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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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.

Our Father in Heaven, may Your Name be honored. Today, lead our Senators along the road of humility so that You can exalt them in due time. May they have the wisdom to reap the bountiful harvest that comes from planting the seeds of lowliness and reverential awe.

Lord, make them wise and strong as they face national challenges that threaten our freedom. Guide them, strong Deliverer, for they are pilgrims in time who are headed for eternity. Continue in everything to work for the good of those who love You, who are the called according to Your purposes. Keep us, O God, so dedicated to You and Your purposes that we may do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You.

We pray in Your majestic 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. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

TRAGEDY IN DALLAS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the city of Dallas will hold a me-

morial service in honor of the five police officers slain in the senseless shooting during last week's peaceful protest. The victims are individuals who, like law enforcement officials in each of our communities, willingly put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe. Their loss is a tragic reminder of the courage and selflessness they possessed, just as it is a reminder of the burdens their family bear on our behalf. Today we remember each of them.

I know I speak for the entire Senate in saying our hearts are with the families and friends of each of these victims, the others wounded, the entire law enforcement community, and the city of Dallas.

Our Nation experienced a great deal of suffering and heartbreak last week. We must come together now to overcome these tragedies and allow healing to prevail.

CARA AND MILCON-VA AND ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, let me speak on an entirely different matter.

Angie was "a beautiful girl with a heart of gold and a smile that would light up a room" before her life was changed by heroin. Angie described her addiction to her mother, saying: "Mom, I need this drug like I need air to breathe." It would take Angie experiencing an overdose and her mom begging her to quit before she agreed to seek treatment. Unfortunately, though, like so many addicts, Angie left the treatment facility and started using again. She told her mother: "I'm in a black hole and I can't get out." Angie would end up dying from an overdose, her body dumped callously at the bottom of a muddy creek by her drug dealer.

Tragically, Angie's story is just one glimpse into the widespread prescription opioid and heroin epidemic sweep-

ing our country. In fact, drug overdoses now claim 129 lives a day in America. The families of these victims know more must be done to prevent others from enduring the pain of drug addiction and overdose.

Antidrug groups and law enforcement officials also know more must be done to prevent the widespread loss communities have experienced at the hands of this crisis. That is why nearly 250 antidrug and law enforcement groups across the country have voiced their support for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act conference report.

Just last week, these groups collectively sent a letter urging passage of this legislation, which they called a "truly comprehensive response to the opioid epidemic" that represents "the critical response we need." These groups represent States from coast to coast, from Lifehouse Recovery Connection in California to Justice and Recovery Advocates in Maryland, to Friends of Recovery in New York, among dozens and dozens of others. They have seen the crisis firsthand, and they know the positive impact this bipartisan comprehensive response can have.

Here is what I mean. The National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities have asked Congress to "act quickly" and pass the CARA conference report. They call it "a pivotal step towards stemming the tide of this epidemic."

The Addiction Policy Forum has warned Congress "not [to] play politics" by blocking passage of this CARA conference report. They call it "a monumental step forward—a tipping point to better addressing the paralyzing opioid epidemic."

The Faces and Voices of Recovery has urged support too. They call it "the most expansive Federal, bipartisan legislation to date for addiction support services," and they say it can "help save the lives of countless people."

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



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The Fraternal Order of Police has asked Congress “to adopt the conference report” on behalf of its more than 330,000 members. They call it another “tool to reduce the deaths from this epidemic.”

So we are just one step away from sending this legislation to the President's desk. The House overwhelmingly passed it by a vote of 407 to 5. With continued cooperation, the Senate can send it to the President this week.

Remember, this Senate has provided more than twice as much funding for opioid-related issues as under the previous Senate majority. Let me say that again. This Senate has provided more than twice as much funding for opioid-related issues as under the previous Senate majority. The passage of CARA would represent another crucial step toward combating this crisis.

Of course, this wouldn't have been possible without the unwavering commitment of Members like Senator PORTMAN, Senator AYOTTE, Senator GRASSLEY, and Senator ALEXANDER to move this bill forward. From raising awareness about this crisis to serving as voices for the voiceless and working across the aisle to develop this comprehensive legislative response, these Senators were resolute in their support. In no small part, because of their efforts to drive this bill forward, communities will be better equipped to prevent heroin and prescription opioid abuse in the first place, just as they will be better equipped to save lives and foster treatment and recovery.

I also want to recognize the work of Democratic Members like Senator WHITEHOUSE and Senator KLOBUCHAR for their efforts to help garner support for this bill and move it through the legislative process. There is no reason every Senator shouldn't support it now. The sooner we send this bill to the President's desk, the sooner we can help our communities begin to heal from the prescription opioid and heroin crisis.

