month is that government funding will be gone. We have to do something about that. And we know, as we have heard all the threats by Republican Senators, that we are not going to fund the government unless something is done with Planned Parenthood. These things take time. We have to get to that. Every day we waste here on the floor, trying to figure out what the Republicans want to do, is time that we should be spending on how we are going to fund the government.

There is no question that the Republican leader now has a very real and important decision to make. We have a lot of work to do this month. We can’t afford to waste time with unnecessary procedural votes.

We also have some things we have to be involved in here that are going to slow up what we do. We have the President of China coming toward the end of the month. We have the Pope coming. We expect as many as 500,000 people here on both sides of the Capitol during the short time the Pope is here on Capitol Hill. We have so many things to do. We need to have a path forward, as I mentioned already, to keep the Federal Government from shutting down because of a lack of funding. We need to figure out a way to keep our highway trust fund solvent, which it is not now. We need to do something about cyber security, and we need to consider important tax extenders legislation, as well as how to avoid default on the debt limit. They are all going to converge at about the same time.

Senate Democrats and Senate Republicans have very real deadlines that we must meet. We can’t meet them because of the procedure in the Senate unless the Republican leader allows us to have some time on the floor. What we don’t have is time to waste on Republican-contrived procedural fights that have no basis in fact or reality. It is time for Republicans to abandon their empty threats and turn voting on final passage of the Iran nuclear agreement resolution of disapproval and move on to other matters.

Mr. President, would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015
The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.J. Res. 61, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 61) amending the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of determining the employers to which the employer mandate applies under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

McConnell amendment No. 2640, of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2641 (to amendment No. 2640), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2642 (to amendment No. 2641), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2643 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2640), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2644 (to amendment No. 2643), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell motion to commit the joint resolution to the Committee on Finance, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 2645, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2646 (to the instructions amendment No. 2645), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2647 (to amendment No. 2646). The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12:30 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. REID, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that until 12:30 p.m. today, the time during quorum calls be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, if I might, through the Chair, if Senator CORKER would like to take his 5 minutes first, I am happy to allow that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for her tremendous courtesy, and I will actually take 1 minute.

This afternoon we are going to have a very sober and dignified debate about a foreign policy issue of huge consequence to our Nation and certainly to the world. I wish to thank Senator MCCONNELL and Senator REID for setting up a format that reflects that. I know many on the other side of the aisle have been concerned about amendments that may call for this to be a different type of debate. I would like to point out that the leader yesterday filled the tree. I just want People to know that.

I wish to thank Senator CARDIN and Senator MENENDEZ before him for the way we have all been able to work through a lot of issues that have come up. What I hope doesn’t happen today is that somehow or another, we begin referring back to incidents and trying to turn this into some type of partisan debate. We worked through August. Things happened all along the way. We worked through those. We ended up with the ability as a Congress, on an executive agreement, which we all know was meant to be implemented without any congressional involvement whatsoever, going straight to the U.N. Security Council—we all worked together to figure out a way to have this debate and then vote on the substance of this legislation.

So I want to thank my friends on both sides of the aisle. It passed overwhelmingly—98 to 1. I think, actually, the Senator from California was absent on that day. I look forward to a very substantive debate taking place on this most important issue.

Later today, I will have longer and more formal comments to make about the substance of what was agreed to by the administration and other countries involved in the process.

I am looking forward to this. I want to thank again my friends on the other side of the aisle that I think we set this up in a manner to be a dignified, sober debate about one of the most important foreign policy issues that will come before us. Thankfully it is coming before us because we all forced it to come before us, to have this debate, and to be able to weigh in.

I yield the floor. I thank very much the Senator from California for her comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I wish to thank my chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator CORKER, for the courtesy I do not have on this particular matter, but there are a lot of matters when it comes to foreign policy on which we do agree. I do agree this should be a very straightforward debate—either you are for this agreement or you are not.

I think the fact that Congress is voting on it is good. I did support that in the committee. That calls for regular order as far as the way we treat this very important issue. I am very proud to stand here today as the longest serving member sitting on the Foreign Relations Committee today. Out of all of the members, I have been there the longest. When I got there, I did not have these gray hairs. I am not blaming any of the topics that came before us for these gray hairs; however, we have had some tough debates, and this certainly is one of them. I know my friend has a lot to do. I want to say again to the administration and other countries involved in the process.

I am looking forward to this. I want to say to him today: Thank you, Mr. President. In that race for President that you ran, you were very clear that you were going to reach out your hand and see if we could avoid another war in the Middle East. I hope and pray this Senate will give us and the world this opportunity.

As the President has said, a military option is always on the table. It is in our Constitution that the President can respond to a threat. So nothing in this agreement takes a military response off the table. But it does say
that diplomacy should have a chance to work. This diplomacy includes much of the world. That is why it is so remarkable.

I also want to give special thanks to two former Secretaries of State—Colin Powell, a Republican, and Hillary Clinton, a Democrat—for weighing in on the side of diplomacy. As Senators, we deal with thousands of issues in the course of our careers, but we will long remember those that actually change the course of history. Those kinds of votes tend to get a lot of attention and they are votes about which we must look deeply into our hearts and into our minds. We have to look at the facts. Facts are stubborn things. No matter what 30-second ad there is, no matter what newspaper ad there is, there are facts that are obvious. I want to go through those facts. I have them here on this chart.

One, this agreement cuts off the uranium pathway to a bomb. It does it by reducing Iran's enriched uranium by 98 percent and severely restricting its ability to enrich uranium. That is No. 1.

Two, it cuts off the plutonium pathway to a bomb. They do that by dismantling Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium and replacing it with a core that cannot produce weapons-grade plutonium. That is the second part of the agreement.

Three, it includes the most intrusive inspections regime ever negotiated. Let me repeat that. The deal includes the most intrusive inspections regime ever negotiated. This means 24/7 monitoring of Iran's declared sites as well as inspections to the entire nuclear supply chain, from its uranium mines and mills, to its conversion facility, to its centrifuge manufacturing and storage facility. This is critical. It provides the International Atomic Energy Agency—you will hear it referred to as the IAEA—a mechanism to make sure that Iran grant access to its suspicious sites. No other international agreement has ever done this before. So when you hear colleagues say, “Well, Iran has 24 days, you know, to hide things,” all the experts will tell you that Iran has 24 days, you know, to hide things, but you cannot hide nuclear material. It has a half-life of thousands of years. But no other international agreement, not even the agreements we have with the IAEA, say that the IAEA has a deadline where access has to be granted to suspicious sites. No other international agreement has ever done this before.

Next, it requires the Iranians to disclose their past nuclear activities before they can receive any sanctions relief. Let me say that again. The Iranians have to disclose their past nuclear activities before they can receive any sanctions relief. Because of all of this, more than 100 nations support this deal, including many of our closest allies, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, France, Japan, and Canada—100 nations. That is why 29 of the Nation's top scientists, including 6 Nobel laureates, call the deal “innovative and strenghtening, and it serve as a ‘guidepost for future agreements.’” One hundred nations, 29 of our Nation's top scientists. That is also why 60 bipartisan national security leaders support it, including leaders such as Madeleine Albright, Thomas Pickering, and Ryan Crocker. You know those names. You know those people. They have integrity. They have intelligence. They have experience. They were appointed by Republicans and Democrats alike. They point out that there are no viable alternatives to this agreement. They are right.

Anyone—you are going to hear this from my Republican friends—anyone who says we should go back to the bargaining table—and you are going to keep hearing this over and over again: Oh, just go back to the negotiating table. Anyone who says that after 20 months of negotiations and huge support in the world is either engaging in fantasy or they truly want to sink this deal. So if you are not going to sink this deal, you must just go back to the table. Just forget the support of the 100 nations. Just go back and renegotiate this deal,” let me tell you, they are either engaging in fantasy or they want to sink this deal. There is a hard, cold truth here: If we walk away, there will be no agreement. Let’s be clear. If that is your position, why don’t you say it? But don’t say “Go back to the negotiating table. No problem.” If we walk away, there will be no agreement. America will be isolating itself and undermining its role as a global leader on arms control. That is why more than 100 former U.S. Ambassadors say that without this deal, “the risks to the security of the United States and our friends and allies would be far greater” than if we do the deal.

