

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with Senator MCCONNELL, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 231; that there be 2 hours for debate equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on Calendar No. 231; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the Record; that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I mentioned to the majority leader I have to do some more consultation over here in order to clear this nomination, but for the moment I must object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

IIHF 2014 WORLD ICE HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in the last few years, we have seen dictator after dictator tumble across the world: Qadhafi in Libya, Ben Ali in Tunisia, Mubarak in Egypt, Saleh in Yemen, and eventually Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Yet there is one dictator who hangs on. He is the last dictator in Europe. You may not be familiar with his name, but they certainly know him in neighboring countries. He is the strong-man President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko.

For more than 20 years, he has ruled Belarus with an iron fist—using a barbaric combination of repression, intimidation, and torture to maintain power. He is so bold as to continue to call his security services the KGB. Can you imagine in today's world calling your security service the same name as the dread security service of the Soviet Union, the KGB?

Under Lukashenko's reign, elections have been consistently rigged, arrests have been made for political purposes, and the public's basic freedoms of

speech, assembly, association, even religion—which we take for granted—are severely restricted.

As shown in this photograph I have in the Chamber, this is Alexander Lukashenko, the last dictator in Europe, the President of Belarus.

On December 19, 2010, Lukashenko was given an opportunity to ease the iron grip of his police state and move closer to democracy by holding a legitimate Presidential election. He could not bring himself to do it. He orchestrated a fraudulent election, and then he turned around on the day of the election and arrested all of his opponents who had the audacity to run against him and threw them in prison. How about that?

I was in Belarus shortly afterwards and met with their families. These people were distraught, beside themselves about what had happened.

One of these detainees who was eventually released came and saw me in November, Ales Mikhalevich, one of the Presidential candidates who had been arrested, tortured, and denied basic legal rights for months. Recently he had been given political asylum in the Czech Republic, where he continues to fight for human rights in Belarus. His wife and daughters, whom I met in Minsk, in Belarus, are still being harassed by the KGB as of today.

Ales Mikhalevich and others from the hundreds who were imprisoned have been released, but others were not so lucky.

Mikalai Statkevich, a Presidential candidate, was sentenced to 6 years and can barely receive the medical assistance he needs.

Andrei Sannikau, another Presidential candidate, was sentenced to 5 years in prison for having the boldness to run against this dictator.

A number of other political activists who have engaged in political activity which we take for granted in the United States have been languishing in prison. I thought about it this week, as the demonstrators gathered in front of the Supreme Court, marching back and forth with signs, how we take that for granted. You try to do that in a country like Belarus, you will end up in prison. Thank God the United States has a much better standard when it comes to basic rights.

Here are the names of some of the other activists Lukashenko has thrown in prison: Zmitser Dashkevich, Eduard Lobau, Paval Sevyarynets, Zmister Bandarenka, Ales Byalyatski, Mikalai Autukhovich.

Authoritarians frequently torture these activists, trying to pressure them to sign letters admitting a guilt that does not exist. But I want to speak about something that is going to come up where Belarus and Lukashenko are going to become international celebrities.

On February 16, Mikhalevich, whom I mentioned earlier, was one of the 13 who picketed the headquarters of Prague-based automobile company Skoda, a subsidiary of Volkswagen.

Why did they picket Skoda?

Skoda is one of the major sponsors of the International Ice Hockey Federation's World Championship, and has been for the last 19 years. In fact, Skoda's this automobile company's—relationship with the Hockey Federation is one of the longest lasting sponsorships. And much to the disbelief of the rest of the world, the International Ice Hockey Federation has chosen to host its championship in Belarus. Why? Because Lukashenko, the dictator, is such a big fan of hockey. All the while, political prisoners, including Presidential candidates, will be languishing in prison because of this dictator.

Companies such as Skoda, Nike, and Reebok are among the major corporate sponsors of this federation that is holding its championship in Belarus.

