

SYRIA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, tomorrow the President is going to brief the Democratic caucus and the Republican caucus separately. He is going to address the Nation tomorrow night. As we all know, there are international discussions relevant to the matter in Syria.

Normally what I would do in a situation such as this is file cloture today, but I don't think that is to our benefit. I don't think we need to see how fast we can do this; we have to see how well we can do this, so I will not file cloture this evening on the Syria resolution.

I have spoken to the Republican leader. I have talked to virtually all of my Democratic Senators. We have enough votes to get cloture, but I don't think we should be counting numbers tonight. I think what we need to do is to make sure the President has the opportunity to speak to all 100 Senators and all 300 million American people before we do this.

As I have said before, when we get on this, we are going to deal with this in a manner that is dignified and move forward in a way that is expeditious, yet thorough.

I have discussed this with the President and other people in the administration. I repeat: I wish to make sure the President has a full opportunity to make his case to the Senate and the American people before we vote on this matter.

As always, I will continue to discuss this with Senator McCONNELL, and we will see if we can reach some kind of agreement to move forward without cloture. If that doesn't work out, I will file cloture when it is appropriate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business for up to 15 minutes. After I conclude my remarks, I ask that Senator INHOFE of Oklahoma and Senator CASEY of Pennsylvania be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there any objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Ohio.

LABOR DAY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, most of us were in our States over Labor Day. I usually come to the floor a few days after Labor Day to talk about the importance of Labor Day and what it means to working Americans, what it has meant to our country, and what it has meant to building a strong middle class.

I would like to read a letter sent to me by Bill Ross, who is an Ohio business leader. Mr. Ross writes:

I grew up in a first generation immigrant family in a small Ohio town.

My father, who obtained only an 8th grade education (not uncommon for his generation), worked hard in an industrial job.

My mother worked at home to care for our family of 5 children. When able to do so, she went to work outside the household too.

We rented a home for \$25 a month, ate nutritious meals at home, and all walked to school with clean clothes each day.

All five children went to college, obtained post-graduate professional degrees, and pursued rewarding professional careers in law, education and business.

How did that happen?

Because, first and foremost, my father had a job with a living wage and health care for his family that his union protected. Because we had access to good quality public education. Because we had access to affordable state universities and student loan programs that we could later afford to repay. Because blue collar working people had a chance.

I hope we can restore all that in America again.

Bill Ross's story is very much like my wife Connie's story. Bill Ross was born in Ashtabula a bit before my wife who was also born there. Bill Ross's dad carried a union card and his mother went to work when she could. My wife's father carried a utility worker's union card for more than 30 years in Ashtabula, OH. Her mother was a home care worker who worked, when she could, after the children were a little older.

My wife, as did Bill Ross, was able to go to school with minimal debt. She graduated from Kent State University in the 1970s with not much more than \$1,200 in student debt.

The ability of a living wage and carrying a union card gave them a reason to celebrate Labor Day because it gave so many working families a chance.

The Presiding Officer comes from a State much like mine. He understands the importance of carrying a union card and getting a living wage gives people the kind of opportunity that people in this country deserve.

For generations hard-working Americans left their homes every morning, and some at night, to earn an honest living. They bent with swollen knees to put on steel-toed work boots to provide for loved ones. They put up with calloused hands to build a better life for their children.

Middle-class Americans and people struggling to enter the middle class labored to ensure that children have enough food and clean clothes and an adequate education to thrive.

We know steelworkers, nurses, mechanics, teachers, and plumbers are not always treated with the dignity they deserve—especially, far too often, from our elected officials.

American history is a history of struggle for working people—fighting for representation and fair wages, for access to good-paying jobs, and for the dignity every human being deserves. It is about fighting for democracy and civil rights—as we were reminded a few days ago when we marked the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for jobs and freedom.

More than a century ago, when John Patterson Green, an Ohioan, and

Cedarville native John Henderson Kyle introduced a bill to establish Labor Day as a State holiday in Ohio, they were not thinking of any one segment of the population. They were focused on the rights of all Americans who work hard and play by the rules.

Since then, we have seen how the middle class grew when we ensured that hard work is rewarded with fair pay and decent benefits.