We know right now that Iran has enough nuclear material to build 10 nuclear weapons. So whom are you kidding when you say the world will be safer if this agreement falls and Iran is left to continue the dangerous course it began way back in 1984? We passed sanctions. We did it right here. I spoke on that. I said: We have to keep our eye on Iran. We don’t trust them. So they came to the table. We have a meeting with the various Ambassadors, the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary. This is what he said. In a meeting with the various Ambassadors of the countries that cut this deal, the same thing was said, but let’s say it the way he did. This is the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary:

If the United States were to walk away from this agreement, then the world would be self-inflicted wounds we can ill afford.

Philip Hammond, the UK Foreign Secretary.

Let’s put up the statement by Philip Hammond, the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary.

So, again, look at what he is saying. He is saying that if we walk away, the hardliners in Iran would be strengthened. They would win. So I ask opponents of this deal: Why do you want to stand with the hardliners in Iran? Because you are standing with the hardliners in Iran who shout “Death to America,” “Death to Israel.” You are standing with them. They want to kill the deal.

I am under no illusion that this agreement solves all of our problems with Iran. I am under no illusions that this agreement will make Iran suddenly some positive player on the world stage that we can cozy up to. No. No. That is why this agreement is not based on trust. As Hillary Clinton said today, it is based on distrust and verification. She is right. This agreement is also based on the most stringent inspections regime ever negotiated. Iran is a bad and dangerous actor. I do not think there is any disagreement on that. That is why its nonnuclear activities will remain subject to tough sanctions. But here is the ultimate question each of us must ask ourselves: Would we rather have a bad and dangerous actor with a nuclear bomb or a bad and dangerous actor without a nuclear bomb? My kids would say that is a no-brainer. The answer is obvious. We do not want Iran to have a nuclear bomb. That is why we need this deal. If Iran cheats, it will be in front of the whole world and I will be among the first to consider any and all options.

I began by saying this is one of the most important votes we will ever cast in our lifetime. I am reminded of another one, my vote against the Iraq war. It was lonely then—only 23 of us—but you have to look at the situation. Some of the leading voices against this deal were the very same people who brought us the Iraq war. Remember Paul Wolfowitz saying the Iraqis would “greet us as liberators?”
CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE
September 9, 2015

S6480

Remember Dick Cheney, who is out there now saying: Vote no on this deal. Oh, it is terrible.

Remember what he said as he drew us into Iraq? He said there was ‘‘no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction.’’ And remember when he said the whole war would be ‘‘weeks rather than months’’? I remember that after 10 years of war.

Remember Bill Kristol saying we should be punished when we discover the weapons of mass destruction?’’

And, remember, some of our colleagues who are here today pushed hard for the Iraq war and said it would be great for America and great for Israel. Well, they were wrong then, and they are wrong now.

Look, it is no secret that the Prime Minister of our great ally, Israel, is on the other side of this argument, but we must also remember that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a chief leader for the Iraq war and said in 2002: ‘‘If you take out . . . Saddam’s regime, I guarantee you that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region.’’ Prime Minister Netanyahu argued for the war by saying: ‘‘I guarantee you that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region.’’

Positive reverberations? Instead, devastating consequences. More than 4,000 of our brave American men and women were killed and nearly 32,000 wounded. We know that a lot of the Baathists joined ISIS, and the Baathists were loyal to Saddam. Now they are guiding ISIS. No positive reverberations there, devastating consequences.

If we were completely honest and we really asked the question: Who won the war in Iraq? The answer comes back, Iran. Iran. They have never had more influence in modern times on Iraq than they have today. They have a chief supporter in Iraq and the Iraqi-American relationship, I strongly support this deal.

I am the proud author of the last two United States-Israel security bills passed by Congress. They were called the United States-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act of 2012 and the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014. I believe, as the author of those two bills that President Obama signed, this deal makes the United States safer, it makes Israel safer, and it makes the entire world safer.

We said that Prime Minister Netanyahu is very clearly opposed, but let’s look at some of the top military experts in Israel—experts who understand what is paramount to Israel’s security.

Let’s look at Ami Ayalon. He is a former head of Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security service. He said: ‘‘When it comes to Iran’s nuclear capability, this [deal] is the best option. . . .’’ Now this isn’t just some citizen in the street; this is the former head of Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security service, saying this.

Then there is Amram Mitzna, a retired major general in the Israel Defense Forces, the IDF, former member of the Knesset and former mayor of Haifa, who said: ‘‘For Israel’s sake and all the people of the Middle East, we must not miss this opportunity.’’

There is Efraim Halevy, former director of the Mossad, who said: ‘‘Without an agreement, Iran will be free to act as it wishes. . . .’’

Let me repeat that. This is the former director of the Mossad, who said: ‘‘Without an agreement, Iran will be free to act as it wishes. . . .’’

These leaders from Israel whom I have quoted are some of the most knowledgeable in the world when it comes to Israel’s security, and they believe this deal will make Israel safer. It doesn’t change the fact that the Israeli Government opposes this. I agree with that; I understand that. But there is a split in Israel, and it is worth commenting on it.

With their expertise and their knowledge, these endorsements by these Israelis should be taken seriously. Also, the endorsements from our current and former colleagues in Congress should be taken seriously.

Eleven Jewish former Members have weighed in, saying: ‘‘We championed the U.S.-Israel relationship, and we all strongly support this agreement because it will enhance the security of the U.S., the State of Israel, and the entire world.’’

I thank them for weighing in. This is one of those debates that is very hard—regardless of your position—because it is emotional, it is difficult, and yet they weighed in, as did the Israeli security experts. Believe me, the pressure on them not to talk was enormous.

This deal also has the support of some of the most knowledgeable and respected foreign policy lawmakers who ever served in Congress. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD two op-eds, one by Spinitron, written by Senators Carl Levin and John Warner and another by Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Aug. 13, 2015]

WHY HAWKS SHOULD ALSO BACK THE IRAN DEAL

(By Carl Levin and John Warner)

We both were elected to the Senate in 1978 and privileged to serve on the Senate Armed Services Committee for 30 years, during which we each held committee leadership positions of chairman or ranking minority member. The Iran Agreement negotiated by the United States and other leading world powers for many reasons, including its limitations on Iran’s nuclear activities, its strong inspections regime, and the ability to quickly re-impose sanctions should Iran violate its provisions. But we also see a compelling reason to support the agreement that has gotten little attention: Rejecting it would weaken the deterrent value of America’s military option.

As former chairmen of the Senate Armed Services Committee, we have always believed that the U.S. should keep a strong military option on the table. If Iran pursues a nuclear weapon, some believe that military action is inevitable if we’re to prevent it from reaching its goal. We don’t subscribe to that notion, but we are skeptical that should Iran attempt to develop a nuclear weapon, we could deter them from pursuing it through economic sanctions alone.

How does rejecting the agreement give America a weaker military hand to play? Let’s imagine a world in which the United States rejects the nuclear accord that all other parties have embraced. The sanctions now in place would likely not be maintained and enforced by all the parties to the agreement, those limited to Iran’s non-deterrent value. Iran would effectively argue to the world that it had been willing to negotiate an agreement, only to have that agreement rejected by a recalcitrant America.

In that world, should we find credible evidence that Iran is starting to move toward a nuclear weapon, we believe that the United States would almost certainly consider use of the military option to stop that program. But it’s highly unlikely that our traditional European allies, let alone China and Russia, would support the use of the military option since we had undermined the diplomatic path. Iran surely would know this, and so from the start, Iran would have less fear of a military option than if it faced a unified coalition.