Last year, I joined Congressman MIKE QUIGLEY of Chicago and National Hockey League Hall of Famer turned European Parliamentarian Peter Stastny and wrote to the International Ice Hockey Federation President Rene Fasel, urging that the 2014 games in Belarus be suspended until the political prisoners are released. How can anyone celebrate the excitement of a world-class sports championship when people are languishing in prison for their political beliefs? They ignored our request.

I spoke to USA Hockey, which represents the United States in this federation. They paid no attention.

It turns out the International Ice Hockey Federation will be meeting next month in Finland. Belarus is likely to be on the agenda. It should be. It should be at the top of the agenda.

The honor of hosting this prestigious international sporting event in a country where the President is regarded as Europe's last dictator is hardly a reflection of the quality of the sport that is involved.

An ardent fan of ice hockey and the head of the Belarus national Olympic committee, rewarding Lukashenko with the 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship ignores his regime's atrocities.

I have tried to reach out to Skoda, owned by Volkswagen, Nike, Reebok, and other sponsors to let them know their image is at stake too if they validate this dictator's policies and give honor to a country which does not recognize the basic freedoms.

This photograph I have in the Chamber shows Skoda's CEO, Winfried Vahland, in the center, along with Hockey Federation President Fasel on the right, as they celebrate Skoda's commitment to sponsor the world championship through 2017.

Skoda contends its sponsorship of the event does not indicate approval of what is going on in Belarus—simply their dedication to hockey. That does not show much courage.

Lukashenko's preparations for this ice hockey tournament indicate that Belarus is expecting a lot of visitors and a big economic boost.

I am once again calling on the International Ice Hockey Federation in their meeting in Finland to consider this matter at the top of their agenda and to suspend their plans to hold the Federation Championship in Belarus in 2014.

There are many other countries around the world more than anxious to join them and make this a championship well deserving with a host country that is one we can be proud of.

My feelings about this are not alone. The European Union recently widened sanctions against Lukashenko and his cronies. Lukashenko promptly recalled his Belarusian representative to the EU, after which EU Ambassadors were withdrawn from Belarus.

After a summit in Brussels earlier this month, Lukashenko—never at a loss for words—criticized the European Union politicians and railed on the German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, the first openly gay minister in Germany. President Lukashenko said:

It is better to be a dictator than gay.

That is a quote. He went on to say:

Belarusians deserve to host the World Championship in 2014 in Belarus.

That is incredible. What sports organization wants to validate those comments?

I want to close by saying, I hope the International Ice Hockey Federation's Annual Congress will make the right decision in May. I hope its corporate sponsors will feel a little uneasy being associated with Dictator Lukashenko and his policies in Belarus. I hope they will suspend the 2014 Championship unless the political prisoners are at least released and that other international sporting groups, such as the International Cycling Union, follow their example.

I want the United States, in partnership with the European Union, to continue to place pressure on Lukashenko to open his political system and to stand by the Belarusian people in their efforts to bring justice to their country.

REMEMBERING JUDGE WILLIAM HIBBLER

Mr. DURBIN. I wish to pay tribute to a great man and a great judge who passed away unexpectedly earlier this month. Judge William Hibbler had served with distinction as a Federal district court judge in the Northern District of Illinois since 1999. Bill Hibbler cared so deeply about Chicago that it sometimes surprised people to learn that he actually started life in a small town in Alabama.

His family moved to Chicago when he was a child. He graduated from St. Mel High School on the West Side and later from the University of Illinois at Chicago. He worked as a substitute teacher in the Chicago public school system to help pay his tuition at DePaul University School of Law. He started his

legal career in private practice but soon felt the call of public service so he went to work as an assistant State's attorney in Cook County.

In 1986, he became an associate judge of the Cook County Circuit Court, and he served in that capacity for 13 years, until he joined the Federal bench. Judge Hibbler was active in community service throughout his career. He was a mentor to many young people.