Seventy-five years ago, President Roosevelt signed the Fair Labor Standards Act, which ultimately ensured that American workers would receive a minimum wage, reasonable work hours, and an end to child labor.

One of the authors of that bill, Senator Hugo Black, sat at this specific desk in the Senate and supported Social Security, minimum wage, and paying for overtime. He initially introduced that legislation in 1932.

President Roosevelt led us to decades of prosperity by ensuring that hard work is met with fair wages and decent working conditions. A minimum wage helped to lift millions of Americans from poverty and allowed them to join the middle class.

Today workers face new challenges. While corporate executives and Wall Street banks are earning record profits, too many families in Ohio, Indiana, Oklahoma, and across the country are still struggling. Some politicians have used the recession and the budget crisis it created as grounds for attacking worker's rights. We have seen vicious attacks on workers' rights across the country. We have seen it in North Carolina. We saw it last year in Indiana and Michigan. We have seen it over the last 3 years in Ohio.

Ohio passed one of the worst attacks on collective bargaining rights in Ohio's history, trying to convince people that public employees caused the financial crisis, not Wall Street. Workers fought back and shattered a record for signatures needed to establish a ballot initiative and energized 2 million voters who came out to overturn that wrong-headed law.

Today, because the unity of not just labor union members but the huge majority of voters in Ohio, police officers, firefighters, sanitation workers, teachers, and other public sector workers continue to have the right to bargain and work with management through collective bargaining to ensure safety and fairness on the job.

In Akron, OH, UAW workers at Meggitt do high-quality and efficient work which allows them to be competitive with workers in Mexico and has prevented operations from being outsourced and helped to attract new investment in Ohio.

In Toledo, Youngstown, Cleveland, and beyond, union autoworkers helped bring back the American auto industry. They are building the cars of the future that people want to drive. I met with business owners across Ohio over this August and the month before and the month before and the month before

that—during my 7 years in the Senate—Ohio business owners who want to pay their workers a fair wage and have joined in efforts to raise the minimum wage. They know increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour will increase domestic production by nearly \$33 billion over 3 years as workers spend their raises in their local businesses and communities. This economic activity would generate 140,000 new jobs over the course of 3 years.

It is no surprise that the American public is anxious about our place in an increasingly multipolar, complicated, dynamic global economy. People know that after NAFTA and CAFTA and permanent China trade relations were passed, plants closed and we lost 5 million good manufacturing jobs. Never in history has company after company implemented a business plan where they close down production in Stuebenville or Toledo or Dayton, OH, to move overseas to Wuhan or Shanghai, China, and sell the products back to the United States. That business plan led us to this.

In 1977 manufacturing was 20 percent of our GDP and financial services represented significantly less. That flipped by 2010, where manufacturing is now only about 11 percent of GDP. Between 2000 and 2010, because of wrong-headed trade agreements, because of tax policy that has given incentives to move offshore, our country lost 5 million manufacturing jobs and 60,000 plants closed down.

Since 2010 we have seen manufacturing jobs grow by more than 500,000. That is not good enough. We have to enact an agenda that includes the best trained workers, the most developed and sophisticated infrastructure, the most robust manufacturing base, and the strongest defense against currency manipulation. Until every American worker is able to rise out of poverty, we still have work to do. Labor Day, celebrated last week, shouldn't simply mark the end of summer; it should mark the beginning of a renewed commitment to fighting for American workers, American businesses, and strengthening our middle class.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

SYRIA

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first of all, let me thank my friend the distinguished Senator from Ohio for including me in his unanimous consent request. I will briefly speak about an amendment.

We all understand that the issue is going to come before this body to send activity into Syria. I am very much opposed to any kind of force in Syria, but if it happens, we want to be sure there is some protection there. So I have an amendment that even if my amendment passes, I will still oppose the effort of this President to send activity into Syria, and I believe it would precipitate a war.

My amendment is very simple. If the President takes military action against Syria, sequestration of our Armed Forces would be delayed for 1 year. We are talking about the fiscal year where we would take another \$52 billion out of our military.

What Assad has done and continues to do is reprehensible, but the United States can't afford another war given the current state of our military. The threats from Syria and the Middle East are not emerging threats. These threats have been around for decades. We knew they were there. There is nothing new about them. Yet the readiness capabilities of our military continue to be decimated by drastic budget cuts.