While the United States would certainly provide the greatest combat power in any military action, other partners make valuable contributions—not just in direct participation, but also in access rights, logistics, intelligence, and other critical support.

If we reject the agreement, we risk isolating ourselves and damaging our ability to assemble the strongest possible coalition to stop Iran.

In short, then, rejecting the Iran deal would erode the current deterrent value of the military option, making it more likely we would have to choose a military weapon, and would then make it more costly for the U.S. to mount any subsequent military operation. It would tie the hands of any future president trying to build international participation and support for military force against Iran should that be necessary.

Those who think the use of force against Iran is almost inevitable, as we make the military option to be as credible and effective as possible, both as a deterrent to Iran’s nuclear ambitions and in destroying Iran’s military capabilities, must also recognize that this is already necessary. For that to be the case, the United States needs to be a party to the agreement rather than being the cause of its collapse.

In our many years on the Armed Services Committee, we saw time and again how America is stronger when we fight alongside allies. Iran must consider that it is aware that a collective framework of deterrence stands resolute, and that if credible evidence evolves that Iran is taking steps towards a nuclear arsenal, it will lose the possibility of military action by a unified coalition of nations to stop their efforts.

In deal on the table is a strong agreement on many counts, and it leaves in place the robust deterrence and credibility of a military option. We urge our former colleagues not to take any action which would undermine the deterrent value of a coalition that participates in and could support the use of a military option. The failure of the United States to join the agreement would have that effect.

[Aug. 30, 2015]

THERE ARE NO PERFECT NUCLEAR DEALS

(By Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar)

During the Cold War both Republican and Democratic presidents accepted less-than-
perfect arms pacts with the Soviets. We need to do the same with Iran.

At the height of the Cold War, the Soviet Union had thousands of nuclear warheads aimed at America, and the two countries were subject to numerous arms controls agreements. But progress was hard-fought and incremental at best. In an ideal world, the Soviet Union would have agreed to severe constraints that would have helped Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and many other elements of the former Soviet Union’s WMD programs.

These experiences underscored for us that arms control agreements are rarely finished absolutes. Inevitably, their success depends on many factors that play out after the agreement is signed, including alliancing cohe- sion, congressional funding for implementation and the political will of the parties to see verification and enforcement.

Over the past few years, every member of Congress will have the opportunity to weigh the terms of the nuclear agreement against all viable alternatives. In our view, the key questions regarding this agreement are: Will it stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon? What are the risks of going forward with this agreement? And what are the risks if Congress rejects the agreement?

The plus-sides of this deal are clear. It includes severe restrictions on uranium enrichment and plutonium production, required transparency into Iran’s nuclear activities and inspection provisions to assure the international community that Iran’s nuclear program is, and remains, peaceful. Reports that Iran was already working to address unresolved allegations about its nuclear behavior have been refuted by the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who has stated that the arrangements are technically sound, consistent with the IAEA’s long-established practices and do not compromise IAEA safeguards standards in any way. Such a report taken alone will help deter Iran from cheating and provide the means to detect violations in time to take strong action if required.

Could we conceive a stronger deal? Of course—that has been true of every arms control negotiation. We have heard critics suggest that Iran would have agreed to entirely dismantle its nuclear enrichment facilities and stop all activities related to its civil nuclear program if only the U.S. had been tougher in negotiations. But had the U.S. taken such an approach in the early 1990s, we would not have encouraged and helped Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus to dismantle their weapons and materials of mass destruction, and the risk of accidents or catastrophic terrorism would have been far higher over the past 20 years.

As with other agreements, Congress must recognize that there is no such thing as “per- fect” verification. What is crucial, however, is whether “effective” verification can be achieved. Can we measure in time to take action before Iran could achieve a militarily significant advance? We believe the answer to that question is yes. The moni- toring and verification provisions of this agreement are unprecedented in the history of arms control in their comprehensiveness and intrusiveness, and together with our intelligence capabilities should give us powerful tools to achieve effective verification.

Opponents of this agreement have offered criticism that sanctions relief would provide Iran with an opportunity to secure or red- uce by the defeat of this agreement rests on a patently false assumption. Anyone be- lieving that the present effective economic sanctions against Iran will be lifted in China, India and other nations if Congress rejects this agreement is in a dream world. This agreement and the alliance that brought it to Iran to the negotiating table through sanctions has focused on Iran’s nuclear activi- ties, not its regional behavior, though both are serious dangers. This alliance could evolve to another level without either to pursue a broad, nuclear and regional agenda on which alliance partners themselves strongly disagree.

With or without this agreement, the U.S. must continue and intensify our efforts with other partners to challenge and counter Iran’s destabilizing regional activities and strengthen our cooperation with Israel and the Gulf States. If this agreement is re- jected, both of these objectives become more difficult.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, members of Congress must think long and hard about the consequences if this agree- ment is turned down. There is no escaping the conclusion that this will inevitably be grave implications for U.S. security and for U.S. international leadership in the decades ahead. Sanctions allies will go their own way, reducing the effectiveness of our financial tools and leaving Iran in a stronger posi- tion across the board. Any future effort by this president or the next to assemble a sanctions coalition, rather than Iran’s destabilizing regional and Israeli and the Gulf States, Congress must listen carefully to the conclusion that this risk can be avoided or re- sisted.

It is striking to realize that we don’t have one Republican for this. I am kind of amazed. All of the focus was on the Democrats, really. A few are opposing and a vast majority are for it.

I am surprised that a Richard Lugar couldn’t sway anybody, that a Colin Powell couldn’t sway anybody, that a John Warner couldn’t sway anybody, and, also, the religious communities across the United States apparently aren’t swaying anybody. It is telling that 340 U.S. rabbis fear that if the United States rejects the deal: “. . . the outcome will be the collapse of the international sanctions regime, an Ira- nian nuclear bomb, [and] isolation of Israel and the United States from international partners.”

There is also support from more than 53 Christian leaders and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, who referred to Pope Francis’s hope for a deal that he says is a “definitive step toward a more secure and fraternal world.”

I don’t know why we haven’t been able to really see bipartisan support in the Senate. I am puzzled by it. I am saddened by it. It appears to me this is political. President Obama wants it. He worked hard for it. They don’t like it. This is what I think.

I may be wrong, but it is hard for me to imagine, with all of these solid Repub- licans in favor of this deal outside of the Senate and the House, we cannot seem to have bipartisanism. These faith leaders are speaking on behalf of their congregations, on behalf their con- gregations, and their faithful. They are speaking for so many Americans who have prayed on this issue and have come to the conclusion that it is best for our Nation.
Believe me, it is easier to say no. You

A deal by its very nature is not per-
fect. It is not. That is why it is a deal.

A deal by its very nature is not per-
fect. That is why it is a deal. Other-
wise it would be a flat. Oh, I want this.
OK. We make deals. We do it here all
the time, but somehow this deal—
because it isn’t perfect and everyone
goes it isn’t perfect—somehow we
cannot seem to get bipartisanship. It
breaks my heart, frankly.

Colleagues, this is a really a major
moment for us, as individuals and for our
Nation. We will be judged on this vote,
and we should be judged on this vote.
We should be judged on votes that
could lead to another war in the Middle
East. At least one of our colleagues on
the other side of the aisle admitted his
truthful position. I respect that. He
said we can “set Iran’s nuclear facili-
ties back to day zero” using military
force.

He is voting no on this agreement,
and anyone else who joins him should
know this: to walk away means Iran
could continue its nuclear program at
will. This is not acceptable, and it means a path to
terror.

Let us not tiptoe around this. This
option, the option of no agreement,
Isn’t going back to the bargaining
table because everyone has said—very
clearly, all our allies—they are not
going back to the bargaining table.

So we have no agreement, and to
walk away means the international
sanctions collapse. If we think that we,
ourselves, can now turn to our best
friend and allies, such as the United
Kingdom, and say: Well, if you don’t go
along with us, we are not trading with
you anymore—that is not going to hap-
pen.

