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## Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 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.

Eternal God, You have withheld nothing we need. Today, meet the needs of our lawmakers. Give them so much more than they expect or deserve that they will sing praises for Your goodness. In these days of unprecedented challenges and opportunities, empower them with faith, courage, and good will to make the world a better place. Lord, use them as Your servants to bring healing to our Nation and world.

Today we also pray for the ill, the bereaved, the infirmed, the discouraged, and the lonely. Keep them as the apple of Your eye; hide them in the shadow of Your wings.

We pray in Your merciful 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. HELLER). The majority leader is recognized.

### PROTECTING FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUBSTANCE ABUSE ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, by now, many know the numbers. Overdose deaths in Kentucky were responsible for more than 1,000 deaths in 2014

alone. This is a devastatingly high number, among the highest rates in the Nation, but it is even more heart-breaking when you consider the real-world toll substance abuse can take on friends and family members, not to mention their children.

The trickle-down effects of opioid and heroin abuse are palpable and widespread, lasting and cyclical, but there are steps we can take today to help families impacted by drug abuse and keep more families from ever going through it to begin with. That is why I am proud to join my colleague, the senior Senator from Iowa, in introducing the Protecting Families Affected by Substance Abuse Act, which would reauthorize grants to help children in foster care or at risk of being placed there because of their parents' drug habits. This is what one Kentucky group said about their experience with these grants:

The Regional Partnership Grants have been integral to the implementation of Kentucky-START, which has helped more than 800 Kentucky families and more than 1,600 Kentucky children. It's programs like these, which focus on better outcomes for children and safely reuniting families, that are helping combat the negative effects of the opioid, heroin, and other drug epidemics facing the Commonwealth.

I am also proud of the work that is being done in the Commonwealth to address the opioid crisis, particularly in rural communities. For instance, the Appalachia High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program, HIDTA, was recently recognized by Director Botticelli and the Office of National Drug Control Policy as the top program of its type for 2015. I recognize all they have done in the fight against drug trafficking and illegal drug use. I have no doubt that without their efforts and those of the other leaders in the Commonwealth, the toll of the epidemic would be much greater than it already is.

So whether it is working to support the local HDTAs or working together

with the senior Senator from Iowa and me to pass our legislation to reauthorize grants for local communities, there are many opportunities for Senators to help ensure we respond to the drug epidemic wreaking havoc on our communities at home. For example, there are a number of other important pieces of related legislation in the Senate.

This week Senators discussed one of these bills in the Finance Committee. It would allow Medicare Advantage and Part D plans to implement a prescription drug abuse prevention tool similar to what is already available and used in Kentucky in the Medicaid Program and in private plans. I was proud to join the junior Senator from Pennsylvania as a cosponsor of that bill as well.

Of course, there is the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, CARA. The junior Senators from Ohio and New Hampshire have been leading the charge on that effort, and I thank the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator GRASSLEY, and the chairman of the HELP Committee, Senator ALEXANDER, for working together to have the bill reported out of Judiciary, and it came out of the Judiciary Committee on a voice vote.

In the coming days we will be working to move that important bipartisan bill forward. It has garnered a great deal of support from both sides of the aisle because of its provisions to expand prevention and educational efforts, strengthen prescription drug-monitoring programs, improve treatment programs, and give law enforcement officials more of the tools it needs to address this awful epidemic.

With bipartisan support, we can pass legislation such as CARA and the others I have discussed today in order to promote healthier families and a healthier country.

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



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