



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 160

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JULY 17, 2014

No. 112

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.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.

Eternal Father, hear and answer our prayers from Your holy hills. We sleep each night in peace, sustained by Your grace and mercy. Arise, O Lord, and use our lawmakers to fulfill Your purposes. Empower them to make the rough places smooth and the crooked places straight. Give them the wisdom to commune with You throughout the day, leaning confidently upon You for wisdom and striving to be responsible stewards of their calling. Keep them from becoming impatient when anything or anyone causes them to wait.

Lift the light of Your countenance upon us all.

We pray in Your Holy 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.

BRING JOBS HOME ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 453, S. 2569, the Bring Jobs Home Act.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 453, S. 2569, a bill to provide an incentive for businesses to bring jobs back to America.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of S. 2244—an extremely important piece of legislation. There will be 30 minutes for debate on the Coburn amendment, 20 minutes on the Vitter amendment, 10 minutes on the Flake amendment, and 30 minutes on the Tester amendment. Any remaining time until 12 noon will be for general debate on this legislation.

At 12 noon the Senate will proceed to a series of up to five rollcall votes. Rollcall votes are expected in relation to the Coburn and Flake amendments; however, we expect voice votes on the Vitter and Tester amendments. Upon disposition of the amendments, the Senate will proceed to a rollcall vote on passage of S. 2244, as amended.

We expect to reach an agreement to vote at 2 p.m. on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 849, the nomination of Julie Carnes, of Georgia, to be United States circuit judge for the Eleventh Circuit. Senators will be notified when an agreement is reached.

(Mr. WALSH assumed the Chair.)

BORDER CRISIS

Mr. President, the distinguished President pro tempore of the Senate, who just opened the Senate, has been for many, many years the chair of the foreign operations subcommittee on appropriations. He is the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. I wanted to note that while he is on the floor.

Over the past 2 weeks poker players have flocked to Las Vegas because there is an annual World Series of Poker there. It is on ESPN. I do not know how athletic it is, but it is on ESPN, and it draws a lot of attention. Poker is a very important and popular game now—a game of chance, and this tournament—the World Series of Poker—is the most prestigious high-stakes tournament in the world, and 2,400 or 2,500 miles away from Las

Vegas, here in Washington, DC, some Senate Republicans are playing a high-stakes game of their own with a humanitarian crisis. But instead of poker chips, they are using kids, children.

Last night the junior Senator from Texas upped the ante and announced that any legislation to address the humanitarian crisis in the Rio Grande Valley must also include a termination of President Obama's 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. In other words, before Republicans help our Border Patrol agents and all the other personnel who are trying to do something to handle this humanitarian crisis, they want President Obama to deport the DREAMers who are already here. They are legitimately here. These are children. But instead of considering a thoughtful, compassionate solution to a real-life crisis on our border, radical Republicans are trying to hold these kids ransom.

I have heard Senator DURBIN speak here on the floor. He visited one of these centers in Chicago on Monday. There are mothers with little babies there who have been brought, as the law requires, to Chicago to try to unite them with their families.

We have, as we learned last night in a Senators briefing, more than 50,000 of these children who have arrived at the border, and we have to do something to address that. The people who are required by law to take care of these children—some of whom are babies—do not have the resources to do it.

These are not children sneaking over the border. They come to the people in uniform and say: Here we are. We have an obligation by law to do something about it. But it takes a lot of money to take care of this. We cannot do it unless we get added resources, and what the junior Senator from Texas said is that we are not going to do this unless we deport all these children who came here before—the so-called DREAMers.

Once again, we see there are no substantive solutions being offered by today's Republican Party. Instead of

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doing something about these children who are at the border, they want to deport hundreds of thousands of these people who are already here.

President Obama's deferred action plan, which is widely popular in the country because it is the right thing to do—and, obviously, Republicans want to get rid of it—what this is all about, his deferred action plan, is about keeping families together in America. It grants immigration officials discretion in considering the cases of children who have lived most of their lives as Americans, even though they were brought here illegally.

Let me give you an example of a young woman from Las Vegas. Her name is Astrid Silva. Astrid came to the United States as a little, tiny girl in a boat across the Rio Grande. Her mother was with her. She was in her—I want to get this right—she was in her dress, confirmation dress or whatever it was. She was just a tiny, little girl. She had her rosary beads and a little doll, and she floated across the river.

She knows no other country than the United States of America. Now, because of what happened, because of the President's action, she can now fly in an airplane. She has done that. She is working on getting her education completed—a wonderful, wonderful, involved woman in what is going on in Nevada. And the junior Senator from Texas wants to send her back to a place she does not know—Mexico? Mr. President, Astrid Silva is an American. It is the only country she knows. It would be cruel and unusual to do what the junior Senator from Texas wants done.

The deferred action plan is a positive step forward, and we should not go back, especially not as a ransom for helping our border personnel to care for desperate children.

I would hope my friend, the Republican leader, can rein in these extreme elements of his caucus so we can achieve a real solution, one worthy of the ideals upon which this Nation was founded.

These children are real—they are little kids—real human beings. They should not be used as pawns in the Republicans' high-stakes game of chicken with President Obama.

AMBASSADORIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, when I first came to the House of Representatives, I had the good fortune of serving on the Foreign Affairs Committee. It was wonderful. I served under Chairman Zablocki from Wisconsin, Chairman Fascell from Florida. It was a wonderful experience to get a view of what was going on in the world, and I enjoyed it very, very much.

But I learned there—and I think we all know; maybe I should have learned it sooner—our national security depends on the qualified men and women who serve as our ambassadors throughout the world.

When I travel overseas, I always make sure I get the staff at these em-

bassies together and tell them how much I appreciate what they do for our country. They are not all ambassadors, of course. There is one per country—we hope.

To apply to be a Foreign Service officer is hard. You have to have really, really good grades. You have to pass a written examination after having graduated from college and maybe with graduate work. Some of them are Ph.D.s. And then, after you pass a written test, you have to pass an oral test. It is very, very difficult.

These are some of the best and brightest in the world, and their ultimate goal—as we had the All-Star Game on Tuesday—is to be an all-star, to be able to play—as they did on Tuesday in Major League Baseball—in the “all-star game.” Well, that is what ambassadors are; they are the all stars of the diplomatic corps of this country. Right now, these ambassadors are on the front lines. They are fighting to defend our interests abroad—our security interests, our national interests, and our economic interests. Right now there are gaping holes in our Nation's front lines.

Let's look at who ambassadors really are. Here in the Senate, I had the good fortune to serve with one of the really distinguished ambassadors, Daniel Patrick Moynihan from New York. Prior to coming to the Senate, he was our Ambassador to India. He left his mark on that country. He did a remarkably good job as Ambassador from the United States to India.

The Republican leader and I attended a funeral a week or so ago in Tennessee. The funeral was for Howard Baker, who had been the majority leader in the Senate—a fine man. He married another Senator from Kansas, Nancy Kassebaum. He became, after retiring from the Senate, our Ambassador to Japan. He distinguished himself there again with the remarkably good job he did.

We can go back and look at the beginning of the history of this country. What do we always learn about Thomas Jefferson? We know how smart he was, how he wrote brilliantly. But we also learned in every history lesson about Thomas Jefferson, that he was our Ambassador to France. John Adams was our Ambassador to England. They have set the standard for how important ambassadors are.

Here in the Senate Republicans are stalling ambassadors. Twenty-five percent of all the ambassadorships to the continent of Africa—unfilled. There are gaping holes in our Nation's front lines. Approximately 30 ambassadors are waiting to be confirmed—and waiting and waiting and waiting.

Senate Republicans, who have been so quick to accuse this administration of poor leadership on world issues, are obstructing the confirmation of ambassadors who are desperately needed at embassies all around the world. Republicans are abdicating the Senate's constitutional role to confirm ambassadors.

