

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

COMMEMORATING THE 94TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today I rise in honor of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, as we mark the 94th anniversary of this horrific tragedy.

On April 24, 1915, the Ottoman Empire began a campaign of forced deportation against the Armenians. Around 2 million Armenian men, women, and children were driven from their homeland, 1.5 million of whom were killed. Hundreds of thousands were massacred outright, while others perished from forced marches, deliberate starvation, and epidemics that ravaged through concentration camps. Yet despite an outcry of condemnation by Great Britain, France, Russia, and the United States, no action was taken against the Ottoman Empire, as the first genocide of the 20th century continued.

Today, the thriving, vibrant Armenian community in the United States is a testament to their endurance and strength. Yet we can never forget the loss and sacrifice of previous generations. Earlier this week, we also paid tribute to those killed in the Holocaust, and together, these anniversaries mark this week as a solemn reminder of what can occur when prejudice and hatred go unchecked. Just as we cherish the memories and stories of the Armenians persecuted by the Ottoman Empire and their survivors, so must we also honor them by recommitting ourselves to combat intolerance in all its forms.

In my own home State of Nevada, I am proud to represent thousands of Armenian-Americans, many of whom gathered to commemorate the 94th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide this past weekend in Las Vegas. I congratulate the Armenian American Cultural Society of Las Vegas for yet again organizing such a successful and meaningful event. This is a wonderful opportunity for the Armenian-American community and their supporters to come together in our State, which I am pleased is one of at least 40 other States who have recognized the Armenian Genocide.

I extend my best wishes to the Nevada Armenian-American community back home and thank them for their many contributions to our great State.

I thank the Chair, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I would like to address the Senate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized.

NASA

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, there are so many things I would like to talk about, not the least of which—which I will not confine my remarks to—is our space program, which is adrift.

The White House continues to deliberate on who should be the administrator of NASA. The previous administration starved NASA to death by asking it to do too much with too little. The result of that is that now NASA is coming to the end of the life of the space shuttle, as we complete the construction of the International Space Station. With the remaining nine flights—and those nine flights NASA thinks it can get in during the next year and a half, but they can't—we are going to have to fly the space shuttle into 2011, and we ought to do that deliberately and slowly to make sure we don't sacrifice safety.

At the end of that time, upon the completion of the space station—the International Space Station, with components from a number of countries around the world and something that is larger than two football fields long, 200 miles into the cosmos, circling the globe at 17,500 miles an hour, with research laboratories, with habitation modules for the astronauts and cosmonauts on board—the United States, when we shut down the space shuttle, will not have a manned vehicle because we didn't have enough money for the development of the new vehicle—the new rocket, the Aries—and so we are going to have a gap and we will have to rely on the Russians. We will have to buy a ride on their spacecraft in order to get to our space station, which is a \$100 billion investment.

Now, that is the sad state of affairs, and that is where NASA finds itself. NASA is adrift because it doesn't have a vigorous leader, appointed by the Obama administration, to take charge; someone who understands space flight, who understands management, who understands aeronautics. By the way, aeronautics is the first "A" in NASA—the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. NASA does not have a leader as yet who understands how to motivate people and capture the spirit of the American people, which is that we are explorers and adventurers by nature. There is not a heart in America that does not beat more quickly when they think of the potential we have in the cosmos and the exploration of new worlds.

Look at what the Hubbell space telescope has done for us. How do you think we have been able to have the

revelations from the Hubbell space telescope? It is because we have been able to send astronauts out there when it could not even see because it had an incorrectly ground lens when we launched it, over a decade and a half ago. We sent astronauts there to repair it in orbit.

Lo and behold, in 2 weeks another flight with astronauts will go to the Hubbell space station, will repair it, will give it new instruments, and for the next 2 decades it will continue to peer into the universe and unlock those secrets about where did we come from and when did it happen and how are we positioned in this universe that is so vast, so infinite that our human minds cannot even grasp. That is the excitement of the future.

