

makes sure we protect critical programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, this week President Obama stood beside Israel and the cause of peace when he addressed the United Nations General Assembly. I rise today to also stand beside our ally and friend, Israel, and the goal of its two-state solution. I firmly believe that only a two-state solution can lead to a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinian people.

Unfortunately, we are heading down a path that will not lead to a lasting peace. Involvement by the U.N. General Assembly will not lead to a solution but will act as a disruptive force. I urge the parties to use the time in New York to begin a constructive dialog toward agreement on final status issues. If peace is to be achievable, then we must break through the cycle of failure that has too often plagued negotiations. U.N. action will not resolve the issues acting as a roadblock to peace.

It is important also to note, as the President stated, that peace will not come until each side "learns to stand in each other's shoes." Each party must realize the other's aspirations, because their futures are intricately intertwined. No action at the United Nations can remove or change what is an essential fact. For Israel, the two-state solution will enable its people to enjoy a secure and peaceful future. For the Palestinians, the goal of nationhood can only occur through negotiations with Israel.

I believe the President is making a good-faith attempt to realize and understand the aspirations of each party, while standing firm with our friends. The central reality is this: We will only recognize a Palestinian state as part of an agreement that leads to a lasting peace. This is in the best interests of Israel, the Palestinian people, the United States, and the international community.

There is no time like the present to restart the hard work needed to achieve a lasting peace. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert recently

pressed on the urgent need to return to negotiations in an op-ed in the New York Times. I ask unanimous consent that this op-ed be printed in the RECORD at the end of my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. While I don't agree with everything the Prime Minister wrote, I do believe he was especially correct about one point:

I truly believe that a two-state solution is the only way to ensure a more stable Middle East and to grant Israel the security and well-being it desires. As tensions grow, I cannot but feel that we in the region are on the verge of missing an opportunity—one that we cannot afford to miss.

He concludes in his piece:

Now is the time. There will be no better one. I hope that Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Abbas will meet the challenge.

I also hope that today both parties sit down in New York and avoid the disruption that will be caused by a vote in the United Nations.

EXHIBIT 1

PEACE NOW, OR NEVER

(By Ehud Olmert)

JERUSALEM.—As the United Nations General Assembly opens this year, I feel uneasy. An unnecessary diplomatic clash between Israel and the Palestinians is taking shape in New York, and it will be harmful to Israel and to the future of the Middle East.

I know that things could and should have been different.

I truly believe that a two-state solution is the only way to ensure a more stable Middle East and to grant Israel the security and well-being it desires. As tensions grow, I cannot but feel that we in the region are on the verge of missing an opportunity—one that we cannot afford to miss.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, plans to make a unilateral bid for recognition of a Palestinian state at the United Nations on Friday. He has the right to do so, and the vast majority of countries in the General Assembly support his move. But this is not the wisest step Mr. Abbas can take.

The Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has declared publicly that he believes in the two-state solution, but he is expending all of his political effort to block Mr. Abbas's bid for statehood by rallying domestic support and appealing to other countries. This is not the wisest step Mr. Netanyahu can take.

In the worst-case scenario, chaos and violence could erupt, making the possibility of an agreement even more distant, if not impossible. If that happens, peace will definitely not be the outcome.

The parameters of a peace deal are well known and they have already been put on the table. I put them there in September 2008 when I presented a far-reaching offer to Mr. Abbas.

According to my offer, the territorial dispute would be solved by establishing a Palestinian state on territory equivalent in size to the pre-1967 West Bank and Gaza Strip with mutually agreed-upon land swaps that take into account the new realities on the ground.

The city of Jerusalem would be shared. Its Jewish areas would be the capital of Israel and its Arab neighborhoods would become the Palestinian capital. Neither side would declare sovereignty over the city's holy places; they wouldn't be administered jointly with the United States.

The Palestinian refugee problem would be addressed within the frame-work of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. The new Palestinian state would become the home of all the Palestinian refugees just as the state of Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people. Israel would, however, be prepared to absorb a small number of refugees on humanitarian grounds.

Because ensuring Israel's security is vital to the implementation of any agreement, the Palestinian state would be de-militarized and it would not form military alliances with other nations. Both states would cooperate to fight terrorism and violence.

These parameters were never formally rejected by Mr. Abbas, and they should be put on the table again today. Both Mr. Abbas and Mr. Netanyahu must then make brave and difficult decisions.

We Israelis simply do not have the luxury of spending more time postponing a solution. A further delay will only help extremists on both sides who seek to sabotage any prospect of a peaceful, negotiated two-state solution.

Moreover, the Arab Spring has changed the Middle East, and unpredictable developments in the region, such as the recent attack on Israel's embassy in Cairo, could easily explode into wide-spread chaos. It is therefore in Israel's strategic interest to cement existing peace agreements with its neighbors, Egypt and Jordan.

