The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, a Senator from the State of New York.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Gracious Father, You give us inner eyes to see You and Your truth. Today we celebrate the birthday of Helen Keller, born on this day in 1880. Thank You for her courageous life. With Your help she overcame tremendous obstacles of being born blind and deaf. We are grateful for people like Anne Sullivan who taught her to read braille so that later she could attend Radcliffe College and eventually become a prolific author.

Our spirits are lifted today as we ponder Helen Keller’s words, “I thank God for my handicaps, for, through them, I have found myself, my work, my God.” We intentionally adopt for our lives four things Helen Keller urged us to learn in life: “To think clearly without hurry or confusion; To love everyone sincerely; To act in everything with the highest motives; To trust God unhesitatingly.” And for our work, Keller’s words ring true: “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Thank You, Father, for the memory of this great woman. Help us today to use all that we have to do as much good as we can in as many circumstances and to as many people as we can. You are our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

Mrs. Clinton thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The Acting President pro tempore. Under the previous order the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The Acting President pro tempore. The acting majority leader is recognized.

BIPARTISAN PATIENT PROTECTION ACT

The Acting President pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 1052, which the clerk will report. The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1052) to amend the Public Health Service Act and the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to protect consumers in managed care plans and other health coverage.

Pending:

Kyl amendment No. 818, to clarify that independent medical reviewers may not require coverage for excluded benefits and to clarify provisions relating to the independent medical reviewers. Allard amendment No. 817, to exempt small employers from certain causes of action.

THE ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be debate in relation to the Allard amendment. No. 817, prior to a vote on or in relation to the amendment.

The Senator from Nevada.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. On behalf of Senators Snowe and DeWine, Nelson, Lincoln, and others, on the issue of employer liability. We hope we can get the final details of that ironed out soon. I thank those four Senators and others on this issue.

On the issue of scope, I think we are close to an agreement on that major issue.

I thank all involved, including Senator Frist and many others, for the serious negotiations that have been ongoing.

We may end up with a couple of issues that simply require votes on the floor to resolve them and the majority of the Senate will prevail. But I am very hopeful, and frankly very pleased at the progress we have made. All parties have been very cooperative. I think this is a real opportunity to have a Medicare program that is the only way you can resolve an issue that has such detail and it is much complexity associated with it.

Again, I echo the sentiments of the Senator from Nevada. I think we could easily complete this in the next couple of days with the kind of willingness that has been displayed so far.

I yield the floor.

The Acting President pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. One thing I forgot to mention, Senator Kennedy and I, late last night, spoke to Senator Judd Gregg—well, it wasn’t late; it was in the evening. He indicated he would try today to get a list of amendments so we would have a finite list of amendments, so we could work through those.