Sixteen Air Force combat flying squadrons have been grounded. We finally, after 3 months, put them back in the air again, and right now we know it costs more to get them back in a state of readiness than the money we saved from grounding them for 3 months. Our naval fleet has been reduced to historically low levels, the end strength of our ground forces has been cut by more than 100,000 personnel, and hundreds of thousands of DOD civilian employees have been furloughed. Just in my State of Oklahoma, in one of my installations, 14,000 civilian employees have been furloughed.

We can't have it both ways—continuing to cut the funding of our military while still expecting to meet our national security requirements. As military readiness and capabilities decline, we accept greater risk, and, as I have always said, risk equals lives. Every time we have a hearing, we have our combatant commanders come in and talk about the risks. Risk means lives. As I have always said, risk equals lives, and allowing these cuts to continue while proposing to send our forces into harm's way is immoral and reprehensible.

Over the last week I have heard a lot from the President and his administration about how any action in Syria will be limited. I suggest there is no such thing as limited war. Once we decide to strike, we can't predict where it will end or how the situation might escalate. Let's not forget that we have troops currently on the ground in Jordan and Turkey, marines guarding our Embassies, and sailors and airmen stationed around the region. We have already heard that Iran is ordering its terrorist proxies to retaliate by attacking U.S. interests in the region, including our Embassy in Iraq. The State Department has ordered nonessential personnel to evacuate our Embassy in Lebanon. The threats to our forces are real.

I wish to read for my colleagues excerpts from a letter that was written by two ladies, Rebekah Sanderlin and Molly Blake. These are spouses of two of our servicemen. They are responding—much more eloquently than I could ever hope to—to the immense hardship our military is enduring

under sequestration and to the misguided belief that a military strike on Syria can be done in isolation—that it won't affect our troops and their families.

I ask unanimous consent that the entire letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AN OPEN LETTER TO CNN REPORTER BARBARA STARR

[From The Huffington Post, posted Sept. 4, 2013]

DEAR MS. STARR: We are writing to let you in on a secret. It's a big one—so get to a fresh page in your reporter notebook and have your pen poised and ready.

You told your viewers last Thursday that there was “no question” that the military could afford to go into Syria and that you “don't think it's really going to affect military families at all.”

Here's some inside information for you: There is no such thing as a person-less war. Our military cannot afford for Americans to forget that wars and battles and military strikes are fought by troops, that troops are people, and that those people have families.

In our military communities this summer we couldn't even afford to pay federal employees for a five-day work week. Military families can't get doctors' appointments and can't get the counseling services needed to grapple with the problems we already have, problems largely created by almost 12 years of war. And while Congress was busy sending a warning letter to the president to ensure they get to sign off on whether or not we go to war, they managed to ignore military families when the sequester hit. Today clinic hours are being slashed—along with pretty much every other service military families need. Walking around our communities lately, it doesn't look like we can afford much of anything—and certainly not a whole new war.

And that's just taking ‘afford’ literally.

Figuratively, the picture is even grimmer. An entire generation of military kids have grown up with a parent they know primarily through Skype. Couples are trying to piece together marriages that have been badly fractured by more years spent apart than together. We grew hopeful that better days were coming as we watched the end of the Iraq war, and we're thrilled that the end of our involvement in Afghanistan is nigh, and yet now all of cable news is breathless and giddy with talk of war in Syria.

You boast, in your bio, that you have exclusive access to Lt. Gen. Russel Honore and you've interviewed several secretaries of defense and other important people at the CIA. You may very well have Sec. Hagel on speed dial—but that doesn't give you the right to toss around your thoughts on how military families may or may not be affected by military action. Not until you've stood in our shoes for longer than a three-minute live shot.

You see, Barbara, there's no such thing as ‘no boots on the ground.’ We in the military community sigh and shake our heads when we hear talk like that from the people on TV. Perhaps you consider a relatively small number of troops to be the same as zero—but we don't. We know that each of those service members is somebody's somebody.

As journalists, we like to show both sides of the story. So we would like to also voice our thanks. For your careless words have aimed a giant floodlight on the military-civilian divide. Blue Star Families Director of Research and Policy, Vivian Greentree said it best: