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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 PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's opening prayer will be offered by Dr. Benny Tate, senior pastor of Rock Springs Church in Milner, GA.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Our most kind and gracious Heavenly Father, as we bow our heads and hearts before You, we come with a grateful heart. I lift this esteemed body of individuals to Your care and blessing. My prayer is that You will illuminate their understanding because, as Ben Franklin reminded us, You are the Father of lights. I pray for every Member that they would follow the direction of President Abraham Lincoln and be driven to their knees by an overwhelming conviction that they had nowhere else to go. God, give our leaders direction and guidance. I ask You to unify the hearts of the men and women serving in this body, for unity is where You commanded the blessing. May every Member remember the goal is more important than any role, and our Lord teaches us that the greatest of all is the one who serves, and anyone can be great because anyone can serve.

We pray this prayer, respecting all faiths, but we pray this prayer in the Name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Until You come, we pray. 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The Senator from Georgia.

WELCOMING THE GUEST CHAPLAIN

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I want to take just a moment today to recognize Dr. Benny Tate of Rock Springs Church in Milner, GA, for being here with us to deliver this morning's opening prayer.

Benny is my personal pastor, my dear friend, and inspiration for both my wife and me. He offered us constant prayer and support as I entered this political journey and continues to do so today.

Before I was sworn in to the Senate, we joined Benny on a personal mission trip to Haiti. It was a life-changing trip. We went to a community that had been stricken by the earthquake in 2010. We saw kids who were still sleeping and eating on the ground in tents. Yet we saw hope, and that is hope I will carry with me the rest of my life because of this man, Benny Tate.

Thank you, Brother Benny, for your faith, your life, and your service. We are all honored to have you here today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

OBAMACARE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, here is the headline too many Kentuckians had to wake up to this morning: "Health insurance rate hike requests average 17 percent in [my home State]."

The story noted that these double-digit premium increases continue a national trend of hefty hikes as insurers adapt to a market reshaped by President Obama's signature health care law—in other words, more unaffordable premium increases, thanks to ObamaCare.

It was unfortunate to hear some of ObamaCare's defenders try to pretend

otherwise and blame these rates on something like uncertainty over Kynect's future. As the story notes, "the only company that will offer plans statewide on the exchange next year said the requested rate increase has nothing to do with the end of Kynect." Yesterday I shared stories from Kentuckians who continue to suffer under this law.

Thanks to what we learned last night, I am afraid we will be hearing even more. ObamaCare's defenders need to own up to what their partisan law is doing to the middle class and not waste another moment trying to deflect attention elsewhere. They need to work with us to relieve the pain of ObamaCare and start over with real care.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the men and women who sign up to defend our Nation don't ask for much, but our Nation certainly asks a lot of them. They sacrifice on our behalf every day. They deserve the kind of support that the National Defense Authorization Act before us can provide. It will honor commitments to veterans, servicemembers, and their families. It will authorize raises, support Wounded Warriors, and improve military benefits and health care. We need to pass it. The Democratic leader needs to stop preventing us from doing so.

Yesterday in his opening remarks, he claimed he was holding up the bill because he hadn't had the chance to read it—then talked about a new book he is reading.

Today in his opening remarks he will surely make more excuses for Democrats not to do their jobs—then head to a press conference titled "Do Your Job."

You can't make this stuff up. But it is not funny.

Look, we get it. Democrats want to run TV ads claiming the Senate can't

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



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