To walk away means Iran continues
its nuclear program because there
won’t be a deal. To walk away means we
will find ourselves isolated from
some of our best allies in the world.
Remember, 100 nations support this
deal, including the United Kingdom,
France, Germany, Australia, Japan,
and Canada. To walk away—I believe—
means war, and the other side would
say: Oh, that is just a scare tactic.

It is not a scare tactic. If you cannot
go back to the negotiating table be-
cause nobody is going back there with
you—you can go back. You will be
there by yourself. Iran walks away.
They continue with their program, and
we are not going to stand for that. We
have all said that.

So to walk away, in my view, means
war. Because when we walk away,
there is no deal. Iran keeps its nuclear
program, and that cannot be allowed to
happen.

Another one of our colleagues whom
we serve with—and I have a lot of re-
spect for and a good friendship with—
one said: Bomb, bomb, bomb, bomb
Iran.

You remember that. He is going to
vote no on this deal, and that is going
to move us more toward his reality.

Wars are easy to start, and they are
difficult to end. Wars are a stain on the
human race, and we should do every-
thing in our power to avoid war. Now,
avoiding war does not mean giving up
strength because, again, a military re-
sponse to Iran is always on the table.
And if Iran violates the deal, the whole
world will know it. It will be right out
there, and the world will stand with
us in taking action.

Diplomacy is the first resort; war is
the last resort. I have voted for war,
OK. I said: Let’s go after bin Laden. I
voted for that war. It is easy to start,
hard to end.

So, my colleagues, I will say it again.
This is our chance, and this is our
choice. History will judge us.

With this one vote, we have the
chance to seize a historic opportunity
to once again make America a shining
example of leadership. With this vote,
we have a chance, a real chance, to
make this world safer right now for our
children and our grandchildren.

I yield the floor to the PRESIDING
OFFICER, the Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I thank
the Senator from California for her
service on the Foreign Relations Com-
mittee and her passionate comments.
Obviously, approving this different
place policywise than she is.

I do want to point out there is bipar-
tisanship here. There is bipartisan dis-
approval. While I know the Senator
from California knows a great deal
about foreign policy, as she is the long-
est serving member on the committee,
the two who have spent more time
than anyone understanding the nature
of this deal, the impact it is going to
have on the region—more time because
there has been more meetings with
them—are the two Democrats, the
ranking member today and the former
ranking member, who both oppose this.

So there is bipartisanship.

I don’t view this as political at all. I
think we have been able to establish
strong bipartisan bill to vote on this.
We have strong bipartisanship in both
bodies, I might say, in the House and
the Senate, in opposing this.

I hope what we will be able to do is
not cast aspersions about people’s mo-
tives but really debate this on the sub-
stance.

If I could, and then I will be glad to
take my colleague’s question.

Without objection, I would like to
yield the remainder of Republican time
as in morning business in this manner:
20 minutes to Senator Cruz, who I
think will be here momentarily; 20
minutes to Senator McCAIN; 15 minutes
to Senator VITTER; and 5 minutes to
Senator King.

I don’t want to burn up a lot of our
time, but if there is no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there
objection?

Hearing none, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORKER. I will be glad to take
my colleague’s question briefly, but I
don’t want to burn up a lot of our time.

Mrs. BOXER. Briefly, this is not a
lot.

What I wanted to point out is exactly
that: that you do have a few Demo-
crats, I think four Democrats, who
have come down “no,” but we don’t
have one Republican on the other side.
That was the only point I was making.

So my colleague is right. You have
bipartisanship. Why aren’t the Republi-
cans supporting this? It just seems odd
to me. And to me it does feel political from your side be-
cause when you have Colin Powell, who is
for the agreement, and you have John
McCain, who is for the agreement—
former ambassadors and military peo-
lies—it just seems odd. I was making
that point.

But my colleague is right. You do
have bipartisan support on your side,
and I am lamenting the fact that we
don’t have it on ours because it doesn’t
feel right to me, having gone through
these debates in the past.

Mr. CORKER. I think in closing—I
will leave the floor, so I am not burn-
ing up any more of our time—

I think there are very legitimate con-
cerns about the fact we began this to
dismantle Iran’s nuclear program, to
end their program, per the President,
and by approval of this deal we actu-
ally are approving that different place
of Iran’s nuclear program—the greatest
state sponsor of terror in the world.
Obviously, that creates a lot of issues
and concerns. That is why, I believe,
we see so many people disapproving of
this agreement.

With that, Mr. President, I yield
the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The
clerk will call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The
clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without
objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, let’s start
out with a little simple math: 58 to 42
is not a victory for the side with 42.
Even in the case of ObamaCare—a
truly disastrous piece of legislation
which was forced through the Congress
on purely partisan lines—that legisla-
tion received a majority. This isn’t
even close. Because not only has the
Republican caucus held firm and unani-
mously rejected this catastrophic deal,
which has also been joined by colleagues
from across the aisle who are not blind-
ed by partisan politics and understand
the threat that is posed by President
Obama’s proposed nuclear deal with
Iran.

I want to take a moment to acknowl-
edge them, as they are among those
who know best how bad this deal is.
First, Senator CHUCK SCHUMER of
New York, who has been a long-time advo-
cate for the State of Israel. It is no se-
cret Senator SCHUMER and I have had
our disagreements on a great many
issues, but I have been proud to stand
with him for Israel and against this
Iranian nuclear deal, and I was proud
to stand with Senator SCHUMER when Congress voted unanimously on the legislation I introduced to ban a known terrorist—Hamid Abouatlebi, who participated in the 1979 Iranian hostage-taking—from becoming Iran’s Ambassador to the United Nations. I was privileged to join Senator MENENDEZ of New Jersey, the former chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, in introducing that legislation.

Senator MENENDEZ and I have worked together on a wide range of issues, including legislation to provide a Rewards for Justice reward last summer of $5 million for the capture or kill of the Hamas terrorist who murdered Israeli American teenager Naftali Fraenkel and his two teenage friends.

Senator BEN CARDIN of Maryland, the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, whose name is on the legislation on which we are scheduled to vote this week. Certainly Senator CARDIN and I have worked together on this deal as anyone, and his opposition should make all Senators, particularly Democratic Senators, take note.

Senator JOE MANCHIN of West Virginia, my colleague on the Senate Committee on Armed Services, understands the threats to national security posed by this Iranian nuclear deal, I was honored to work with him and have his support for the resolution I introduced condemning Hama’s use of human shields during Israel’s action in Gaza last summer—a disgusting terrorist tactic that was aided andabetted by Hamas’s Iranian sponsors.

Democrats should take note that the ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee, the former ranking member on the Foreign Relations Committee, and the Democrat scheduled to be the next Democratic leader have all come out and valued national security above partisan loyalty. That ought to be reason enough to cause every other Democratic Member of this body to take a second assessment of their own decisions.

I also want to mention Senator CHRIS COONS of Delaware, who even though he plans, unfortunately, to vote in favor of this deal, maintains it should go to a vote and not go into effect by default because the minority can block cloture through a filibuster. In these dark times, it is at least encouraging to know that there are still a handful of Democrats, willing to defend national security, and to put country in front of party, are willing to defend national security. That used to be a robust tradition on the Democratic side of the aisle. I should think there were more Scoop Jackson Democrats in the United States Senate. I would that there were more JFK Democrats in the United States Senate. I would that there were more Joe Lieberman Democrats in the United States Senate.

It is also telling that not a single Republican was persuaded by the President and Secretary of State when they told us this is the only option; that is, this deal, this catastrophic deal, or war and that this is the very best deal we could have gotten. If that is so, we shouldn’t have been negotiating in the first place.

Indeed, as Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu noted, the one person telling the truth about this deal is Iran’s President Ruhani, who observed that Iran has gotten everything they wanted from this deal because this deal is, as Prime Minister Netanyahu predicted, a very bad deal and a historic mistake.

