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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Creator and sustainer of our destinies, You have loved us through the seasons of our lives. You accept us as we are, infusing us with Your peace, and strengthening us with Your grace.

Bless our lawmakers. Give them the wisdom to follow Your leading, to live with courage, and to release the powers of goodness throughout our land. Lord, empower them to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint, as You keep them always in Your care.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to the Ukraine act.

At 5:30 there will be a cloture vote on the motion to proceed to that important piece of legislation.

We have so much to do this work period and we have so much to do this week. I know I have said this on other occasions, and we have been able to

work things out so it hasn't been necessary, but everyone should understand we have a lot to do and we may have to be in this weekend. If we are forced to go through all the procedural hoops to be able to complete the important Ukraine legislation, the important unemployment legislation, and the important SGR legislation, and setting it up so we can sometime next week get on minimum wage, we are going to have to be in this weekend. There is just no way around it, and everyone should understand that.

I know I will immediately start hearing from people: I have this event; I have that event. It is Monday at 2 p.m. in the afternoon. It is only 11 a.m. in the West. There is plenty of time to reschedule stuff or at least put it on hold, because we just have no choice. The only alternative is to take a week away from the break we are expecting to have. So everyone should understand that it is possible the Senate will need to work through the weekend to get all this work done.

UKRAINE

Mr. REID. The first item the Senate will consider, as I have already indicated, is a bipartisan package of aid to Ukraine. It includes sanctions against Russia for their untoward actions against their neighbor, Ukraine. As we prepare to debate this measure, I advise all Senators it is customary to show respect for the President—I am confident everyone will—when he is overseas. He is at a nuclear conference over there in Europe as we speak and it is an important meeting. President Putin is not there, but he has sent his Foreign Minister, as I understand it.

As we begin debate on this aid and sanctions package, I also hope the Republicans who stopped action on this legislation prior to the break have considered how their obstruction affects our great country's national security as well as the people in Ukraine, who are struggling so very much.

Since this was blocked by some Republicans, these important sanctions have not taken place. Russian lawmakers voted to annex Crimea and Russian forces have taken over, in many instances by force, military bases in Crimea. It is impossible to know whether events would have unfolded differently if the United States had responded to Russian aggression with a strong unified voice, which we did not do.

When a few extreme Republicans blocked action on this robust bill, which was reported out of the Foreign Relations Committee with a strong bipartisan vote, and then, when it came to the Senate floor, we sent a very weak message to the Russians by indicating we will work on this later; we won't do it now. In spite of what some Republicans did with their obstruction, President Obama moved forward with additional sanctions, and I am glad he did. The President is working closely with our European allies to impose the most effective sanctions possible. That is, in effect, what he is working on today.

In light of such clear-cut aggression against Ukraine, which continued as late as yesterday, it is difficult to believe Republicans blocked that package at all, but they did and it is almost unimaginable why they did this. They blocked aid to Ukraine in order to protect the anonymity of their big-time donors. They are saying: We will give the President the tools he needs to help the beleaguered people of Ukraine but only if—only if—the 501(c)4 work being done by the Internal Revenue Service and the Treasury Department is stopped.

That is pretty absurd, but that is the truth. It is all over the news today. So Republicans delayed this aid package for 10 days in order to protect the Koch brothers and billionaires just like them. That is very hard to believe, but it is true. Republicans objected to moving forward with this aid package in

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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order to protect the ability of the Koch brothers and other GOP donors to hide behind shadowy front groups—groups that spend millions on political attack ads. This is the reason for holding up something that is so important to 46 million Ukrainians and important to our country. It is important for our security. But they objected to moving forward with this aid package unless, I repeat, we agreed to allow the Kochs and billionaires just like them to continue anonymously spending millions and millions of dollars trying to buy America's democracy. Hard to believe, but it is true.

I applaud so very much the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, the junior Senator from Tennessee, as well as the senior Senator from Arizona, JOHN MCCAIN, for their impassioned defense of this bill prior to the break. No one spoke more fluently and with more articulation than those two good men. They joined in defending bipartisan sanctions and the role of the International Monetary Fund in stabilizing Ukraine's economy and keeping Ukraine free.

The measure before the body includes vital loan guarantees, sanctions, and IMF funding. That is what they are holding up more than anything else. In the work we did on the omnibus, this was one of the last items we tried to get done—IMF funding. But even back then they would not agree to IMF funding unless Treasury stopped all work on looking at these secret shadowy groups. If the American people knew what they were doing—but they do not because they are hidden—these millions and millions they are spending on ads around the country are hidden behind phony organizations. We couldn't get that IMF funding in the omnibus because Republicans opposed IMF funding unless they got relief from the Treasury Department.