Yet NASA is adrift. I call on the White House to please put in an administrator of NASA who is a leader, who understands space, who understands how to motivate people and who can capture the American spirit and help inspire, standing by our President who wants it, a vigorous space program.

I did not come here to speak about that, but I get pretty exercised because I have been the beneficiary of being a part of this space program. I do not like what I see now and I do not like what I have seen in the last 5 years. I have said so on the floor of this Senate, over and over. The more we try to get additional funding in the budget to develop this new rocket—and we were successful in the Senate—the more we would have our legs cut out from under us by the previous White House budget office because they kept starving NASA of funds. That has led us to where we are today.

I personally know our President is a space aficionado. We have talked about it hours on end. I know he wants us to have a vigorous space program. I know President Obama understands how to accomplish the very thing he wants to do with young people, in getting them educated and particularly educated in math and science and engineering. Look to history. Look at what happened in the Apollo program when young people by the thousands starting going into math and science and engineering because they were challenged by what we were doing in the cosmos. We can do that again if the President will give the full support to the space program and if he will put the right leader in NASA.

I came today to speak about another subject, but I do not think there is a much more important subject at this time. With all the problems facing this country—the economy, the national security situation—you have to tend to your knitting. America's space program and America's preeminence in space—that we do not lose the high ground—is a highly important issue, high among the items on the agenda to which this country must attend.

CHINESE WALLBOARD

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I wish to talk about something else that is afflicting this country. A lot of people don't know about this, but we have to get it front and center. One of the exports coming from China into the United States has been drywall. Drywall is the boards that you put up on the studs when you build a house. Normally what it is is a material called gypsum. Gypsum is a byproduct in the mining and manufacturing of phosphate. A lot of that phosphate goes into fertilizer but a byproduct of that is gypsum. And gypsum, put into the form of a flat sheet with thick paper on either side, in boards about 10 feet high and about that wide, is called wallboard. In the modern construction of houses, when you build a house and you divvy up the rooms and you put up these studs to be a wall and you put insulation in there, and then on the outside of the studs you put the wallboard and then you put a finish over the wallboard and you paint that, that is the wall of a house.

The problem is that wallboard that has been imported into this country from China is defective because it has contained some kind of organic compound that is having absolutely disastrous effects in people's houses. When you compare a piece of this wallboard from China with wallboard from America that is gypsum, you can actually see the difference. Gypsum is dry. It is absorbent, which is what you want for a wall if there are contaminants or vapors in a house. But this Chinese wallboard is giving off vapors.

What do we find in our houses? This is not only in Florida, this is all over the southern United States. They have discovered it in Louisiana. They have discovered it in California, in Texas, they have discovered it in Georgia, and some people are now discovering it in the Atlantic coast, the north Atlantic region of the United States. What they are discovering is that, first, you walk into a house with Chinese wallboard and you notice a smell. It is a different smell. It is pungent. Some people call it like a rotten egg smell. As I have gone into these homes over the course of the Easter break back in Florida, to me the smell is not so much rotten eggs but you detect the smell of sulfur, but it starts searing the nasal passages.

I am kind of like a canary in the coal mine because my respiratory system is very sensitive to these kinds of things, for example, mold and mildew. I will get congested if I walk into a home with mold and mildew and I will start coughing. When I walked into those homes a week and a half ago in Florida, the same thing happened to me. I would only be in the home 10 minutes and my nasal passages started to constrict, my voice got scratchy. I started to get what we call getting clogged up. I started hacking and wheezing, my eyes started watering.

Lo and behold, that is happening to these homeowners. This is their home.

This is their life investment. Now, through no fault of their own, they are finding out they have a part of their home that is now irritating their respiratory system and in some cases their family members have had to go to the hospital and in other cases their pediatricians are telling them to get their children out of those houses. The family has vacated the home, their life investment—vacated. Hopefully they have some relatives they can go live with, and in some cases they do not. You can imagine the financial burden.