First and foremost, this terrible deal will not stop a virulently anti-American and anti-Israeli regime from getting a nuclear bomb. The so-called Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Khamenei, declared that Israel—which he calls the Little Satan—would be nothing in 25 years and that those 25 years would be made miserable because of the heroic attacks of radical Islamic fundamentalism. He is the Great Satan. He didn’t say this in 1979. He tweeted it yesterday.

This is the Ayatollah Khamenei, the person with whom the administration is making a deal that facilitates his hate-filled policies, not being a candidate. He is telling us he intends to do everything possible to murder as many Israelis as possible and to murder as many Americans as possible.

President Obama’s deal, if it goes through, will allow Khamenei and his fellow mullahs to retain their centrifuges. They have established their “right to enrich” uranium. They have rejected attempts to inspect their sites with possible military dimensions related to their nuclear program. Indeed, this deal is without any credible inspection mechanism.

Not long ago, the administration was promising the American people so-called “anytime, anywhere inspections” of Iran’s nuclear program. It agreed to any deal with Tehran before it has even voted yet on this deal, and we are already seeing the consequences play out in real time. Senior Iranian officials, including Suleimani, who is technically still under a U.N. travel ban, have traveled to Moscow to make arms deals with Vladimir Putin—arms that will flow to Iran’s terrorist proxies, from Yemen to Gaza to Lebanon to Syria. Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has gotten an economic lifeline in the form of a $1 billion line of credit. Senior Iranian officials have announced to the media they will redouble their support for Hamas because they “reject the existence of any Israeli on this earth.”

If we want to understand who we are dealing with, that is exactly what their intent is. In other words, the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism, Iran, just got a $150 billion windfall courtesy of the U.S. Government.

The grim consequences of this activity can be seen on our TV screens as we witness hundreds of thousands of panicked refugees fleeing out of places where Iran’s proxies are active. Of course, ISIS and its affiliates bear significant responsibility for this crisis. But make no mistake about it; Tehran’s bloody fingerprints are all over it as well. From the Houthis to Hamas to Hezbollah, they are enabling against efforts by the nation of Israel to stop a nuclear weapons regime. That is a remarkable commitment Senate Democrats have signed on to.

In addition, this terrible deal makes concessions to Iran completely unrestrained. For example, it provides sanctions relief for designated terrorists such as General Suleimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard’s elite Quds Force, who should have no association with Iran’s nuclear program whatsoever.

If we believe in a military general covered in this agreement—this man, General Suleimani, who has blood on his hands from the IEDs that he funneled into Iraq that murdered and maimed hundreds of American service men and women.

And even while Iranians such as Suleimani get relief, four Americans were cruelly excluded from this deal: Pastor Saeed Abedini, an American citizen imprisoned for 8 years in an Iranian prison for the crime of preaching the Gospel; former marine Amir Hekmati; Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian; and Bob Levinson. It is unfathomable to me that we agreed to any deal with Tehran before they were liberated.

Finally, this terrible deal provides Iran with some $150 billion in economic relief, which will inevitably be used to finance the violent terrorist that has been a signature of the Islamic Republic since the 1979 revolution. It will, in effect, make the U.S. Government the leading international financier of terrorism. We haven’t even voted yet on this deal, and we are already seeing the consequences play out in real time.

Senior Iranian officials, including Suleimani, who is technically still under a U.N. travel ban, have traveled to Moscow to make arms deals with Vladimir Putin—arms that will flow to Iran’s terrorist proxies, from Yemen to Gaza to Lebanon to Syria. Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad has gotten an economic lifeline in the form of a $1 billion line of credit. Senior Iranian officials have announced to the media they will redouble their support for Hamas because they “reject the existence of any Israeli on this earth.”

If we want to understand who we are dealing with, that is exactly what their intent is. In other words, the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism, Iran, just got a $150 billion windfall courtesy of the U.S. Government.

The grim consequences of this activity can be seen on our TV screens as we witness hundreds of thousands of panicked refugees fleeing out of places where Iran’s proxies are active. Of course, ISIS and its affiliates bear significant responsibility for this crisis. But make no mistake about it; Tehran’s bloody fingerprints are all over it as well. From the Houthis to Hamas to Hezbollah, they are enabling
and financing the radical Islamic terrorists who are making life, from North Africa to the Middle East, utterly untenable. They are murdering Christians and Jews and other Muslims who do not embrace their radical jihadist creed.

This isn’t complicated. The American people know this is a terrible deal. That is why President Obama has only been able to persuade a minority of their duly elected representatives to support it. It is why, as Secretary Kerry frankly admitted, they didn’t even try to submit their deal to the Senate as a treaty, as they should have done. They prefer to jam it through by default or by Presidential veto—anything to get what they believe will be a domestic political legacy. How typical it is of the Washington cartel that one-third of one House of Congress is trying to force this catastrophic deal on our country.

Yet even in the face of 42 Democrats making this decision to value partisan loyalty over the national security of our country, over standing with our friend and ally the nation of Israel, and over protecting the lives of millions of Americans—even in the face of that—there were still serious steps we can take right now. There are two individuals in Washington, DC, who have the capacity still to stop this deal. Their names are Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL and Speaker of the House JOHN BOEHNER—simply to enforce MCCONNELL and Speaker of the Househip of my party—Leader MCCONNELL, these sanctions until the review period has not started and does not start terms of Corker-Cardin, the review period does not start until the administration submits the entirety of the deal to Congress. That entirety is defined under Corker-Cardin to include any and all side deals.

This deal has at least two side deals with the IAEA concerning inspections. It is a political sweetheart deal that trusts the Iranians to inspect and verify. So when you list the litany of horrors coming out of Iran under the Corker-Cardin deal, you can wipe away every bit as evil, every bit as consumed with bilious hatred resources, billions of dollars. And, if this deal goes through, we know to an absolute certainty that Americans will be murdered, Israelis will be murdered, and Europeans will be murdered. I ask every Democratic Member of this body to think before you cast a vote: How will you look in the eyes of the mothers and fathers and sons and daughters of those who will be murdered by Iran’s nuclear weapons? What can America offer the leaders of Iran that would—given, I assume, that they would be willing to make a deal to acquire nuclear weapons? That in every case the Americans can offer will be nothing more than a small bit of teeth in it that ought to be in it. They are murdering by the hundreds of millions, with the IAEA concerning inspections, and all side deals.

Osama bin Laden murdered nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001. Bin Laden never had $100 billion at his disposal. He had no control over the billions of dollars you have used for the purpose of funding the terrorist organizations that you call allies. And if—God forbid—Iran ever acquires nuclear weapons, it will be a thousandfold worse. Osama bin Laden murdered nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001. Bin Laden never had $100 billion at his disposal. He had no control over the billions of dollars you have used for the purpose of funding the terrorist organizations that you call allies.

And, if—God forbid—Iran ever acquires a nuclear weapon, the odds are unacceptably high that they will use it to acquire nuclear weapons. That is what is at stake in this agreement I don’t believe is a fair deal. What does it mean to face these security issues, having to acquire nuclear weapons? That is blood you can’t wash your hands of. When you knowingly and willingly send billions of dollars to jihadists who have declared their intention to murder us, there is no excuse you can hide behind when they carry through on the intention using the billions of dollars you have given.

And, if—God forbid—Iran ever acquires a nuclear weapon, the odds are unacceptably high that they will use it to acquire nuclear weapons. It will be the end of the world.

I implore every Democrat: Go home and ask yourself how you will look in the eyes of the mother or father whose son was blown to bits by an Iranian IED that came directly from General Suleimani, on whom we are now lifting sanctions; how you will explain your vote that “your son or daughter’s life didn’t matter enough to me, that I was willing to reward their murderer.” I can tell you that is not a conversation I ever would have liked to have. I ask every Democrat who has said they support this deal to ask yourself that question.

