewed their record and said no to the party of no.

I wrote the following at the time, this past January:

We have no choice but to govern differently. The times demand it. If we do not govern differently, we will have taken no good lessons from the bad experience of the Bush years.

That goes for Republicans and Democrats alike.

In my first address to this Chamber this year, I reminded both Republicans and Democrats that when we retreat to partisanship, when we fail to reach for common ground, we rob ourselves of the ability to create the change the American people demanded.

As the health care debate approached in April, I reached out to our Republican colleagues and wrote this:

Rather than just saying no, you must be willing to offer concrete and constructive proposals. We cannot afford more of the obstructionist tactics that have denied or delayed Congress' efforts to address so many of the critical challenges facing this nation.

Last week, I reminded the other side that our hands remain outstretched across the aisle. I assured them we still save them a seat at the negotiating table. And just yesterday, I encouraged our Republican friends to join with us to pass an important bill that would promote foreign travel to the United States—creating jobs, reducing our deficit, and strengthening our economy in the process. Everyplace in America, there are hotel rooms and motel rooms that are not occupied as they should be. The legislation killed yesterday by the Republicans would have had more people coming to those hotel and motel rooms.

At the beginning of this year, at the beginning of this Congress, at the be-

ginning of this debate, and even up to the beginning of this week, my commitment to bipartisanship and finding common ground has not changed one bit. Unfortunately, a stubborn group of Senate Republicans has not changed either.

Yesterday, Republicans blocked a bill that had 11 Republican cosponsors. I assumed when they sponsored that bill they were in favor of the bill. That is kind of an idea people get around here. They blocked a bill that would support a trillion-dollar industry in an otherwise slow economy. They blocked a bill that would create 40,000 new jobs right here at home over the next year. It would have cut our deficit by \$425 million and helped our economy recover.

Perhaps, though, we shouldn't be surprised. Just last week, a Republican Senator said the following:

Democrats need to know when they bring [bills] up, we're going to extend the debate as long as we can—even if we can't win.

That is what he said.

Given their commitment to obstruction, it is remarkable we have gotten anything done this year, let alone such a strong catalog of important accomplishments that have helped us revive our economy, strengthen our national security, protect our environment, demand accountability, promote equality, and ensure progress. But if Republicans are going to stand in the way of a bill that creates tens of thousands of new jobs, cuts our deficit by hundreds of millions of dollars, and helps every single State in the Union, how are we going to do the other important work the American people sent us here to do? What is it they want to do?

As my good friend from North Dakota, Senator DORGAN, said yesterday on the floor:

If we can't agree on a piece of legislation that was offered by over 50 Senators, Republicans and Democrats, dealing with promotion of tourism and creating jobs and promoting this country's economic interests by asking international tourists to come to America and see what America is all about—if we can't agree on that, how on Earth will we get agreements on energy, health care, climate change, and so on? It is so disappointing.

I don't know if anyone could put it any better than Senator DORGAN did. I couldn't.

Reforming health care and pursuing energy independence are daunting tasks. No one claims it is simple, but nearly everyone knows it is essential. No one claims the answer is obvious, but everyone knows we must work toward one. Yet, if Republicans refuse to find common ground on the easy things, how will we do so on the hard ones?

It is difficult to understand, but it is clear to anyone following this debate that our Republican friends are not interested in making the difficult but necessary decisions to dig our economy out of this ditch and move us further down the path of recovering prosperity. They have said publicly and privately they are waiting on President Obama's

failure. At this point, it has been a bad bet because President Obama is still—today in the press, his popularity is approaching 70 percent.

Instead, they like to echo talking points written by pollsters. They like to repeat the tired, trite, and baseless claim that if we reform health care—85 percent of Americans want us to reform health care, but they are saying that if we improve health care, they will be denied and delayed in getting health care. It is absolutely incomprehensible what their reasoning is. Nothing could be further from the truth.

First, let me state once again the facts. No matter what Republicans claim, the government has no intention of choosing any part of your medical plan. Remember, we are talking a public option, a public choice. The government has no intention of choosing for you any part of your medical plan or meddling in any of your medical relationships. If you like the coverage you have, you can keep it. In fact, it is the name of a whole section of the HELP Committee's bill. Section 131 is called "No Changes to Existing Coverage." That is what the title of the bill section is. Every time you hear Republicans say otherwise, you know they are not interested in an honest debate.

Second, let me reiterate once again the reality. The only thing being delayed is urgently needed reform that ensures all Americans have access to quality, affordable health care. The only thing at risk of being denied is Americans' ability to stay healthy, get healthy, or care for a loved one. It is being delayed by a party that has made such stalling tactics their speciality, as evidenced last night.

The party of no is showing no interest in sitting down with us at the negotiating table. The party of no has shown no interest in legislating. And I am most concerned that the party of no has shown no interest in helping the millions of people who have no insurance and the 20 million who are underinsured and the millions more who are paying too much for health care they could lose with one pink slip, one accident, or one illness. Millions of people are afraid they are going to lose their insurance. That is what this debate is about. It is not just about people who have no insurance, it is about people who have insurance, to keep it. In the last 8 years, the number of uninsured in this country has gone up by 10 million people—10 million people.

So I remind my Republican colleagues again, this is not about winning and losing. This is not the time for ideology. This is not the place for political games. For the millions of Americans who have paid crushing health care costs or those with no coverage at all, it is about a concrete and critical crisis that children, families, and small businesses feel every single day. It is about the parent who cannot afford to take their kid to the doctor because insurance is too expensive. It