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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.

Eternal Father, we thank You for another day with its fresh promise, its opportunities and duties. As our bodies are renewed, so give strength to our minds and hearts to glorify You in our lives.

Be near our Senators as they labor. For their added burdens, give them increased strength. Lord, to all who serve in the government, provide a full measure of grace and wisdom that all things may be ordered according to Your will. Help our lawmakers to be faithful and obedient to Your vision for our Nation as You keep them from becoming weary in their pursuit of Your purposes.

We pray in Your loving 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 2, 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, there will be a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with the time equally divided between the two leaders or their designees and with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. At 11 a.m., the Senate will turn to executive session and immediately proceed to vote on confirmation of Regina McCarthy to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. It is expected that will be a voice vote, but we will have to wait and see.

Upon disposition of the nomination, the Senate will resume legislative session and proceed to a rollcall vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 1256, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act. Therefore, Senators should expect at least one rollcall vote to begin at 11 a.m. The Senate will recess from 12:30 until 2:15 today to allow for the weekly caucus luncheons.

Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday I noted that all of us wish to reform health care but that we need to do so without sacrificing what Americans like about our current system. They like the freedom, they like the choice, they like the quality of care, they like the options, and they like the efficiency. I also noted that the kind of government takeover of health care that some of our Democratic friends are contemplating could lead to a decline in every one of those things. This morning, I wish to explain in a little greater detail how it could happen.

The first point I wish to make is that the very concept of a government option is itself misleading. What starts out as an option could quickly become the only option. This is clear to anyone who realizes that, unlike market-based health plans, any government-run plan would have unlimited access to taxpayer money and could use that money to subsidize the cost of services, and artificially lower prices would make the government-run plan more attractive to individuals and businesses. Some say this could be avoided by creating "safeguards" to ensure a level playing field for the market-based insurers and a government plan. But no safeguard could create a truly level playing field, and any safeguard could easily be eliminated once a government plan is enacted. A government plan would also be able to operate at a loss—a loss the taxpayers would have to cover one way or another.

Government could also keep health care costs artificially low by paying providers less than private insurers do, just as it already does with both Medicare and Medicaid. At first blush, that

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



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