I ask you to ask the question how you will look in the eyes of the mothers and fathers and sons and daughters of those who will be murdered by Iran’s nuclear weapons? What can America offer the leaders of Iran that would—given, I assume, that they would be willing to make a deal to acquire nuclear weapons? That in every case the Americans can offer will be nothing more than a small bit of teeth in it that ought to be in it. They are murdering by the hundreds of millions, with the IAEA concerning inspections, and all side deals.

Osama bin Laden murdered nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001. Bin Laden never had $100 billion at his disposal. He had no control over the billions of dollars you have used for the purpose of funding the terrorist organizations that you call allies. And if—God forbid—Iran ever acquires nuclear weapons, it will be a thousandfold worse. Osama bin Laden murdered nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001. Bin Laden never had $100 billion at his disposal. He had no control over the billions of dollars you have used for the purpose of funding the terrorist organizations that you call allies.

Osama bin Laden murdered nearly 3,000 people on September 11, 2001. Bin Laden never had $100 billion at his disposal. He had no control over the billions of dollars you have used for the purpose of funding the terrorist organizations that you call allies.

And, if—God forbid—Iran ever acquires a nuclear weapon, the odds are unacceptably high that they will use it to acquire nuclear weapons. If you think those were terrible—and they were—imagine Iran with a nuclear weapon. That is what is at stake in this debate. Currently Iran has the capacity to build 10 nuclear weapons—in 10 weeks. We allow them to go from doing that, put inspectors in place. So when you listen to the litany of horrors coming out of Iran’s terrorist activities, imagine
those activities with a nuclear weapon. Our goal is to stop the development of a nuclear weapon in Iran.

I yield the floor to the Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I will vote for the joint agreement. I want the Senate and my colleagues from Florida to understand. I gave a lengthy speech as to why I would support this some 5 weeks ago. In the early part of August before we adjourned. Indeed, I, like most every other Senator here, feel this is one of the most important votes we will cast. I bring to the table the attempted insight given the fact of 6 years being a member of the Intelligence Committee and now having the privilege of being a senior member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

The question is, Does this agreement prevent Iran from having a nuclear bomb? It is an essential question. Does this agreement do that? This is not an agreement to stop the bad behavior of Iran, which, of course, I wish we could. This is a question of preventing Iran from building and producing a nuclear bomb. I believe this agreement does it, and I believe it does it at both the declared sites and a future cheating at a covert site. If we believed otherwise, we could not. I yield the floor.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, in response to the Senator from Florida’s— I am sure heartfelt—remarks, only 21 percent of the American people agree with his stated position there, and I am
sure he will hear from his constituents, as he should.

I did not come to the floor this morning to talk about the agreement. I will save my remarks, which I have been asked to make, for this afternoon.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I call attention to the urgent refugee crisis that is happening in our midst. Men, women, and children are fleeing by the thousands from the violence and destruction that has engulfed the Middle East and North Africa. This crisis didn’t come out of nowhere like an earthquake or a tornado. Instead, it is the predictable result of this administration’s policies of leading from behind as conflicts metastasized in the vacuum created through years of inaction by President Obama and a total lack of American leadership. This did not happen by accident. It happened because of leading from behind. It happened because this President has refused to act to end a vacuum which has permitted the growth of destinations that have become havens for militants. Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt have faced increasing turmoil and unrest, Aylan’s family to board a boat bound for a safer home. Abdullah arranged for the boat and rocking it back and forth until it capsized, launching the passengers—including Aylan, his mother, and 4-year-old brother—into the rough waters. Despite Abdullah’s strongest attempts, he was unable to save his family.

This photo, which was taken shortly after Aylan’s dead body was washed ashore, has opened the world’s eyes to this devastating crisis. Within hours of this photo being posted, people across the world began to share it on social media using a hashtag in Arabic that translates to “humanity washed ashore.” This image has haunted the world, but what should haunt us even more than the horror unfolding before our eyes is the thought that the United States will continue to do nothing meaningful about it.

The conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa have taken a toll on all others. Desperate refugees are not only a threat to our security, but a crisis of conscience. They challenge the moral fabric of our Nation and the foundation of global leadership. Let’s be clear. The current crisis before us is not a migrant issue. They are not migrants. Migrants leave for economic reasons. It is a mass exodus of refugees who are fleeing conflicts that this administration has refused to address for years. As the T.N. in our President’s speech last week: “This is a primarily refugee crisis, not only a migration phenomenon. The vast majority of those arriving in Greece come from conflict zones like Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan and are simply running for their lives.”

I say to the media: Stop calling them migrants. They are not migrants. They are refugees who are attempting to escape from torture, murder, killing, and genocide. Statements and images like these should elicit a sense of heartbreak and sympathy; they should be a call to action. The following quote is from the Wall Street Journal editorial this morning:

It’s hard to believe, but the debacle that is the Obama Administration’s Syria policy could get worse. U.S. sources have been leak-

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, about 63 percent of European asylum seekers in the past 2 years are Syrians, but the truth is, the refugee crisis is much bigger than what we are seeing today in Europe. Since 2011, well over 200,000 Syrians have been killed, 1 million injured, 8 million displaced, 4 million forced to seek refuge abroad in countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt where the situation is not much better. The U.N. has described this crisis as “the greatest humanitarian crisis tragedy of our times.”

As conditions at refugee camps in the region continue to deteriorate with overcrowding, disease, violence, and exploitation, those who can are attempting to escape further west to safer places in Europe. The United Nations estimates that at least 850,000 people will seek refuge in Europe between 2015 and 2016. About a quarter of them, about 210,000, are increasingly leaving their families and homes to make dangerous journeys by sea and land. While they are risking their lives to escape the threat of abduction, sexual abuse, torture and murder, they face an entirely new set of threats on this desperate journey for asylum. Many are on traversing unsafe routes, suffering from starvation, facing the threat of human trafficking, enduring debilitating psychological trauma, and, of course, many are dying.

The U.N. Refugee Agency has stated that about 2,600 people have died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean this year alone, including 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi. Aylan grew up in the Syrian city of Kobani, a city situated on the border of Turkey, which in recent years has been under siege by ISIL militants and the Assad regime. Facing increased threats in Kobani, Aylan’s father, Abdullah, and mother, Rehen, did what any parent would do for their children. They attempted to move Aylan and his 4-year-old brother Galip to a safer home. Abdullah arranged for his family to board a hand-for-hand boat. Sweden by way of Greece, a trip that many of his fellow Syrians have attempted over the years. But when the Kurdi family met their smugglers in Turkey, they were surprised how crowded the small, filmy fiber glass boat was. Despite repeated questions about the safety of the voyage, the smugglers assured Abdullah they would be OK.

Shortly into the trip, the waters became increasingly rough, crashing into the boat and rocking it back and forth until it capsized, launching the passengers—including Aylan, his mother, and 4-year-old brother—into the rough waters. Despite Abdullah’s strongest attempts, he was unable to save his family.

I say to the media: Stop calling them migrants. They are not migrants. They are refugees who are attempting to escape from torture, murder, killing, and genocide. Statements and images like these should elicit a sense of heartbreak and sympathy; they should be a call to action. The following quote is from the Wall Street Journal editorial this morning:

I strongly suggest, given the fact that there is no policy, no strategy, and no effective way of stemming this horror, that the President of the United States should say so and reckon with the cold logic of mass graves.

Another Syria Failure

I strongly suggest, given the fact that there is no policy, no strategy, and no effective way of stemming this horror, that the President of the United States should say so and reckon with the cold logic of mass graves.
Unfortunately, the administration is still "considering a range of options"—I am not making this up—to respond to this issue, a National Security Council spokesman stated this week. In the meantime, the President and his cabinet officials continue to push through an agreement that legitimizes al-Qaeda, which is not only the leading state sponsor of terror in the world, but the patron of the Assad regime responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent Syrians. After this deal, Iran’s hold on the region will only be enhanced, and it is safe to assume that it will use the billions of dollars in sanctions relief to boost arms supplies to Iran’s terrorist proxies, to sow chaos and instability across the region, and to prop up Assad right when he needs it most.