During his confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, I noted that some judges have an unfortunate tendency to look down on the people who come before them once they put on the judges' black robes, and I asked Judge Hibbler what type of temperament he would bring to the Federal bench. His answer said so much about the kind of man Bill Hibbler was and about his values. He said, "The opportunity to serve is a wonderful opportunity, and we should never forget that."

Judge Hibbler died on March 19. He was 65 years old. The esteem in which he was held is evident in comments by other judges and by lawyers who appeared before him.

Chief Judge Jim Holderman of the Northern District praised Judge Hibbler as "an outstanding jurist who cared deeply about our system of justice and displayed an unparalleled sense of fairness." Thomas Bruton, clerk of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois, said: "Judge Hibbler was a friend to everyone who met him. He was gracious, kind and a mentor to many in this court."

U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald said, "He was a wonderful judge and wonderful person, who treated everyone who appeared before him with great respect." His friend, 7th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Anne Claire Williams, said that Judge Hibbler "wasn't what you would call a man of many words, but each day, in his own quiet way, he made a difference in the world."

I am proud to have joined then-Senator Carol Moseley-Braun in urging President Clinton to nominate Judge Hibbler to the Federal bench 13 years ago. His many years of distinguished service on the Federal bench only deepened my respect for him. William Hibbler loved the law, and he loved justice. He also loved his family very deeply, and I wish to offer my sincere condolences to his wife Regina, his son William, and his daughter Aviv. We are grateful for the service that their husband and father provided to the Chicago community, and we will miss him.

TRIBUTE TO MR. LEONARD GILLIAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to a true American hero who honorably answered the call to serve his country in its dire time of need, Mr. Leonard Gilliam of Laurel County, KY.

Mr. Gilliam was born in McWhorter, KY, in 1919. The 92-year-old has had an incredible life on this Earth thus far. Leonard was a country boy who had lived on his family farm his entire life. He was the first boy from McWhorter to get the call from the U.S. Army in 1941; he was 21 years old.

The newly enlisted men, along with Gilliam, headed to basic training in Fort Thomas, KY. Gilliam was trained in artillery; during training he learned how to man a tank gun. After training ended he was transferred to Fort Benning, GA, where he would reside until December of 1941. The attack on Pearl Harbor led to the declaration of war, which for Gilliam would mean being deployed to the front.

The young Leonard Gilliam knew that going to war would be difficult, and his bringing up had prepared him to face the difficult road ahead. He had spent his childhood working on the farm and walking through fields and creeks, to and from the Twin Branch School, every day. But what the eager Gilliam did not foresee was the opportunities he would be presented with during his time in the service. A chance to see the world and forge a lifelong friendship were not in the then 21-year-old's plans back then.

His much needed experience with tanks landed him a spot on the front lines, and Gilliam entered the war in Casablanca, North Africa. He traveled through Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia before heading towards Europe. Gilliam was called to invade the island of Sicily on July 10, 1942. He was later awarded the Bronze Arrowhead for his courageous actions during the invasion.

Gilliam spent time in Sicily guarding POWs. He remembers eating with them, talking with them, and even giving them cigarettes. Looking back, he says that the prisoners were some of the finest people he has ever met. He stayed at the prison in Sicily until he was called to go to Normandy. He arrived in France a mere 4 days after the invasion of the beach on June 6, 1944.

The hardships experienced by Gilliam in France were some of the toughest times of the war for him. But in the midst of a dark shadow cast by war, Gilliam met Wayne McCoy, a fellow tank gunner who would soon become his best friend. The two friends helped each other see the end of the war, and then they lost track of each other once they had returned back to the States. It wasn't until 1997—53 years later—when the two would reunite. The two war buddies shared a deep bond, one that they continue to share to this day.

The veteran now recalls the warm welcome he received when he finally made his return trip home in 1945 after 3 years overseas. Mr. Gilliam is a modest man. He feels like he is undeserving of the hero's welcome he received after World War II. He believes that the real heroes were the ones that "stayed over there," the ones who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and never got the chance to come home.