

team and should be in the Senate Hall of Fame for the good work he has done over these many years.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

PROPOSED EXECUTIVE ACTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to say a few words this morning about President Obama's proposed Executive action on immigration. I will begin with a quote from the President himself. "Democracy is hard," he said during a commencement speech in Miami 3 years ago. "But it's right. [And] changing our laws means doing the hard work of changing minds and changing votes, one by one."

As somebody who well understands just how difficult the work of changing minds and votes can be, I could not agree more with the President's statement. Americans accept that democracy's blessings are only made possible by the constraints it imposes—both its legal contours and those imposed by popular elections.

We accept democracy's messiness. We accept that we may not always get all of what we want exactly when we want it. Based on more of what the President said in Miami, this is something he seemed to understand as well. He was talking about immigration that day.

Here is something else he said on that topic. "I know [that] some . . . wish that I could just bypass Congress and change the law myself. But that's not how democracy works." Indeed, it is not—all of which makes the President's planned Executive action on immigration even more jarring.

If the President truly follows through on this attempt to impose his will unilaterally, he will have issued a rebuke to his own stated view of democracy. He will have contradicted his past statements on this very issue. The instances of President Obama saying that he does not have the power to do the kinds of things he now plans to do are almost too numerous to list.

He tried to suggest otherwise last weekend. But a prominent fact checker panned the spin as "Pinocchio-laden" and clarified that the President has been asked specifically about the source of actions that he is contemplating now. The President's previous answers seemed to be unequivocal: He lacked the legal authority to act, according to the President himself.

As one example, President Obama said last year that Executive action was "not an option," because "[he] would be ignoring the law. 'There is a path to get this done,' he said, 'and that is through Congress.'" He is right. The action he has proposed would ignore the law, would reject the voice of the voters, and would impose new unfairness on law-abiding immigrants, all without solving the problem.

In fact, his action is more likely to make it even worse. We have already seen the consequences of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, his most recent action in this area. It was a factor in encouraging young people to risk their lives on a perilous journey some would never have even contemplated and some would never complete.

The effect of this action could be just as tragic. Just as the Affordable Care Act had little to do with making health care more affordable, slapping the term "immigration reform" on something does not make it actually immigration reform. Just as with ObamaCare, the action the President is proposing is not about solutions, it is not about compassion, it seems to be about what a political party thinks would make for good politics.

It seems to be about what the President thinks would be good for his legacy. Those are not the motivations that should be driving such sweeping action, and I think the President will come to regret the chapter history writes if he does move forward because the plan he is presenting is more than just—as the President himself has acknowledged—an overreach, it is also unfair. What does the President have to say to the countless aspiring immigrants who spent literally years waiting patiently in line, to the people who played by all the rules? Where is his compassion for them? What does the President have to say to the millions of Americans who still can't find work in this economy? The President can't reach across the aisle to secure a serious jobs plan for them, but he is willing to put everything he has into one Executive action? Where is the justice?

There is a larger point too. Some people seem to have forgotten this already, but we just had an election. Before that election the President told us about his plan to act unilaterally on immigration. He reminded us that his policies were on the ballot. And then the people spoke. The President doesn't have to like the result, but he has a duty to respect it. The American people clearly sent a message. Nobody missed it. They said they want to see

us working together. They said they want to see more serious ideas pass through Congress. What they didn't say they wanted to see was the President sidestepping the very representatives they just elected. That is why so many Kentuckians have been calling my office in opposition to this plan. I know phones have continued to ring off the hook all week in our offices across Capitol Hill. Our constituents want to be heard. President Obama needs to listen to their voices.

If nothing else, perhaps the President will at least consider the views of Democratic Senators and Members of Congress who have urged him not to do this. These Democrats understand the consequences of a President from a different political party citing this precedent in the future.

Either way, he needs to understand something: If President Obama acts in defiance of the people and imposes his will on the country, Congress will act. We are considering a variety of options, but make no mistake—when the newly elected representatives of the people take their seats, they will act.

Look, as the President has said, democracy is hard. Imposing his will unilaterally may seem tempting. It may serve him politically in the short term. But he knows it will make an already broken system even more broken, and he knows this is not how democracy is supposed to work because he told us so himself.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 2 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Maryland.

TRAGIC SYNAGOGUE SLAYINGS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I know I express the sentiments and outrage of every Member of this body about the tragic events in Israel this past Tuesday where those in a synagogue were brutally slain. It was a shock to all of us—in a synagogue, in a place of worship, people there praying and studying, and their lives were brutally ended.

Let me just mention the victims. Rabbi Moshe Twersky, Rabbi Aryeh Kupinsky, Rabbi Kalman Levine, Avraham Goldberg, and Zidan Saif, a police officer.

I particularly want to mention Rabbi Kupinsky because there is a connection

here to Maryland. Three of the victims had U.S. citizenship. Rabbi Kupinsky is a cousin of a distinguished constituent, Judge Karen Friedman of Baltimore. So this affects all of us.

I know first and foremost our prayers are with the families and we express our deepest sympathy. I also express our resolve to eliminate such extremists and to work with the international community so there is no refuge anywhere in the world—anywhere in the civilized world—for such extremists. Then I would hope we would all recognize and speak out for Israel's right, indeed its obligation, to defend its people from such brutal attacks.

