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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, eternal and unchangeable, we pray for this Nation, its people, and its institutions in these challenging times. If we have forsaken You, do not abandon us. If we have sinned, forgive us. If we have been mistaken, correct us. Lord, let Your grace be sufficient for all our needs. Lift the efforts of this body into the higher reaches of Your kingdom, guiding and strengthening our Senators in the discharge of their duties. Bless their work as You strengthen them by Your spirit to honor You.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TOM UDALL 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 assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 17, 2009.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM UDALL, a Senator from the State of New Mexico, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico 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, we will be in a period for the transaction of morning business for an hour. Senators will be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each. Republicans will control the first half and the majority will control the second 30 minutes. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to the Travel Promotion Act postcloture. Following adoption of the motion to proceed to the travel bill later this afternoon, we will turn to the emergency supplemental appropriations conference report.

I am disappointed that we are again wasting time on a heavily bipartisan bill, the Travel Promotion Act, which has wide support by both the Democrats and Republicans. But the Republicans forced us to have a vote on cloture to allow us to get on the bill. All the Republicans voted for it. They are filibustering things they even agree with just to stall for time. This is 30 hours we could use to do a lot of good. I don't know what would be the rationale for wasting this time. Maybe they don't want President Obama to complete more legislation through us. It is beyond my ability to comprehend why we would waste this time.

It has been written and talked about that this is the most accomplished Congress since the first year of the Roosevelt administration. I don't have before me all the legislation we have done, but I am going to try to recall some of the things we have done.

We passed the lands bill, the most significant environmental legislation in more than a quarter of a century, creating more than 2 million acres of wilderness, 1,000 miles of scenic rivers, hundreds of miles of trails, and many other good things in this very important legislation.

We passed the Lilly Ledbetter legislation equalizing pay between men and women.

We passed the Children's Health Insurance Program which had been vetoed by President Bush on several occasions. Now more than 14 million children can go to the doctor when they are sick or hurt.

We passed the economic recovery package. Twenty-five percent of that money is out. The rest is coming.

We passed the omnibus spending bill—very important legislation which had been held up by the Bush administration. We spent \$1.2 trillion of the people's money within a period of 3 weeks. Why did we do that? We did it because Mark Zandi, among others, Senator MCCAIN's chief economic adviser, Republican economists, and Democratic economists told us we had to do this to stop a worldwide depression, and we have done that. As Chairman Bernanke said, the crops have been planted and the shoots are now appearing out of the ground.

We went on to pass a procurement bill—extremely important—to rein in the excessive expenses of what has taken place in years past with the Pentagon, overspending money we give them; that is, something is supposed to cost this much and winds up costing twice as much.

We were able to pass national service legislation, allowing 750,000 people in America to be involved in public service, dealing with the environment, health care, the poor. During the 7,000 hours they volunteer, they get a small stipend. When they finish, they get an amount of money to help with their college education.

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



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Credit card legislation—so important—we finally were able to do it. After years of talking about doing it, we did it to stop the ripoffs of these credit card companies and what they were doing to hurt Americans—all Americans.

We passed tobacco legislation. I can remember, when I was working in the Capitol of the United States going to law school, the Surgeon General came out with the first report that smoking was bad for you. Some people thought that was the case, but the Surgeon General of the United States said it will kill you. We have been trying ever since then to get control of tobacco. After all these years, we did it.

We have been able to work on other important pieces of legislation—financial fraud, reported out of the Judiciary Committee, which stops scams taking place on people who are about to begin foreclosure, taking advantage of people who are in a time of distress. We passed a lot of housing legislation that is important to allow people to stay in their homes. Have we stopped it all? Of course not. But we have done a pretty good job at that.

We are now arriving at a point where we are going to pass the supplemental appropriations bill, which is very important, to fund our troops. This is the last time we will have to do this because President Obama is honest with his budgeting. The cost of the war is in his budget. It was never in President Bush's budget. For the 8 years he was President, he never put it in his budget. We had to come back and do supplemental emergency appropriations bills to fund our troops.

It is interesting to note, all but five Republicans in the House of Representatives voted against funding the troops yesterday. It will be interesting to see what happens here. Are my Republican colleagues going to join with us to fund the troops? I think so. I certainly hope so.