As the administration stands by, Russia is capitalizing on America’s inaction to provide additional support for the Assad regime. According to numerous sources, Russia is establishing a base at an airfield near an Assad stronghold in western Syria. Russia could soon deploy 1,000 or more military personnel into Syria to conduct air operations in support of Assad forces.

Our government is doing what it has sadly done too often in the past, receding our strength and averting our eyes. We try to comfort our guilty consciences by telling ourselves that we are not doing nothing, but it is a claim made in bad faith, for everyone concedes that nothing we are doing is equal to the horrors we face. We are telling ourselves: We’re too tired or weary to get more involved, that this is not our problem, that helping to reverse the long history of disagreement or conflict—and that frank-sounding, baddest, most capable military force if we aren’t willing to use it? I don’t mean use it by entering into peaceful agreements that are better than the status quo instead of the brutal, overwhelming U.S. military force. Our planes and our bombs and our brigades, these are the muscle that ensures that activity.

Peace is a messy business. As Yitzhak Rabin said upon the recognition of the PLO—a really hard thing for the Israelis to do—he said, “You don’t make friends and you don’t make enemies, you make it with very unsavory enemies.” It makes sense, right? The definition of peace is the settlement of old disputes or even just one big dispute with someone with whom one has a long history of disagreement or conflict. And unless peace comes from unconditional surrender—and that frankly doesn’t happen very much in the postnuclear age—then peace by nature is going to be a compromise. It doesn’t come from one side getting everything it wants. To think that it is going to feel fairly unsatisfactory.

I say this because viewing the Iran deal through this prism allows me to understand why so many people are voting no, and it allows me to understand why many of those who are voting yes took a long time to get there, but what I have trouble understanding is all of the revisionist history that is crowding this Chamber right now. I don’t think there is a single Member of the Senate who didn’t in principle support that idea that we bring an end to Iran’s nuclear weapons program. And I don’t remember anyone who didn’t understand that the sanctions we layered upon Iran were directed at their nuclear program, not their support for Hezbollah or their detention of hostages or any other malevolent behavior in the region. Why? Because we had a whole different set of sanctions on that activity.

But now there is all sorts of Sturm und Drang in Congress over the idea that this deal represents a give-and-take between the United States and Iran. Why didn’t we try that? Why didn’t we really talk to the Iranians about their nuclear program, not all of these other activities. Thus, it must stand to reason that these sanctions would be removed if Iran came to the table and satisfied our concerns about their nuclear program, not our concerns about everything else they do that is terrible.

Peace is never perfect. Diplomacy is, frankly, mostly ugly, but it matters. Because why on Earth do we spend $500 billion every year on the world’s biggest military that substitutes for a diplomatic agreement. America, more than any other country in the world, can afford to take a diplomatic risk because we can clean it up fast if it goes wrong. Now, I don’t think this agreement is going to go wrong, but I sure like knowing that a bunker-busting bomb is waiting in the wings if it does. And I will sleep better at night knowing that by agreeing to this deal, we are keeping together an unprecedented international coalition to work with us if we need to drop that bomb—something they would not do if we dropped it without this agreement.

This body often seems to forget that American power is not simply exercising a military presence through their nuclear power. And President Obama, frankly, is not the first President to be pressed by hawks in Congress, and outside of Congress, to forsake diplomacy in favor of war. In the first meeting with legislative leaders after the announcement of Russian missiles inside Cuba, the bipartisan congressional leadership, meeting
with President Kennedy, was unanimous in its support for an attack and ultimately the possible invasion of Cuba. All of them thought that talking to Russia about a negotiated solution equaled weakness. President Kennedy didn’t listen, and over 13 days he worked on a successful solution—the Cuban Missile Crisis that history looks very kindly upon.

President Reagan, upon signing the IMF treaty with Russia, leaned over to Gorbatchev and announced the deal and said: “The hardliners in both countries are bleeding when we shake hands today.” Hawks in Congress didn’t want an agreement with our sworn enemy, Russia. They didn’t understand why we signed a nuclear agreement with a country that still out for American blood on so many other fronts. But history tells us that the IMF treaty was an important piece of our strategy to weaken hardliners inside Russia and open that country to reform.

I hear this analogy to 1938 and Munich almost every day, and it doesn’t just come with respect to this agreement. Almost every time we sit across the table from someone we have a disagreement, they claim is that it is Munich all over again, but Munich is the exception, not the rule. There are plenty more diplomatic agreements to avert war that went right rather than those that went wrong. It doesn’t mean we don’t learn caution from its mistakes; it doesn’t mean it is an automatic parallel to every single time we are trying to settle our disputes with an adversary at the negotiating table rather than through the means of arms.

Our partners in the Middle East largely get this. I just returned from this trip, as I mentioned, to the region—Qatar, UAE, Iraq, Kuwait, and Jordan—with Senator Peters. In every country we visited, we heard about Iran’s provocative activity that includes supporting the Houthis in Yemen, funding Shiite militias in Iraq, propping up the murderous Bashar al-Assad in Syria, pumping money into Hezbollah and Hamas to threaten Israel, but despite these provocations, every Arab political leader whom we met with—every single one—supports this agreement. They give two basic reasons, and I want to share them because they mirror the reasons for my support of this agreement.

First, they know that no matter how dangerous Iran is today, they shudder to think how much more dangerous Iran would be if they possessed a nuclear weapon. They believe, as do I, that this agreement is the best way to keep Iran from 1938 as our nation is not on a nuclear weapon, and they support it, to a country, first and foremost for that reason.

Before this deal, Iran had 19,000 centrifuges spinning. After it, they are going to have just a few thousand. Before this deal, Iran was enriching up to 20 percent and was only a few months from being able to enrich to a level in which they could get on a pathway to a bomb. After this deal, enrichment will be down to 3.7 percent. Before this deal, Iran had an enormous stockpile of enriched uranium, and after this deal that stockpile is, for all intents and purposes, eliminated—reduced by 97 percent. The only way we knew what was going on in the nuclear program was through covert surveillance. After the deal, we are going to have a network of inspectors crawling over every inch of their nuclear program to make sure they aren’t cheating.

Second, our Arab partners whom we visited within the region know that all of the problems in the region can’t be solved without Iran at the table, and while they aren’t sure this agreement by itself will draw Iran into peaceful negotiations over Syria or Yemen or Iraq—and I think none of us can be sure that is how this will play out—they are certain that a rejection of the agreement by the United States Congress will empower the hardliners, punishing the moderates, and pushing Iran away from any constructive dialogue in the region. Our Arab partners don’t love the terms of this agreement any more than the U.S. Senate does, but they know the alternative—a retrenched Iran with a green light to start back up from wherever they chose—their nuclear program—is the most dangerous outcome of all.

Our partners understand what supporters of the deal understand; that this idea that if Congress were to reject the agreement, we could come back to the table and get a better one is pure fiction. It is pure political fiction made up by people who don’t want to sound like they don’t have an alternative plan, when they really don’t. No one with any credible diplomatic experience in the world believes that Iran will come back to the table if Congress rejects this deal, and our international partners have told us to our face that they will not come back to the table if we reject this deal. A better deal is fantasy, plain and simple.

Here is what happens. Here is what really happens if Congress rejects this deal that is supported by all of our negotiating partners—Britain, France, Germany, China, Russia—the entire Security Council and all of our partners at the negotiating table, almost every nation around the world supporting this agreement. What would it say if the U.S. Congress walked away? Our power as a nation would be irreparably damaged.