The Baltimore Sun said this morning in its editorial there could be no excuse, no explanation, no reason or even plausible justification for the horrific attack on a Jerusalem synagogue Tuesday that left four Rabbis and an Israeli police officer dead.

I know we all believe in that statement. There is no justification for such actions. Yet Hamas—and again I would quote from the Sun paper—“Hamas, the militant [extremist] group that controls Gaza, hailed the attack in the synagogue as a blow against Israel's occupation. . . .”

This just points out the difference between Hamas and Israel. I have been on the floor many times talking about Israel's legitimate right to defend itself and Hamas's desire to put innocent people in harm's way. It is our responsibility to speak out. If this event would have happened in the United States, I think we all know what the reaction would have been. So our resolve goes out to the people of Israel that we will stand by them and that we stand by their right to defend themselves.

This is in the backdrop of a rise of anti-Semitism. We have seen these violent attacks in Brussels and Toulouse earlier this year, a brutal slaying in Antwerp, Jewish schools and community centers and synagogues being targets of attacks, extremist parties gaining political support espousing anti-Semitism. We saw that in Hungary and other countries.

I want to mention once again the role this Congress plays in the Helsinki Commission. I have the honor of being the Chair of the Helsinki Commission during this Congress, and the Helsinki Commission implements the commitments we made almost 40 years ago—the Helsinki Final Act; the core principles of human rights and tolerance. Our bedrock principle is that in order to have a stable country you have to have a commitment to basic human rights, and it is not just your obligation but every country that is part of Helsinki, including the United States, that has the right to challenge any other country in its compliance with those basic human rights. We have made progress.

Ten years ago I was privileged to be part of the U.S. delegation in the Berlin conference. The Berlin conference

was established to deal with the rise of anti-Semitism, and an action agenda came out of that conference 10 years ago. It put responsibility on us—political leaders—to speak out against anti-Semitic activities in our own country or anywhere in the world. It set up an action plan to deal with educating, and particularly dealing with Holocaust education, to deal with the Holocaust deniers. It dealt with police training because we understand a lot of criminal activities are hate crimes and the police need to be able to identify when hate crimes are taking place in their own community.

We decided to share best practices by providing technical help to countries to do better, and we established a special representative to deal with anti-Semitism. Rabbi Baker is currently that special representative. But we went further than that, we expanded it to all forms of intolerance—not just anti-Semitism but xenophobia, anti-Muslim activities—because we recognized that the same people who are extremists and who deny individuals because of their anti-Semitic acts would do the same against Muslims, would do the same against any people because of their race or ethnic background.

I was very pleased to see commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Berlin conference. There was a reconvening in Berlin—Berlin plus 10. Ambassador Powers, our Ambassador to the United Nations, led the U.S. delegation. She did a great job. I want to acknowledge that Wade Henderson, representing the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, also participated because there is unity here. It is not just the anti-Semitic activities, it is the intolerance we have seen grow too much in our world community today.

The concluding document said we need to increase our political and financial support for civil societies, and I agree with that. Transparency and supporting the NGOs, supporting civil societies, is critically important.

The bottom line is we must work together to root out all forms of anti-Semitism and all forms of intolerance. Let us work together to make all our communities safer by embracing diversity and recognizing basic human rights.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RUSSIAN ENCROACHMENT INTO UKRAINE

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to call this body's attention to a

crisis that grows more alarming every day, and that is the continued Russian encroachment into Ukraine. It has been over 2 months since the Ukrainian Government entered into a ceasefire agreement with Russian-backed separatists in southeastern Ukraine. It is an agreement that the separatists have repeatedly violated, and since it came into effect hundreds—hundreds—of Ukrainian soldiers have died in battle against these same separatist forces.

The Ukrainian people want peace, but these insurgents and their patrons in Moscow are not interested. Every day they grow more aggressive and bolder in their violations of the Ukrainian territory and their willingness to subvert the international order.

I know there are some in this body who would say this is not our problem, it is thousands of miles away, and not our concern. Some people may think it doesn't matter which flag flies over the territory. I have a different view. To me, what happens in Ukraine is very much in our interests. It is in the interests of all who value liberty and the right to choose one's own future. The stakes are very high, and the consequences of inaction are devastating. To those who ask why is this important, let me bring up several points.

First, it is in America's interest to uphold our traditional commitment to supporting democracy around the world and the right of a people to choose their own destiny. When the Soviet Union fell and the people of Eastern Europe took back the liberty that had been stolen from them decades before, the United States made a solemn promise: Embrace democracy, freedom, transparency, and the rule of law, and we will embrace you.

The Ukrainian people made their choice. They did so on the 24th of August, 1991, when an independent Ukraine ceased to be a dream and became a reality. They reaffirmed that commitment over a decade later when the Orange Revolution swept a corrupt government from office. And earlier this year in the face of Russian threats, intimidation, and aggression, they did so again. I saw that commitment firsthand earlier this year when I had the honor of leading a Congressional delegation with my colleague from Maryland, Senator CARDIN, to monitor the Ukrainian Presidential election. Senator CARDIN and I saw the spirit of the Ukrainian people and their determination to honor the memory of brave men and women who had given their lives in the fight for a free and independent Ukraine. That fight continues today.

But this fight is about more than just Ukraine. Failing to honor our commitment to the Ukrainians will have real consequences that extend to other national security priorities for the United States of America. When Ukraine emerged as an independent nation after the Cold War, it inherited the world's third largest stockpile of nuclear weapons. As a newly independent State