We have accomplished a lot more than what I have just outlined, but we have done it by reaching out to the Republicans. We have not gotten a lot of help from the Republicans, but we have gotten enough to pass bills. For example, on the economic recovery package, we needed 2, and neither one of the 2 would be the 60th vote, so we had to get 3, and we got 3. I appreciate very much the courage of Senators SPECTER, SNOWE, and COLLINS in doing that. It was good for their States and good for our country. We have reached out to the Republicans time and time again.

HEALTH CARE DEBATE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we began this year dedicated to delivering the change the American people demanded in November. We began this Congress committed to making life better for the middle class, for hard-working families who play by the rules. But the American people also demanded something more. They said that we, their

leaders, should not be unwilling to work together. The challenges we face have left no one unscathed. We are all in this hole together, and the only way we climb out of this hole is by doing so together.

When the American people spoke last year, they gave us, above all, a mandate for bipartisanship. It was in that spirit that I wrote my Republican colleagues this spring. In that letter, I said one of the best ways to lift our economy is to keep down health care costs. Almost 50 million Americans have no health care, and the problem grows worse every day.

Every day, more Americans go bankrupt or lose their homes just trying to stay healthy. Even those fortunate enough to have insurance pay a hidden tax for those who do not. What does that mean? It means 50 million people, when they get sick or hurt, go to the nearest emergency room. That emergency room may be across the street or 50 miles from where they are, but that is where they go. That increases the cost of every one of our health insurance policies, it increases the cost of the doctor bills we get, the hospital bills we get, and indigent taxes. If your family has health care, you pay at least \$1,000 more than you would if all other families had health care.

In that letter, I expressed my sincere hope that Republicans would work with us to respond to this emergency. I extended my hand. I asked for their help. Although I knew we would disagree at times, I told them I looked forward to an open and honest dialog about how to help struggling Americans.

In this letter, I especially asked Republican colleagues to focus on the concrete and critical crisis that affects children, families, and small businesses every day—a parent cannot take a child to a doctor because insurance does not exist or is prohibitively expensive; a family lives one accident or illness away from financial ruin; small businesses lay off employees because they cannot afford skyrocketing health care premiums. We hear those stories every time we go home.

I asked in that letter that we use the short and valuable time we have to work together in our common interest rather than against each other and against the interests of the American people. I wish I could say Republicans answered those words with deeds of equal good faith. But how have they responded regarding health care? Have they taken the hand we have extended across the aisle? No. Have they taken the seat we offered at the negotiating table? No. Have they engaged in a productive debate about real people and real problems that relate to health care? No. Have they shown they are just as interested as we are in working with each other rather than against each other? No. Have they told us a single thing they are for rather than what they are against? No; it is always what they are against. In fact, "no" is

all we hear from the Republicans these days. Instead of debating facts, Republicans have committed themselves to a strategy of misinformation and misrepresentation.

We have different priorities. We are committed to lowering the high cost of health care, ensuring every American has access to that quality, affordable care and letting people choose their own doctors, hospitals, and health plans. We are committed to protecting existing coverage when it is good and improving it when it is not and guaranteeing health care for millions, including 9 million children who have none.

I don't believe doing nothing is an option because the costs of doing nothing are too great. We must pass health care reform this year. As we said at the start of this year, at the start of this work period, at the start of this debate, we will continue doing our best to work with Republicans and pass a bipartisan bill.

In spite of the past, I remain optimistic that both Republicans and Democrats recognize how urgent this health care debate is. The health of our citizens and our economy is at stake, and neither will be able to recover if we wait. But as important as bipartisanship is—and it is important—it is not as critical as helping the nearly 50 million Americans who have nowhere to turn, the other 20 million who have bad insurance, and the rest of America, which is paying at least \$1,000 more for their insurance policy as a result of people having no insurance.

As I said in my letter this April, in order for this bipartisan process to take root, Republicans must demonstrate a sincere interest in legislating. I hope they do so because one way or another, we are going to get health care reform done.

Thank you, Mr. President.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, earlier this year, the new administration proposed and Democrats in Congress approved an economic stimulus bill that was meant to lift the economy at a time of massive job losses and widespread economic hardship. Not only was the bill enormously complex, it was also one of the costliest pieces of legislation ever proposed. Yet those who put it together insisted it be rushed to a vote.

Their reason, of course, was the economic downturn was too dire to wait. Trust us, they said; it is responsible, it is needed, and it will work. So this incredibly complex, enormously expensive bill, introduced on January 26, was passed less than 3 weeks later, just 24 hours—24 hours—after all its details