Now, I heard Senator Cruz on the floor earlier today chastising Democrats, yelling at us, about how could we live with ourselves doing a deal with our mortal enemy Iran. So let me ask him and others who oppose this agreement, with the rhetoric that he uses, a question in return: How could we live with ourselves if a rejection of this deal would result in, No. 1, Iran restarting its nuclear program; No. 2, sanctions dramatically weakening; No. 3, inspections ending; and, No. 4, hard-liners being in power inside Iran?

The fact is that many Republicans opposed this agreement before they read it. Senator Cruz opposed it within an hour of its announcement. So do I know how some of these opponents of this deal come live with themselves if a rejection of this deal would result in, No. 1, Iran restarting its nuclear program; No. 2, sanctions dramatically weakening; No. 3, inspections ending; and, No. 4, hard-liners being in power inside Iran?

This is not a perfect deal, but no diplomatic agreement ever is. Peace, as the great Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin told us, is never easy. History almost always judges that it is worthwhile. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. VITTER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.
root out terrorists and to oppose those who inflicted massive death in our country—but there is none that is more important and more significant because this deal, this issue goes to the fundamental security of America, our future. As we are going to be free from the threat of a Middle Eastern nuclear arms race by a wildly radical and unstable regime? It does not get more basic, more serious than that.

The first point I want to make is that this is a serious issue because the consequences do involve life or death, massive numbers of lives or deaths. So if there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisan political considerations, it is this one. I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

The first point I want to make is that this is a serious issue because the consequences do involve life or death, massive numbers of lives or deaths. So if there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisan political considerations, it is this one. I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.

When you look at the agreement, at the specifics of the agreement—I will not go into all of the weeds and all of the issues. I could spend days alone on that. But I do want to focus on two key considerations that are absolutely top in my mind.

The first is the very premise and outcome of this agreement, the consequences that the deal will get there; it is simply a debate over strong action, including meaningfully sanctions that were having an impact, now concedes that they won't. This puts us at the core of this deal, this agreement in your responsibility? If there is any debate, any vote that should be completely devoid of partisanship, this is it. It is this one.

I urge all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to leave the partisanship at the door. This is way more important than that. I hope that would be obvious.

With that in mind, it is troubling that President Obama has tried to make this a partisan debate. He has actively, obviously sought to inflect partisanship into it, I think simply because that is the way he thinks he can hold enough Democratic votes on his side. I think that is really a shame. I hope he does himself a disservice in terms of the nature of the debate and vote we have in this important body.
powers—concluded an agreement with Iran that, if it is implemented as it was agreed to, promises a peaceful, diplomatic solution. Thanks to the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, Congress has had ample time to review the agreement.

I have spent hours and hours studying the text of the agreement and scrutinizing our intelligence agencies' classified assessment of their ability to verify Iran's compliance.

As a member of both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee, I attended more than a dozen hearings and briefings with administration officials and outside experts—both for and against the agreement. In the end, I have concluded that this agreement effectively blocks Iran's pathways to develop a nuclear weapon for well over a decade.

Right now, what we heard from testimony from both those people who support the agreement and the opponents is that Iran can acquire enough fissile nuclear material to make a bomb in less than 3 months. The agreement extends this breakout time to at least 1 year by slashing Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium and handing over to the IAEA the ability to detect violations by Iran.

The agreement also reduces Iran's number of centrifuges by more than two-thirds for a decade, and it maintains inspectors access to Iran's uranium mines and mills—so the whole life cycle of uranium—for a quarter of a century. These are just some of the many restrictions the agreement imposes on Iran.

In addition, Iran is bound by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and other agreements to a permanent commitment not to pursue nuclear weapons and, as part of that agreement, to permit access by inspectors to any suspected nuclear facilities. Iran's agreement is not based on trust—none of us trust Iran—but it is based on an inspections regime that is more rigorous and more intrusive than any previous negotiated agreement.

Nuclear experts are confident that we will be able to detect violations by Iran. Thanks to language in the agreement that allows the United States to respond unilaterally to a violation by reimposing U.S. and U.N. sanctions, Iran knows that if it faces crippling consequences, it will not move forward. If Congress rejects the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the Iran agreement, all of these advantages go away. The risk of an Iranian nuclear breakout and a regional nuclear arms race will increase dramatically. We will be left with no credible, nonmilitary option for stopping Iran's nuclear program.

Now, I certainly respect the views of my colleagues who oppose this agreement, and I have listened carefully to their arguments. Some of them assert that Iran will find a way to cheat and, therefore, no diplomatic resolution is possible. However, most opponents are careful to avoid talk of military conflict and argue that we can reject this deal, that we can rally the world to impose harsher sanctions, and that Iran will eventually capitulate. But sadly, that premise is at odds with the facts that currently exist. Our negotiating partners in this deal—Britain, France, Russia, China, and the European Union—have concluded that this is a fair agreement. In a briefing for Senators last month, the Ambassadors from these nations told us in no uncertain terms that there will be no going back to the bargaining table if Congress rejects this agreement. If the deal is rejected, the most likely outcome is that the international sanctions regime against Iran would unravel. The United States would be isolated, and we would lose credibility as a reliable negotiating partner. So, yes, we will retain the ability to act unilaterally, but unilateral sanctions have never worked to stop Iran in this body. Our military commanders counsel us that even a robust military option would delay, but it would not prevent, Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon because they already have the nuclear knowledge.

This agreement is not about becoming friends with Iran or turning a blind eye to its efforts to destabilize the Middle East. In fact, we must redouble our efforts to help our allies counter Iran's malign influence in the region. In particular, our commitment to the defense of Israel should remain unshakeable. In addition, we must maintain vigorous sanctions against Iran for its support for terrorism and for its violations of human rights.

Now, while there are risks to whatever course we take with respect to Iran, I believe that the choice is clear. Either we recognize that this agreement is the best available option or we chase some fantasy agreement on our own as Iran's economy collapses and Iran's nuclear program continues unchecked and our options for stopping it are narrowed.

I am convinced that the agreement negotiated by the United States and our allies is the best approach, and it is the approach that is most likely to succeed. As I said last month in New Hampshire, I intend to vote to support this deal.

I yield the floor.

theugal presence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The chair will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. KIRK. Madam President, as I rise, many of my pending Iran vote feel that it could deliver a mortal blow to the Senate's historic support for the safety of the families of Israel. Have no fear. No matter what, we will always have a capable majority of Americans who support the free and democratic tolerant society of Israel. No matter what the Iranians do, America's commitment will remain to that shining city on Jerusalem's hills, to a nation that has proved that democracy and tolerance can thrive in a place even as hostile as the Middle East and will remain strong.

I represent many people who have survived the Holocaust. Their spirit is within the State of Israel. They prevailed over the worst evil that has ever disgraced our time. That spirit unites the free and tolerant people of the United States and Israel that we will prevail no matter what.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:28 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, in anticipation of the majority leader and minority leader coming to the floor in a moment, I will begin the debate, a debate on the most consequential vote I will ever take as an elected official. Certainly, in my 41 years of public service, I have never had a decision to make as serious, as complex, and as meaningful as the decision we will make on the Iran nuclear deal negotiated by the administration and the President.

I am in opposition to that agreement and to explain why I will vote against it, but before I do, I want to compliment three or four members in particular on the Foreign Relations Committee: former Chairman MENENDEZ from New Jersey, Ranking Member CARDIN from Maryland, and Chairman CORKER from Tennessee. Throughout the entire debate on the Iran nuclear deal, they have been forthright in being sure everybody got every question they wanted answered, that every issue was exposed, and that everybody had the time to participate to the fullest degree possible. Great leadership on the part of Senator CORKER, great leadership on the part of Senator CARDIN, and great assistance on the part of Senator MENENDEZ.

In the end, in committee, I voted for the resolution of disapproval to vote against the nuclear arrangement with the Iranians, and I want to talk about why. First of all, the President said a week ago, we have a choice. I argue with that conclusion. In fact, I think a vote against the deal is a vote of strength. A vote for the deal is an