Another way to do that is by passing the conference report that would fight Zika and enact record levels of funding for veterans' medical services, including millions for substance abuse and treatment. Democrats are clearly very nervous about their decision to attack women's health and veterans with the filibuster of the anti-Zika funding bill. Who can blame them? They put forth a variety of tortured excuses that don't stand up to scrutiny. They have offered a proposal they hoped would provide political cover by ditching funding for our Nation's veterans. That is clearly not a solution.

I don't know how Democrats plan to explain any of this to veterans this summer. I certainly don't know how Democrats plan to explain this to pregnant mothers. Either Democrats believe Zika is a crisis that requires immediate action or they do not. Republicans believe we ought to pass this bill now because this is a crisis. Our friends across the aisle will have to decide if

they feel the same or if a partisan political group is worth delaying funding to protect families from Zika or funding our veterans.

There is only one option to get anti-Zika funding on the President's desk before September; that is, passing the compromise Zika control and veterans funding legislation that is before us and sending it down to the President for signature.

The rules don't allow for a conference report to be amended, and repassing the same bill that went to conference will not put a bill on the President's desk, it will not create a vaccine, it will not kill a single mosquito, and it will not help a single pregnant mother. So let's do the right thing for our Nation and pass the legislation that is before us.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CARA AND MILCON-VA AND ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING LEGISLATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the tortured explanation from my friend the Republican leader this morning about two important issues—opioids and Zika—is an indication of why the Republicans will no longer have the majority come election day. That is very clear. You can't go on doing what they are doing and expect people to support you.

In the morning, we are going to vote on opioid legislation. It is important we do that. Everyone in this Chamber knows we have to do something to stop this epidemic. It has claimed the lives of too many Americans, and it is doing it every day. Our CARA conference report is a start, but it is a missed opportunity to do something really substantive to stem the number of opioid overdoses across the country, and the reason for that is Republicans refused to allocate money for this legislation.

To have my friend talk about we have done twice as much as we did under the previous majority—why wasn't anything done before? Because it was filibustered. We couldn't do it. There is not enough money to do all the authorizing we have done for these programs. There is not enough money.

In conference, Republicans again rejected our efforts to insert funding into the report. Authorizing legislation is a start, but without resources it is very meaningless. Without any real funding, the conference report comes up really short.

For example, editorials around the country have said as much, and I will pick on one—the New York Times editorial board. This morning, in their piece entitled “Congress Is Voting on an Inadequate Opioid Bill,” they say:

Congress is about to pass a bill meant to deal with the nation's opioid epidemic. It contains some good ideas. It will also be far

less effective at saving lives than it should be.

The Senate is expected to vote on this measure, approved by the House on Friday by an overwhelming 407-to-5 majority. It would authorize addiction treatment and prevention programs to stem what has become a scourge and a disgrace—more than 28,600 overdose deaths in 2014.

And it has gotten worse, not better, but this legislation contains not a penny to support any of these initiatives.

Continuing to read from the article:

The bill would allow the federal government to award grants to states to treat people who are hooked on prescription painkillers and illicit drugs like heroin. In Congress, however, getting a program authorized is only half the battle. Republican leaders say they will allocate funding when lawmakers return to Washington after a seven-week break that begins at the end of this week and ends after Labor Day. Yet there is no good reason for Congress to put off a vote on funding, given the urgency of the problem.

Quoting again, the editorial ends with a further funding caution:

Many lawmakers, especially those who are up for reelection, clearly want to show voters they are doing something about opioids. This bill amounts to progress, but it will not change the trajectory of this epidemic.

That says it all.

Without real funding, this legislation is far from adequate. If we want to stop the increasing number of opioid overdoses, then we need to get serious about finding a way to do it. One way is funding our Nation's response to this scourge.

So I repeat, it is no wonder that there will be a change in the majority of this body with what went on, as evidenced by this morning's statement by my friend the Republican leader. To talk about a tortured explanation on Zika, the Zika problem we have in America today is significant. Last night, 39 new cases were reported in 1 day in America.

These mosquitoes are ravaging—basically two breeds of mosquitoes are causing these problems. They are vicious. They are awful. Mosquitoes have been bad for generations, making people sick and causing people to die, but this is new. Never in the history of all the problems mosquitoes have caused have they caused birth defects. But they do now, and they do it big-time. The President is aware of the issue. He is aware of the issue. It is a very, very frightening thing for our country.

In May, the Senate passed a bipartisan compromise to address this crisis. The bill wasn't perfect. The legislation called for \$1.1 billion in funding and was well short of the \$1.9 billion health experts said was needed to address the crisis, but it was OK. It was certainly a step forward, and 89 Senators—Democrats and Republicans—agreed it was a good step forward. The Senate compromise at the very least was a step in the right direction. That is why, in spite of our serious reservations about the lack of adequate funding, we voted for this legislation, and I am glad we