What else are these homeowners telling me? They are telling me that in the homes, these vapors that are being emitted are suddenly corroding any kind of metallic substance in the home. I went into homes where I looked at the air conditioning unit and the coils on the air conditioner are completely corroded and the homeowners tell me over the course of the last 4 years they have had to change the air conditioner three times because it is not only a corrosion, it is eating through the coils.

I took a screwdriver and I went over to one of the copper pipes on an air conditioner unit and I started scraping it. It was completely soot black. Copper, when it ages, turns green. Not this. I started scraping off that soot black exterior and, sure enough, there was the copper underneath. And the coils that were metallic on the air conditioner, of some other metal, had been corroded through. And here is this homeowner and that homeowner and that one over there who have had to replace the air conditioner three times in the last 5 years. It is unbelievable.

I talked to a husband and wife in one of the homes. In this case I went to homes down near Fort Myers. I went to homes near Bradenton. I went to homes near West Palm Beach. The couple had been on a cruise to Mexico in January. They bought a beautiful silver bracelet. You know that silver will tarnish over time. You have to polish it up. In this case, that silver bracelet had been in the house for 1 month and it was black as soot. These vapors that are coming off whatever this organic material is in the Chinese drywall are making people sick, their houses are uninhabitable, their appliances, including the dishwashers, are corroding, and their life investment in their home is going up in smoke. That is not right.

Needless to say, there is a bunch of lawsuits. But who are they going to sue? They are going to sue a Chinese wallboard manufacturer who is in China. Maybe there is a distributor here. We have a U.S. Government and there is an arm of the U.S. Government called the Consumer Product Safety Commission. This, by the way, is the same Consumer Product Safety Commission that was letting in all of those defective Chinese toys that were killing our children, 2 and 3 and 4 years ago. So last year the Congress, bipartisan, reformed the Consumer Product Safety Commission. The Consumer

Product Safety Commission, in the reform of this legislation, has the authority, No. 1, to stop the import of this Chinese drywall and also exact a recall of this product.

But has the Consumer Product Safety Commission done it? No. To their credit, they sent in an investigation team, and that investigation team reported to the staff of the Senate yesterday. I happened to go and talk to them. So I asked them three questions yesterday. I said: How harmful is this stuff?

And they said: We do not know.

And I said: Well, you are doing an investigation.

Well, it is going to take us a while.

Well, did you see the same effects?

A member of that investigation team concurred with what I have just shared about how it affected his respiratory system, his eyes were watering, he was clogging up, and so forth.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for an additional 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. So as of yesterday, they did not have a conclusion. I would urge them to hurry their conclusion. They ought to be doing this in conjunction with the EPA and the Centers for Disease Control because if this thing is in what we think it is, 100,000 homes in this country—and perhaps half of those are in Florida because that is where a lot of the building was going on in the aftermath of the four hurricanes that hit Florida in 2004—if this is in 100,000 homes, we have a real problem.

You cannot get the home builders. Look, most of them are financially, if not bankrupt, down to their last pennies as it is. There has to be someone financially responsible, and you cannot expect the homeowner to bear this cost. But what about the effects on their health?

Well, as of yesterday, they did not have an answer. So then I asked them: Well, you have done an investigation. How widespread is it?

They said: We do not know.

Well, we better start knowing.

So I said: Well, since you do not know how harmful it is, and you do not know how widespread it is, what are you going to do about helping homeowners?

They said: We do not know.

Well, a number of us, Senator LANDRIEU, Senator VITTER, both of them from Louisiana—because a lot of this drywall came into Louisiana through the Port of New Orleans, they are getting the same kind of complaints from their State that I am getting from the State of Florida.

We can file legislation that will suggest what to do. It is too bad we have to file legislation because the CPSC has the legal authority under the law to ban the import of this wallboard and