

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE—
EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as if in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that on Monday, April 20, at 5:30 p.m., the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations, and that once reported, the Senate proceed to vote as follows:

Calendar No. 34, the nomination of Tony West; Calendar No. 35, the nomination of Lanny Breuer; Calendar No. 36, the nomination of Christine Anne Varney.

I further ask that prior to each vote, there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled in the usual form; and after the first vote in this sequence, the succeeding votes be limited to 10 minutes each; that upon confirmation of the nominations, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, en bloc; that no further motions be in order; that any statements relating to the nominations be printed in the RECORD, as if read, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CHRISTOPHER R. HILL TO BE AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 43, the nomination of Christopher R. Hill, to be Ambassador to Iraq.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Christopher R. Hill, of Rhode Island, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Iraq.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Christopher R. Hill, of Rhode Island, to be Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq.

Harry Reid, John F. Kerry, Richard Durbin, Charles E. Schumer, Jon Tester, Tom Udall, Dianne Feinstein, Edward E. Kaufman, Mark Begich, Frank R. Lautenberg, Bill Nelson, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jack Reed, Bernard Sand-

ers, Christopher J. Dodd, Patty Murray, Benjamin L. Cardin.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that upon disposition of the nominations specified in a previous order for Monday, April 20, there be 20 minutes of debate, equally divided and controlled between the leaders or their designees prior to the cloture vote on the Hill nomination, and that the mandatory quorum be waived.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL MICHAEL OUELLETTE

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I wish to express my sympathy over the loss of Marine Cpl Michael W. Ouellette, a 29-year-old native of Manchester, NH. Corporal Ouellette died on March 22, 2009, as a result of injuries sustained from an improvised explosive device while on foot patrol in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan. Another marine was killed in the attack and two others were injured.

Corporal Ouellette graduated from Memorial High School in Manchester in 1999. He joined the Marines in June 2005 and was trained as an infantryman. He served two terms in Iraq, deploying there in March 2006 and again in July 2007. He began his third tour overseas when he deployed to Afghanistan in November 2008. Ouellette was assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force out of Camp Lejeune, NC.

Corporal Ouellette served with honor and distinction throughout his highly decorated military career. He received a number of awards for his duty, including the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, the Iraq Campaign Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

New Hampshire is proud of Corporal Ouellette's service to and sacrifice for our country. He, and the thousands of brave men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces serving today, deserve America's highest honor and recognition.

Corporal Ouellette is survived by his parents, Donna and Leonard Ouellette, as well as a brother, Alan, and a sister, Stephanie. He will be missed dearly by all those who knew him.

I ask my colleagues to join me and all Americans in honoring U.S. Marine Cpl Michael Ouellette.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart and a deep sense of gratitude to pay tribute to Cpl Michael Ouellette of Manchester, NH, for his service and the sacrifice he paid for his country.

Michael exhibited willingness and enthusiasm to serve and defend his country after visiting hurricane-ravaged New Orleans in 2005. He subsequently joined the U.S. Marine Corps and served two tours of duty in Iraq before deploying to Afghanistan. Tragically, on March 22, 2009, Michael paid the ultimate sacrifice. In support of his brothers in arms and the country he loved, Michael was killed by an improvised explosive device in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Corporal Ouellette will live on as a decorated hero and the epitome of a patriot.

Michael graduated from Manchester Memorial High School in 1999. A beloved member of the Manchester community, Michael was the embodiment of selflessness. With the same sense of altruistic integrity that led him to help an unfamiliar and unsuspecting Memorial High classmate fix a flat tire; Michael answered the call to help his country.

In giving his life to protect our freedoms, Michael personified our greatest attributes as citizens. His hard work and dedication was paramount to his unit's success and places him among the great heroes and citizens our state has known. Michael was regularly recognized for his courageous actions in Afghanistan and Iraq, receiving the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, the Iraq Campaign Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal. He will always be remembered for his courage, kindness, and unwavering devotion.