This legislation provides money for Ukraine—direct money. It is not very much. But if the money we in effect owe the International Monetary Fund was received by the IMF, they would be able to multiply that money many times over, what we put into this. As I recall, it is \$600 million. This would allow the International Monetary Fund to go to other countries that participate in IMF funding and it would generate more than the \$600 million. Ukraine needs this money.

We had Senator DURBIN on a Sunday show, Senator AYOTTE on a Sunday show speaking together about how this country needs our help. And without this money, the help we give will be just a pat on the back, not really much help. So I am very grateful to have the support of Democrats and Republicans—this is bipartisan—to move this aid package forward this evening.

I hope the obstruction will stop. I am hopeful and somewhat confident this legislation will receive the strong bipartisan support it deserves.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Like all Senators, I get lots and lots of letters and emails and phone calls

each month. Some write, some call, pleading for additional unemployment benefits because they have been out of work and they can't find a job. The sad part about that is most of them are not kids. I mean that not in the negative sense. They are not young men and women. Many of them trying to find a job are in their fifties and sixties and they can't find work because they have been laid off because of the recession, depression—whatever we want to call it—and they can't find a job. They need this help.

A number of these individuals have been driven into poverty. One thing we have to do this work period is do something about unemployment compensation, and we are going to try to do that. We have a bipartisan bill, and I so much appreciate the Republicans who have stood up and agreed to help us with that.

HEALTH CARE

There are also people who call, and they are calling because they are happy. They have hope. They do that because for the first time in their adult lives they have health insurance or they have health insurance that is cheaper than they had last year. They have family members who are disabled and who can now get health insurance. They couldn't do it before because they were considered to have a preexisting disability. People who are disabled are really happy because they can get insurance for the first time in their lives or if they have had it in the past, it has been so outrageously costly that it was burdensome to them.

Four years ago yesterday, President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act into law, making quality health care available to millions and millions of Americans for the first time in years. I talked to the President's Chief of Staff the day we left for our work period at home. In the 2 days prior to that, 80,000 people each day had signed up. Tens of thousands of people every day are signing up. We are fast approaching 6 million. Some say we will get over that.

The mix of people who are signing up is good. It is a good mix. We have a lot of young people. There was a piece on public radio this morning of a young man 21 years old who never had insurance before but he said: You know, I need insurance, so I am going to buy some insurance. And it is really very inexpensive.

Connecticut has such an unusual experience. They have two stores set up for people to come in and get their health insurance, and they have had thousands of people who have done that. Some people who aren't very computer literate have been able to go in and talk to somebody and sign up. They had the example of one woman who had struggled on the computer. She didn't know how to use it very well. She came in, and she saves \$300 a month for her health care. So that is what Connecticut has done, but there are many messages of hope out there.

Families have college-aged children who have stayed on their parents'

health plans. Seniors have saved hundreds of dollars on their prescriptions because we are filling the doughnut hole.

I have heard from entrepreneurs who finally—finally—can do what they want to do, which is go out and start a business of their own. They are entrepreneurs who have been locked into their jobs, but now they can leave. They are not locked into jobs to keep their health insurance; they can have health insurance on their own; they can strike out on their own without the fear of losing their health insurance. Women are benefiting from free preventive care, and people with preexisting conditions, which I have talked about, have signed up for health insurance for the first time. One lifelong Republican called recently to say that he and his son signed up for affordable insurance and saw the doctor for the first time in years. They had been without health insurance because of preexisting conditions they both have. But now that his insurance company can no longer discriminate against him or his son, they are getting the lifesaving care they need and deserve. In the long run, this saves huge amounts of money for us as a society.

Across the country, families such as the one I just mentioned have been freed from the fear of going bankrupt or reaching an arbitrary lifetime cap if they get sick. The Affordable Care Act puts patients in charge of their own health care decisions. There are many others on the other side of the aisle who don't want this law to work. We are approaching 13 million people, right as we speak, who have insurance now—or are using the benefits of this would be a better way to say it. Six million people have signed up, and 3 million people are on their parents' health insurance because of this law. We have at least 5 million or maybe more who are there because of Medicaid.

This is wonderful. These people have health care. It is good for our country. I can't imagine what the Republicans expect done—just to say, OK, get rid of all insurance we have? They keep talking about repealing this bill. What are they talking about? They have had about 60 votes to repeal it. It doesn't work, and all the polling—which they don't talk about—is now saying: I am glad we have this. There are some who don't like the bill because they don't think it is strong enough.