In addition, Israel must make every effort to defuse tensions with Turkey as soon as possible. Turkey is not an enemy of Israel. I have worked closely with the Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In spite of his recent statements and actions, I believe that he understands the importance of relations with Israel. Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Netanyahu must work to end this crisis immediately for the benefit of both countries and the stability of the region.

In Israel, we are sorry for the loss of life of Turkish citizens in May 2010, when Israel confronted a provocative flotilla of ships bound for Gaza. I am sure that the proper way to express these sentiments to the Turkish government and the Turkish people can be found.

The time for true leadership has come. Leadership is tested not by one's capacity to survive politically but by the ability to make tough decisions in trying times.

When I addressed international forums as prime minister, the Israeli people expected me to present bold political initiatives that would bring peace—not arguments outlining why achieving peace now is not possible. Today, such an initiative is more necessary than ever to prove to the world that Israel is a peace-seeking country.

The window of opportunity is limited. Israel will not always find itself sitting across the table from Palestinian leaders like Mr. Abbas and the prime minister, Salam Fayyad, who object to terrorism and want peace. Indeed, future Palestinian leaders might abandon the idea of two states and seek a one-state solution, making reconciliation impossible.

Now is the time. There will be no better one. I hope that Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Abbas will meet the challenge.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

VETERANS HEALTH CARE FACILITIES CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2011

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to consideration of H.R. 2646, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2646) to authorize certain Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facility projects and leases, to extend certain expiring provisions of law, and to modify certain authorities of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read three times and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 2646) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

SHORT-TERM TANF EXTENSION ACT

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 2943, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2943) to extend the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families and related programs through December 31, 2011.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the title for the third time.

The bill (H.R. 2943) was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 2943) was passed.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table and any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

HONORING THE SERVICE OF SERGEANT FIRST CLASS LEROY ARTHUR PETRY

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Armed Services Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. Con. Res. 27 and the Senate proceed to its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 27) honoring the service of Sergeant First Class Leroy Arthur Petry, a native of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the second living recipient of the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements related to the concurrent resolution be printed in the RECORD.

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

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 27) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

The concurrent resolution, with its preamble, reads as follows:

S. CON. RES. 27

Whereas Sergeant First Class Leroy Arthur Petry of the United States Army, a native of Santa Fe, New Mexico, was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Obama on July 12, 2011;

Whereas the Medal of Honor is the highest honor awarded to members of the Armed Forces for valor in combat;

Whereas the official citation awarding the Medal of Honor to Sergeant First Class Petry states that then-Staff Sergeant Petry "distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in action with an armed enemy in the vicinity of Paktya Province, Afghanistan, on May 26, 2008";

Whereas Sergeant First Class Petry joins an elite group of Medal of Honor recipients dating back to the Civil War;

Whereas Sergeant First Class Petry has continued a long tradition of military service to the United States by New Mexicans, dating back to the defense of the Western United States during the Civil War, and followed by participation in every major war fought by the United States;

Whereas Sergeant First Class Petry is the second living recipient of the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War;

Whereas Sergeant First Class Petry fought with bravery and, despite wounds to both of his legs, had the courage and quick thinking needed to save the lives of his fellow soldiers by throwing back an enemy grenade and losing his right hand when the grenade detonated shortly after he released it;

Whereas the actions of Sergeant First Class Petry represent the highest values of

the Army, the Rangers, and the United States;

Whereas Sergeant First Class Petry has consistently demonstrated humility and dedication to his fellow soldiers;

Whereas Sergeant First Class Petry, who overcame a troubled youth and found the strength to turn his life around and dedicate himself to serving the United States, is an example to all people who are struggling in the United States; and

Whereas the brave actions of Sergeant First Class Petry, as well as his modesty and selfless service, stand as the embodiment of the best attributes of the people of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That Congress—

(1) honors the service and sacrifice of Sergeant First Class Leroy Arthur Petry of the United States Army and his family; and

(2) encourages the people of the United States to recognize the valor, heroism, and dedication to the United States exhibited by Sergeant First Class Petry.

AUTHORIZING THE USE OF THE ROTUNDA

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to S. Con. Res. 29, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 29) authorizing the use of the rotunda of the United States Capitol for an event to present the Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to Neil A. Armstrong, Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., Michael Collins, and John Herschel Glenn, Jr., in recognition of their significant contributions to society.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to the concurrent resolution.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the concurrent resolution be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and any statements relating to the matter be placed in the RECORD as if read.

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

The concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 29) was agreed to.

The concurrent resolution reads as follows:

S. CON. RES. 29

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring),

SECTION 1. USE OF THE ROTUNDA OF THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL TO PRESENT THE CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.

(a) AUTHORIZATION.—The rotunda of the United States Capitol is authorized to be used for an event on November 16, 2011 for the presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to Neil A. Armstrong, Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., Michael Collins, and John Herschel Glenn, Jr., in recognition of their significant contributions to society.

(b) PREPARATIONS.—Physical preparations for the conduct of the event described in subsection (a) shall be carried out in accordance with such conditions as may be prescribed by the Architect of the Capitol.