My thoughts, condolences, and prayers go out to Michael's family. I offer them my deepest sympathies and heartfelt thanks for Michael's service. We will keep his memory alive knowing that his efforts have made us safer and have preserved the liberties we enjoy every day. God Bless Michael Ouellette.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I wish today to recognize the 60th anniversary of the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Sixty years ago this April, NATO was created to ensure the freedom and security of western nations in the aftermath of the Second World War. Since

then, it has evolved into the most comprehensive international security organization the world has ever known and has become a reliable cornerstone of America's national security.

As many of my Senate colleagues know, I was an active proponent of NATO expansion in 1999 and again in 2004. For me, the debate over whether to expand NATO had deep personal resonance. For many of the countries aspiring to join NATO at that time, freedom did not come to every nation in Europe at the end of the Second World War. For those countries caught behind the Iron Curtain, the end of the Second World War marked the beginning of a long struggle for freedom and democracy. Even after the Iron Curtain fell, their freedom and security was not ensured. For many of those countries, joining NATO in the expansion rounds in 1999 and 2004 provided true security for the first time.

For me, growing up as a Polish American in east Baltimore, I learned about the burning of Warsaw. I knew about the occupation of Poland by the Nazis. I learned about the burning of Warsaw at the end of World War II, when the Germans burned it because of the Warsaw uprising. Soviet troops stood on the other side of the Vistula River and watched it burn. I learned about the Katyn massacre, where Russians murdered more than 4,000 military officers and intellectuals in the Katyn Forest at the start of the Second World War, so there would not be an intellectual force in Poland, ever, to lead it to democracy. I learned that these terrible events must never be permitted again. When the Senate voted to ratify the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary into NATO, I knew that Poland could finally emerge from the shadow of the Cold War to join the family of Western nations.

In the 60 years since it was created, NATO has been an unprecedented success in deterring conflict and promoting peace and stability. To remain relevant and successful in the future, NATO must keep its doors open to those European democracies ready to bear the responsibilities, as well as the burdens, of membership. We must all remember that for many nations that have been occupied and oppressed over the last 100 years, NATO represents an institution that will guard against a repeat of the despicable and inhumane practices of the old century.

LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA FROM CUBAN PATRIOTS

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I wish to share with my colleagues a recent letter from 17 courageous activists within Cuba who are calling for democracy for their country. These individuals represent peaceful local movements across the nation. They represent Cuba's future more than the aged military elite now ruling that country alongside Raul Castro. They

are asking for the support of the United States, including a policy that does not "sacrifice the moral leadership of the United States in the face of commercial temptations."

Though Cubans have suffered oppression under the Castro regime for more than 50 years, this is an especially appropriate time to raise awareness of the ongoing plight of the Cuban people. In recent weeks, the Cuban regime has tightened its grip on the reins of power and installed hard-line military officers in top government posts. Ironically, at a time with increasing harassment and imprisonments taking place in Cuba, there are efforts within this Congress to adjust U.S. policy in a way that would essentially reward the Cuban regime.

Before any Member of this body or the President considers loosening the sanctions we have on Cuba, I commend the following letter to their reading:

The material follows:

[Informal Translation]

DEAR PRESIDENT OBAMA, Your election is a formidable symbol of what civic determination can do to institute transcendental social and political change. By assuming and conducting your important Presidential duties, you honor the millions of Americans who have fought for liberty, social justice, civil rights and human dignity.

In Cuba, there is a movement representing a broad racial and religious spectrum, formed by women, men, workers, and young people that—despite being the object of terrible repression by the regime in power—is conducting a peaceful civic struggle for democracy and human rights.

Our movement includes the desire for CHANGE by thousands of Cubans who have defied the repression, the intimidation and have overcome the fear to sign their names in petitions for constitutional reforms and academic freedom. Thousands more have refused to join in the attacks or "actos de repudio" ordered by the political police against those who aspire for peaceful political change. We are sustained by the inspiration of the more than 1.4 million Cubans that boycotted the elections of a single party and candidate organized by the regime in January and February 2008. Every day, in subtle and not so subtle ways, in visible and invisible ways, the Cuban people increasingly deny their support to the regime in power through acts of civil disobedience.

A great majority of Cubans, including many within the government, yearn for deep democratic changes in Cuba.

The great example of the civil rights movement in the United States is a ray of hope that the full dignity of every Cuban will be restored. We want to determine our future through democratic means.

It is our understanding that your administration will redirect the policy of the United States on Cuba and the regime. We ask that you do not put commercial considerations ahead of political freedom for our people. The regime's repression has increased considerably during the last year, and the militarization at high levels of government is a clear signal of the government's lack of will to initiate real changes. Today, hundreds of political prisoners languish in terrible conditions in Castro's jails. Their only crime has been to fight for the same freedoms that Americans such as Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave their lives for. Have no doubt Mr. President Obama that their fight is our fight now.

We ask that you consider an international, multilateral strategy that would compel the regime to open itself to its own people by freeing the political prisoners, restoring the civil rights of the Cuban people and organizing free elections with international supervision. Such a policy would reinforce and strengthen the work of many groups of Cubans dedicated to the peaceful political change.

This movement for change seeks to peacefully and deeply transform the political scene of Cuba.

We invite you to not sacrifice the moral leadership of the United States in the face of commercial temptations. Your presidency is a tribute to everything that can be conquered when a cause is just and correct. We dedicate our lives to the movement for the freedom of Cuba and expect—one day—to have a democratically-elected Cuban president who would welcome you to Havana.

Do not forget us. We need your support. We, too, "have a dream" of freedom.

Attentively,

1. Jorge Luis García Pérez "Antúnez", Presidio Político Pedro Luis Boitel

2. Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina, Movimiento Cubano de Jóvenes por la Democracia, La Habana

3. Rolando Rodríguez Lobaina, Alianza Democrática Oriental, Guantánamo

4. Idania Yáñez Contreras, Coalición Central Opositora, Villa Clara

5. Juan Carlos González Leiva, Consejo de Relatores de Derechos Humanos, La Habana

6. Iris Pérez Aguilera, Movimiento Feminista de Derecho Civiles Rosa Parks, Villa Clara

7. Alejandro Tur Valladares, Jagua Press, Cienfuegos

8. Ana Margarita Perdígón Brito, Presidio Político Pedro Luis Boitel, Sancti Spiritus

9. Joaquín Cabezas de León, Movimiento Cubano Reflexión, Villa Clara

10. Ricardo Pupo Sierra, Plantados hasta la Libertad y la Democracia, Cienfuegos

11. Enyor Díaz Allen, Movimiento Cubano de Jóvenes por la Democracia, Guantánamo

12. Cristián Toranzo, Movimiento Cubano de Jóvenes por la Democracia, Holguín

13. Marta Díaz Rondón, Movimiento Feminista de Derecho Civiles Rosa Parks, Holguín

14. Margarito Broche Espinosa, Consejo de Relatores de Derechos Humanos de Cuba, Villa Clara

15. María de la Caridad Noa González, Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Familiar, Villa Clara

16. Virgilio Mantilla Arango, Fundación Cubana de Derechos Humanos, Camagüey

17. Yorledis Duvalón Gibert, Movimiento Cubano de Jóvenes por la Democracia, Santiago de Cuba

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, since I last came to the floor to discuss a proposal for a Commission of Inquiry, Americans have learned disturbing new facts that underscore the need for such a nonpartisan review. In the last 8 years, expansive views of Presidential authority and misguided policies have dominated the question of how best to preserve and protect national security. As Senators, we each take an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States." In the months and years following 9/11, driven by an inflated view of executive power, the Bush-Cheney administration compromised many of the very laws and