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Senate

The Senate met at 10 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 Spirit, the fountain of our joy, You see our thoughts from a distance, comprehending the nuances of our motives. Lord, You understand our desire to please and honor You with our lives. You know our remorse for neglected duties, missed opportunities, and selfish pursuits. Give our lawmakers strength for today and hope for tomorrow. Today, meet the needs of our Senators as they confront our dangerous world, providing them with more than human wisdom to accomplish Your will. Give them faith to trust that Your sovereign providence will prevail in the unfolding events of our world. Remind them that they are never alone, for You will never leave or forsake them. We pray in Your sacred 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. Following my remarks and those of the Republican leader, if any, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for an hour, with Senators permitted to speak during that time for up to 10 minutes each,

with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority the final 30 minutes. Following morning business the Senate will resume consideration of a motion to proceed to S.J. Res. 19 postcloture. The Senate will recess from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. to allow for our weekly caucus meetings.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, S. 2779 is at the desk, I understand, and is due for its second reading.

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

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2779) to amend section 349 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to deem specified activities in support of terrorism as renunciation of United States nationality.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would object to any further proceedings with respect to this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to start today by reading a few quotes on the issue of campaign finance reform. Here is the first one from 1987:

What we ought to do is eliminate the political action committee contributions because those are the ones that raise the specter of undue influence. And those can be gone tomorrow. We can pass a bill tomorrow to take care of that problem.

Another quote from the next year:

We Republicans have put together a responsible and constitutional campaign reform agenda. It would restrict the power of special interest PACs, stop the flow of all soft money, keep wealthy individuals from buying public office.

Two years later, 1990:

We would eliminate PACs altogether. It would be interesting to see whether our col-

leagues on the other side of the aisle will be willing to eliminate PACs altogether. And we would have the money come from individuals in small and fully disclosed amounts.

A few years later, 1997:

Public disclosure of campaign contributions and spending should be expedited so voters can judge for themselves what is appropriate. These are reforms which respect the Constitution and would enhance our democracy.

Three years later, in 2000, another quote:

We need to have real disclosure. And so what we ought to do is broaden the disclosure to include at least labor unions and tax-exempt business associations and trial lawyers so that you include the major political players in America. Why would a little disclosure be better than a lot of disclosure?

A quote from 2003:

Money is essential in politics and not something we should feel squeamish about, provided the donations are limited and disclosed, everyone knows who is supporting everyone else.

So, Mr. President, who did these statements come from? TOM UDALL, the sponsor of the vote that we had last night? MICHAEL BENNET from Colorado? He and TOM UDALL sponsored the constitutional amendment. Did it come from them or some other Democrat?

No, that is not the case.

Let me quote a few more things:

Keep wealthy individuals from buying public office and stop the flow of soft money and public campaign contributions and spending should be expedited so voters can judge for themselves what's appropriate.

Those are quotes. Did these quotes come from BERNIE SANDERS, who is known as being a liberal? He has been an outspoken advocate for campaign finance reform.

The author of these quotes is none other than my friend the distinguished Republican leader, the senior Senator from Kentucky. These are all his quotes word for word. The senior Senator from Kentucky has a track record of campaign finance reform spanning two decades or more. I was with him

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



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there 25 years ago, fighting the undue influence of unlimited campaign donations. I cosponsored his 1989 constitutional amendment that would have given Congress power to enact laws regulating the amount of independent expenditures. I was there with him. But I guess times have changed. I am aware that the Republican leader has stated that his views on the matter of campaign finance have changed over the years. What a gross understatement. But as Victor Hugo wrote:

Change your opinions, but keep your principles. Change your leaves, but keep your roots.

At one time the Republican leader was rooted in the principle that the wealthy shouldn't be able to buy public office whether for themselves or for others. Even as recently as late in 2007 he was preaching donor disclosure. What has changed in the last few years?

Over the last several years we have witnessed the Koch brothers trying to buy America, to pump untold millions into our democracy, hoping to get a government that would serve their bottom line and make them more money. The news today says they are out promoting themselves, and that is easy to do because they are worth \$150 billion.

So we are watching the corrupting influence that the Republican leader foretold 27 years ago and many years thereafter before our very eyes. He switched teams. What could have possibly convinced the senior Senator from Kentucky that limitless, untraceable campaign donations aren't really that bad after all?

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, now that the President has conducted initial consultations with our allies and stated his objective to degrade and destroy ISIL, it is time to present a strategy to Congress. I hope he will begin to do that today.