All the polls are somewhat misleading that the Republicans have been throwing around here, but they are still spending millions of dollars on disingenuous ads distorting the truth about the Affordable Care Act and how it is benefiting millions of Americans. We fought hard 4 years ago to pass this landmark expansion of quality, affordable health care, and we will fight just as hard to make sure the law works for every American family.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2148, H.R. 3474, AND H.R. 3979

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am told there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAINE). The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2148) to provide for the extension of certain unemployment benefits, and for other purposes;

A bill (H.R. 3474) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow employers to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of the employer mandate under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act;

A bill (H.R. 3979) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to these three bills.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The bills will be placed on the calendar.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

SUPPORT FOR THE SOVEREIGNTY, INTEGRITY, DEMOCRACY, AND ECONOMIC STABILITY OF UKRAINE ACT OF 2014—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2124, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 329, S. 2124, a bill to support sovereignty and democracy in Ukraine, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as if in morning business.

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

RECOMMENDING GEOFFREY CRAWFORD

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in Vermont we have been fortunate that for almost two decades Judge William Sessions has served with distinction as a Federal judge for the District of Vermont. In January, Judge Sessions announced that he would take senior status later this year. In response to this news, the Vermont Bar Association, Senator SANDERS, and I, each appointed three members to the Judicial Nominating Commission.

The commission, as one can imagine, received many applications for this district court vacancy. It interviewed and vetted seven finalists, and then rec-

ommended to us the two candidates who garnered unanimous support.

I spent hours interviewing them last week in Vermont, and today I am recommending that the President nominate Geoffrey Crawford, a recently-appointed justice from Vermont's highest court. I talked to him at great length last week and again at length this morning. I am very comfortable in forwarding his name to President Obama, as I now have.

Justice Crawford is an experienced and well-respected jurist. He is known for his modesty and humanity, notwithstanding his elite educational background and intellectual heft. He was a successful plaintiffs' attorney before he was appointed to the Vermont Superior Court in 2002.

Then Judge Crawford served on the superior court in our State for more than a decade, earning a reputation for his skill in working with juries and handling a wide variety of litigation. Attorneys who have appeared before him, on either side, have found him to be an engaged and careful jurist who treats everyone in the courtroom with respect. I have talked with a number of those lawyers, and they speak of his respect and abilities.

As a lawyer, I wanted to hear this, and although I did not know Justice Crawford before interviewing him for this vacancy, the Vermont legal community repeatedly told me of his intelligence, warmth, and unwavering commitment to the highest calling of public service.

When I met Justice Crawford, I found him to be well deserving of these accolades, and I was impressed by his thoughtfulness and pragmatic approach to the law, as was the chief counsel of the Judiciary Committee, Kristine Lucius, and the state director of my Vermont offices, John Tracy.

I am confident that Justice Crawford will make an excellent Federal district court judge and I hope the President will nominate him soon for the vacancy on Vermont's Federal district court.

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL RICHARD CODY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, it is my honor today to pay tribute to a fellow native of Montpelier, VT, GEN Richard Cody. General Cody is going to be honored next month—and deservedly so—by his alma mater, Montpelier High School.

Following his graduation from Montpelier High School, General Cody attended and graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. This was the launch of an outstanding U.S. Army career which took him all over our country and world and culminated in his service from 2004 to 2008 as Vice Chief of Staff of the Army. I am really proud to share a hometown with such a distinguished member of our military. I remember how proud Marcelle and I were of General Cody on the day of his retirement ceremony, with full honors, here in Washington.

The Codys and the Leahys go back decades in Montpelier and have always

been friends. General Cody, his siblings, and parents have been among the business and civic leaders in that city for as long as I can remember, and they have always shown the best of true Vermont values. The General brought those values of hard work, patriotism, and especially integrity to his military career, and ended that career as the best example a soldier could have. Even the Secretary of Defense was there for the retirement ceremony to honor him.

I think of this man who would often march from his quarters in Virginia to the Pentagon carrying a military pack just to remind himself of what soldiers on the front line were doing. I have known many in the military—from privates to generals. No one has ranked higher in my esteem than General Dick Cody. He set an example for the whole country.

No salute to a member of the military would be complete without recognizing the family beside the man. Dick's wife, Vicki, and his sons Clint and Tyler, sacrificed much through his service to our country. In fact, Clint and Tyler followed in their father's footsteps, both as members of the Army, and served as helicopter pilots during several combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. I am told one flew the same helicopter his father had flown.

In closing, I would like to thank the Montpelier High School Boosters Club, and the citizens of Montpelier, for honoring General Cody. There is no more deserving alumnus, and I am proud to call him a friend.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COATS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, when the Senate last met, I introduced, together with Senator DURBIN, a resolution regarding our response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That resolution, which received unanimous support in the Senate, called for a number of specific steps to punish and isolate Russia for its actions.

Among these steps we called upon President Obama to impose sanctions on officials of the Russian Federation who are most responsible for the invasion of the Crimean region. I am pleased with recent announcements by the White House which demonstrate that the President has begun the process of sanctioning some of these individuals, although I had hoped the numbers sanctioned would be far greater.

I also note that today the President is in the Netherlands discussing with