In previous years ambassadors were just approved so quickly. Once in a while something controversial would come up, but it was once in a great while. As I said, a quarter of U.S. Embassies in Africa do not have an ambassador. We do not have an ambassador in Bosnia. We do not have an ambassador in Vietnam—on and on. Can't we all agree that it is important that American interests be represented in these places? The answer: We cannot agree. The Republicans do not want these ambassadorships filled.

When can these people who want to play in the “all-star game” be able to play in the “all-star game” and represent the interests of this country? They work in careers that are very difficult. They do not start out as ambassadors. Rarely does that happen.

Each day that goes by more ambassadorships are unfilled. All the ambassador nominees were passed out of committee unanimously. With rare exception they are noncontroversial. I am talking about career ambassadors. These are not political appointees. I am talking about career ambassadors.

What does that mean when I say career ambassadors, career diplomats? These are good men and women who have worked for decades for the U.S. State Department. In most cases these diplomats started working at the lowest levels, processing visa applications, asylum requests, and then became an economic officer, a political officer. By working hard and requiring the necessary expertise, these career diplomats have readied themselves to be ambassadors. It is hard.

Career diplomats do not represent political parties, they represent our country. These long-time professionals have worked for both Democrats and Republicans. They worked for several different administrations. It does not matter, if someone is a Foreign Service officer, whether the President is a Democrat or Republican, they do their job for the country.

Now these professionals are needed to fill vital ambassadorial posts in some of the most volatile regions in the world. Republicans have slammed the brakes on these nominations. At the very least the Senate should confirm these noncontroversial career diplomats. If they want to play games with the political appointees, they can do that, but these career diplomats are not political appointees. They are qualified diplomats who have performed admirably for the State Department for a long time. We need their experience, we need their expertise at embassies all over the world.

Some Senate observers say Republicans are stalling these nominations as a payback for rules changes instituted by the Senate. Let's see if I can try to figure this one out. Republicans are stalling Executive nominees vital to our national interests to get back at Democrats, to get back at me. How is

that? Stalling these nominees is jeopardizing America's interests abroad. It is damaging our Nation's role in global affairs. It is damaging our national security. Is this conjured-up political retribution worth harming the United States? Of course not.

There was a New York Times article within the last 48 hours where Secretary of State John Kerry said: I have 52 important State Department officials who are waiting to be confirmed in the Senate—52. I was stunned to read in that same article a quote from the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee over here, the junior Senator from Tennessee.

Here is what he said: "Rather than filling vacant embassies to alleviate the national security concerns raised by Secretary Kerry and others, the majority leader—Listen to this one.

—who controls the Senate floor—has chosen to spend this week on a sportsman's bill and previous weeks confirming judges.

Why criticize me for bringing up the sportsmen's bill? This bill was sponsored by a majority of the Republicans. Twenty-six Republicans cosponsored that legislation. The junior Senator from Tennessee is complaining that I brought that up. I guess he is also complaining that I brought up raising the minimum wage, which the Republicans filibustered. Maybe he is also complaining that we have student debt in this country—about \$1.3 trillion—and we brought that up to alleviate the pain to families in America with student debt.

Maybe he is complaining because we brought up on the Senate floor something extremely important; that is, that if a woman does the same work as a man, she should get paid the same amount of money—not different work, the same work. She should get the same money. I guess he is complaining because we brought up something that addresses the needs that Americans have; that is, the Hobby Lobby decision from the Supreme Court. We think that is wrong. Women in America, families in America, with some exception, believe that is wrong.

So I agree with the junior Senator from Tennessee. There is an urgent need to fill these diplomatic posts as soon as possible, but for heaven's sake, how could he complain about the substantive legislation which is so important to America that I have just run through?

Then he complains about judges, we are confirming judges. I have been here a while in the Senate. Until Obama became President, with some exception, these nominations went through on unanimous consent. We were not holding up ambassadors. There would be a spat on a judge here and there but not holding up all of the judges. The reason it is taking so long is we have, under the rules of the Senate, what we call postclosure time. That time was originally set up so after we got on a piece of legislation or on a nomination, we could think about it for a little bit.

They think about it a lot and do nothing.

Thirty hours on a lot of nominations postclosure, 8 hours on others, judges only 2 hours. We have been able to go through a lot of judges because of that rule change that we made. I thought it was an urgent need 4 months ago when I came to the Senate floor to talk about the growing logjam of our ambassadorial corps around the country. But Senator CORKER's reasoning that these ambassadorial confirmations were delayed unnecessarily by legislation and judicial confirmations is a little weird, a little strange. It is strange and weird for a number of reasons.

I take issue with the notion that the Senate somehow wasted time by legislating and confirming judicial nominees. These are our constitutional duties. We are going to confirm, in the next few days, a post in Georgia. We have two to be filled there. One of them has been waiting for more than 1,000 days. So I think it is important we do this. Why? Because it is our constitutional duty.

We only have so much time to confirm judges, because as I indicated, filibustering nominees, they do it to everybody. We are working through the judges quickly because we changed the rules. Thank goodness we did. The Senate did consider Senator HAGAN's sportsmen's legislation last week. I repeat. That important bill affects—the one that the junior Senator from Tennessee said we should not have brought up—affects 40 million Americans who hunt and fish.

Somebody I used to practice law with has a place in Montana. He took his grandson there and had a wonderful time fishing—no hunting but fishing. This place he has, a little stream goes by there. He said it was the best time he ever had with his grandchild. That is what 40 million people do. That is what we brought up. That is what the junior Senator from Tennessee said was such a bad idea. Twenty-six Republicans cosponsored that legislation. It contributes \$200 billion annually to our Nation's economy.

My friend from Tennessee thinks it is a waste of time; we should not have done that. The junior Senator from Tennessee was a cosponsor of the legislation. He is going to go back and tell the people in Tennessee that he made a mistake, he should not have been a cosponsor.

Earlier, he voted to proceed so we could work on the legislation. Then he voted to filibuster it. This is the same tactic we have seen so much over the past 6 years. Republicans obstruct. When asked why they are not accomplishing anything, they blame Democrats. They blame me. The truth is Senate Democrats have continued to press for more and more ambassadorial confirmations while also introducing legislation that helps working families.

As I came to the floor in March to highlight the backlog of ambassadorial confirmations, the Senate has consid-

ered an increase in the minimum wage, equal pay for women, student loan refinancing, extension of tax cuts, cost-cutting energy legislation, and a number of other items. These are all important bills to give working Americans a fair shot at a measure of prosperity. Republican filibusters blocked every one of them.

Another issue I have with the Senator from Tennessee is that undoubtedly he knows the Senate traditionally does much of its business through unanimous consent—in fact most of our business. If Republicans agree there is an urgent need to get these nominations done and give their consent, we could confirm all of these ambassadors in a single afternoon. It would only take a few hours in the afternoon. We could do it today.

But it is clearly not a priority for Republicans; otherwise, they would expedite these confirmations. Their behavior on these ambassadorial nominations reminds me of a quote by Gandhi: "Action expresses priorities." Republicans' lack of action on this matter illustrates that they have no priorities in this regard.

So enough with the stalling and enough with retribution. The Senate standoff is not good for this body, and it is hurting American interests abroad. Let's get these ambassador posts filled. Our national security depends on it.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, at 2 p.m. today the Senate vote on cloture on Executive Calendar No. 849, Carnes; further, that if cloture is invoked, at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, July 21, 2014, the Senate resume executive session and all postclosure time be expired and the Senate proceed to vote on confirmation of the nomination; further, that following the 2 p.m. cloture vote, the Senate proceed to the consideration and vote on Executive Calendar Nos. 709, Shear, and 834, Mader; further, that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nominations; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, with this agreement, we expect one rollcall vote beginning at 2 p.m. and two additional voice votes as I have mentioned. I apologize to the Republican leader for taking so much time.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.