He needs to identify military objectives and explain how those ends will be accomplished. He needs to present this plan to Congress and the American people, and where the President believes he lacks authority to execute such a strategy, he needs to explain to Congress how additional authority for the use of force will protect America. The threat from ISIL is real and is growing. It is time for President Obama to exercise some leadership in launching a response.

We know the administration has authorized military actions to protect American lives. Now we need to hear what additional measures will be taken to defeat ISIL.

SPEECH SUPPRESSION

Earlier today one Democratic Senator urged his colleagues to get serious about the real challenges facing our country—challenges such as dealing with the threat of ISIL. He implored fellow Democrats not to focus all their time instead “doing things that are of lesser importance.”

Yet his voice seems to have been ignored by the Democrats who run the Senate, because here we stand debating their proposal on whether to take an eraser—an eraser—to the First Amendment. Here we are debating whether to grant politicians the extraordinary authority to ban speech they don't like. That is what Democratic leaders have brought to the floor this week as their top priority. It is a measure so extreme it could even open the door to government officials banning books and pamphlets that threaten or annoy them. That is not my argument. That is essentially the Obama administration's own position, one that his own lawyers advocated in the Supreme Court in the *Citizens United* case. As one USA Today columnist put it at the time: “It isn't often that a government lawyer stands before the Supreme Court and acknowledges that, yes, it would be constitutional to ban a book. But that is what happened.”

Truly shocking.

These are the depths to which the Obama administration and its Democratic majority appear willing to drag our country in order to retain their hold on power. They are tired of listening to criticism of their failed policies. They are sick of having to sell the middle class on ideas that actually hurt the middle class. And with the Democrats' fragile Senate majority hanging by a thread, it seems they are done playing with the normal rules of democracy. It seems they would rather just rewrite the rules altogether to shut up their critics and shut down their opponents, even as they continue to give a path to leftwing tycoons they like—folks who preach higher taxes and more regulations for everybody else—while jealously guarding pet projects and sweetheart deals for themselves.

The aim here, just as with the IRS scandal, is to use the levers of power to shut down the voice of we the people when we the people don't see things their way. The First Amendment is the only thing standing in the way.

We all know the real reason Senate Democrats are so determined to push this measure now. They are not actually all that serious about passing it this week. In fact, they designed it to fail because they think its failure would help turn more leftwingers out to the polls. The entire spectacle is mostly about saving the jobs of Democratic Senators come November. Yet it must be admitted that it is getting harder to tell which of our Democratic friends are cynical in their support of this and which are sincere, because the number of true believers in speech sup-

pression appears to be growing on the other side, and that is really worrying for the future of our democracy.

So look, if the Democrats who run Washington are so determined to force the Senate into debate over repealing the free speech protections of the First Amendment, then fine, let's have a full and proper debate. Let's make the country see what this is really all about. Let's expose this extremist effort to the light of public scrutiny.

I suspect our Democratic friends don't really want that, though. I suspect they hope to just drop a few talking points, have their proposal fail, shoot some indignant e-mails to their supporters and move on. I don't think they counted on Senators standing up for the American people. I don't think they counted on Senators exposing their plans to entrench the tools of government speech suppression. So they would rather not have a debate they can't win.

Then here is a better idea. We all just spent the past several weeks back in our home States talking to our constituents. They have a lot on their minds these days—important issues they expect the Democrat-run Senate to address—things such as high unemployment, rising health care costs, and an ongoing crisis at the border. I, for one, will be interested to hear how repealing part of the First Amendment creates jobs for Americans or reduces health care costs. The answer of course is it doesn't, and the Republican-controlled House has already sent over countless bills that continue to collect dust on the majority leader's desk. There are many bills on job creation alone, including legislation that passed the House, with significant bipartisan support.

So if Senate Democrats want to take up some of that serious House-passed legislation instead of endless designed-to-fail political votes, we will be happy to do it. Just say the word.

Let's end the Democrats' endless gridlock and get some bills to the President's desk for once because Americans are not demanding that Congress repeal the free speech protections of the First Amendment. That is certainly not on their minds. They are looking to us to work together to get some things done for them for a change, and we can as soon as our Democratic friends want to get serious.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I agree with the Republican leader's defense of the First Amendment, but the constitutional amendment before us is not about limiting free speech. My Democratic colleagues and I are trying to address the special interest money that threatens to create a government of elected officials who are beholden to a few wealthy individuals.

As the respected Justice John Paul Stevens recently told us, money is not speech. Of course it isn't, and we know that.