

ORDER FOR COURT OF
IMPEACHMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate convene as a court of impeachment in the trial of Samuel B. Kent on Wednesday, July 22, 2009, and the Secretary of the Senate inform the House of Representatives that the Senate will at that time receive the honorable managers on the part of the House of Representatives.

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

MOON LANDING AND HEALTH
CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to touch the Moon, our Nation rejoiced not just because we were launching a new era of exploration and technology. When the Apollo 11 crew touched down in the Sea of Tranquility, our country cheered more than just a stunning success for science.

When 40 years ago tonight, man first set foot on another world, we celebrated the fact that those first men were Americans.

On the evening of July 20, 1969, millions of Americans watched with Walter Cronkite, who passed away just 3 days ago. As Armstrong leaped off the ladder, the anchorman took care to note that the astronaut was a “38-year-old American.” Because he was an American—a boy scout from Ohio and a pilot in our Navy—we all were proud.

We were proud that an American vehicle was the first manned spacecraft to make it to the Moon’s surface, that an American’s footprint was the first to be pressed upon it, and that our American flag was the first to be planted within it. America was moving mankind forward, and we were proud to be leaders.

But the story of the journey we celebrate today did not begin on the breathtaking night when the Eagle landed.

It began years before: in the imaginations of Americans everywhere, in laboratories and hangars in Florida and Texas, and in a stadium in Houston where President Kennedy told us that we will choose to reach the Moon within the decade and do other great things, “not because they are easy, but because they are hard . . . because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone.”

We now must be willing to accept today’s challenges. We must be willing to accept the challenge of making it easier to live a healthy life in America. We must be unwilling to postpone our responsibility to fix what is broken.

We now have a chance to be proud once again. We have the chance to lead once again, and for our entire Nation to again achieve dramatic goals, like making health care more affordable, more stable and more secure.

America is the last major industrialized nation on the planet that refuses to ensure all of its citizens can get health care. In the greatest country and the largest economy the world has ever seen, hardworking Americans live in fear as they live one accident, one illness, or one pink slip away from losing their health coverage.

How much longer can the country that led the way to space be content to stay in last place? How much longer can we sit this one out? How much longer can we say no?

Our health care system is not healthy. The cost of doing nothing is too high, and not acting is not an option.

The story of the Moon landing did not begin with that one small step for a man, and it did not end there either. President Reagan credited our willingness to reach for new heights with helping our country “recapture its spirit of vitality and confidence.” He pointed to the space program as proof that “the pioneer spirit still flourishes in America.”

Today that spirit must prevail over partisan passions. If we confront this crisis together, we can once again restore the vitality and confidence of America, and of all Americans.

Forty years ago, no political party had a monopoly on the lunar landing. A conservative who looked to the heavens took no less pride in our achievement than did a liberal. It was not a Republican accomplishment or a Democratic accomplishment. It was an American accomplishment.

As we said at the beginning of this year, our strong preference is to fix health care as one collaborative Congress, not as two competing parties. As we have said throughout this debate, we will continue to work with the other side in good faith and we want to pass a bipartisan bill.

I remain optimistic that both Republicans and Democrats recognize how urgent this is. The health of our citizens and our economy are at stake, and neither will be able to recover if we are unwilling to accept this challenge.

When we make it easier for people to stay healthy—when we make it easier for people to afford to care for their loved ones—when we choose to do what is right, what is necessary and what is overdue—not because it is easy, but because it is hard—we will once again proudly rejoice together, as Americans.

VETERANS VOTING SUPPORT ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased today to join with Senators Feinstein and Kerr and others to reintroduce the Veterans Voting Support Act. This legislation will enable the Nation to better preserve and protect the fundamental right to vote for veterans in facilities operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Our men and women in uniform have risked their lives to serve our country and spread democracy around the globe. We

must do all we can to protect their right to participate in the democratic process when they return home.

When we introduced this legislation last Congress, I had hoped that it could be signed into law before last year’s historic election. Millions of Americans went to the polls last November and yet far too many of our wounded warriors were left behind. That is wrong, and I hope the Senate will consider this important legislation to remedy the disenfranchisement of our disabled veterans. Senators FEINSTEIN and KERRY, the respective Chairpersons of the Rules and Foreign Relations Committees, have been leaders on this important issue.

Today, veterans of the armed services who reside in a VA facilities face a voting rights crisis. Far too often in recent years, the Department of Veterans Affairs has neglected to assist veterans with voting, or to allow nonpartisan groups access to VA facilities to register voters. Until last year, for example, the VA’s national policy was silent on whether it could provide support to wounded warriors seeking to vote. There have also been reports that the Department of Veterans Affairs may have even prohibited its own staff from providing voter assistance to veterans in VA hospitals. In addition, since 2004, reports indicate that the VA has often sided in Federal court against allowing nonprofit voter registration organizations access to VA run facilities.

I welcome the recent strides the Department of Veterans Affairs has made to correct its flawed policies, but it has not gone far enough. I am glad that last year, the Department changed its policy from a blanket prohibition against voter registration efforts to one that would permit its patients to register to vote. That change, however, was only a first step. We need legislative action to ensure that these changes are permanent and complete. For example, I remain concerned that the VA’s voter registration policy stops short of mandating that VA facilities offer disabled veterans a chance to register to vote. To paraphrase Paul Sullivan, the Executive Director of Veterans for Common Sense, the new policy directive only changed the Department from being in active opposition to veterans’ voter registration to passively supporting it. It is common sense that the Department of Veteran Affairs should make services available to wounded veterans who reside in VA facilities and yet face hardships in traveling off campus to register to vote. This legislation will ensure that VA facilities have an affirmative duty to provide our wounded warriors with access to, and assistance with, voter registration materials in the same way they help veterans fill out other forms.

The Veterans Voting Support Act we introduce today would also require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide voter registration forms to veterans whenever they enroll in, or make changes to, their status under the VA

health care system. It would also require the VA to provide assistance to veterans who wish to file absentee ballots. In addition, the bill would require facilities to allow access for non-partisan voter assistance organizations, subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions. To ensure accountability and transparency, the bill also provides certain reporting requirements on the Department of Veteran Affairs. This legislation has the support of voting rights and veterans groups, including the Brennan Center for Justice and Veterans for Common Sense.

I believe it is essential for the Nation to do everything possible to honor our veterans. Ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as interventions across the globe, means more and more men and women are coming home as veterans. These brave men and women must know that the country will honor their sacrifice when they return. Recognizing their service not only means paying continual tribute through services on such holidays as Memorial Day and Veterans Day. It also means ensuring that our veterans in Vermont and across the country have the ability to fully participate in the democratic process. This is not a Republican or Democrat issue it is an American issue. We should all be able to agree that Americans who have ventured into harm's way to defend our values and spread democracy abroad must also have full enjoyment of those freedoms here at home.

The disabled veterans of the Nation have given extraordinary service to our country and have advanced democracy around the globe. Enactment of the Veterans Voting Support Act is the very least we owe our citizen soldiers for their many sacrifices on our behalf. I urge all Senators to support the Veterans Voting Support Act and help us to enact this critical measure into law before next November's midterm elections.

COMMENDING SENATOR COLEMAN

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to my distinguished colleague from Minnesota, Senator Norm Coleman.

I worked with Senator Coleman since 2002 when he was elected U.S. Senator of Minnesota. Norm is a man of integrity and patriotism. He has dedicated most of his adult life to serve the people of Minnesota. While he served in the Minnesota Attorney General's Office for a large portion of his career and eventually became solicitor general, he is highly praised in the city of St. Paul for his successes as mayor. His vision and execution to revitalize the city of St. Paul became a benchmark for success in local governing. Because of his accomplishments as mayor, he gained higher approval ratings in Minnesota than most politicians in Washington ever receive in their entire careers.

During his tenure as U.S. Senator, Norm was a leader in strengthening our homeland security and national defense. He consistently supported and sponsored measures that provide our troops with the important tools they need to defend our freedoms overseas and fought to make sure they receive the proper care and services as they return home. Additionally, Norm remained a strong voice for alternative fuels and energy independence. The Commonwealth of Kentucky and I are thankful for his diligence in promoting clean energy.

He always fought for what he believes is best for Minnesotans and for America. While we are sad to see him go here in the Senate, we are grateful for his contributions. I am honored to know him and to have worked with him. I wish his wife Laurie, his children, Jake and Sarah, and him the best in all of their future endeavors.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Neiman, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 1:41 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 129. An act to authorize the conveyance of certain National Forest System lands in the Los Padres National Forest in California.

H.R. 409. An act to provide for the conveyance of certain Bureau of Land Management land in the State of Nevada to the Las Vegas Motor Speedway, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1018. An act to amend the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act to improve the management and long-term health of wild free-roaming horses and burros, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1442. An act to provide for the sale of the Federal Government's reversionary interest in approximately 60 acres of land in Salt Lake City, Utah, originally conveyed to the Mount Olivet Cemetery Association under the Act of January 23, 1909.

H.R. 2188. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to conduct a Joint Venture Program to protect, restore, enhance, and manage migratory bird populations, their habitats, and the ecosystems they rely on, through voluntary actions on public and private lands, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3170. An act making appropriations for financial services and general government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3183. An act making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 156. Concurrent resolution condemning the attack on the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 1994, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 129. An act to authorize the conveyance of certain National Forest System lands in the Los Padres National Forest in California; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 409. An act to provide for the conveyance of certain Bureau of Land Management land in the State of Nevada to the Las Vegas Motor Speedway, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1018. An act to amend the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act to improve the management and long-term health of wild free-roaming horses and burros, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1442. An act to provide for the sale of the Federal Government's reversionary interest in approximately 60 acres of land in Salt Lake City, Utah, originally conveyed to the Mount Olivet Cemetery Association under the Act of January 23, 1909; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2188. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, to conduct a Joint Venture Program to protect, restore, enhance, and manage migratory bird populations, their habitats, and the ecosystems they rely on, through voluntary actions on public and private lands, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

The following concurrent resolution was read, and referred as indicated:

H. Con. Res. 156. Concurrent resolution condemning the attack on the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in July 1994, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Foreign Relations.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bills were read the first and second times by unanimous consent, and placed on the calendar:

H.R. 3170. An act making appropriations for financial services and general government for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3183. An act making appropriations for energy and water development and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted: