



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 160

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2014

No. 144

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.

Eternal Master, You are too good to be true. Repeatedly throughout our history, You have been our anchor. Continue to bring stability and unity to our lawmakers as they strive to do Your will on Earth, even as it is done in Heaven.

May they trust Your promises, remembering that You are that rock-solid mountain on which they can always depend. Lord, encircle them with the shield of Your favor, doing for them more than they can ask or imagine. Renew their commitment to You as their guide and guardian and enable them to successfully meet the challenges of our time.

We pray in Your majestic 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 be in a period of morning business until 5:30 p.m.

At 5:30 p.m., the Senate will proceed to two cloture votes on two Amba-

sador nominations to two very important countries, Argentina and Hungary; Noah Mamet to be Ambassador to the Argentine Republic and Colleen Bell to be our Ambassador to Hungary.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. REID. I, of course, welcome all Senators and our staff back from the Thanksgiving recess. I am sure that, like me, people spent time with their loved ones, some here and some at their homes around the country.

For many families across America, this Thanksgiving was particularly unique and special. Because of President Obama's recent Executive actions, many immigrant families celebrated their holiday together for the first time without the threat of someone knocking on their door in a police uniform.

These people now, instead of staying in the shadows, are having a good time. Their holiday is not threatened to be ruined. All over America they are openly giving thanks or blessings with family that they haven't been able to enjoy in the past. Instead of looking over their shoulder, they joyously revel in the time they spent with their loved ones.

What President Obama did needed to be done.

The chairman of the Judiciary Committee, the presiding President pro tempore, spent days and weeks coming up with a very difficult piece of legislation, comprehensive immigration reform. Amendments by the scores were heard and debated. Republican amendments were adopted, Democratic amendments were adopted, and that matter was brought to the Senate floor where there was a good, genuine, long debate. On the floor, amendments were offered, debated, and voted upon. We created a very good bill based upon the work of the Judiciary Committee. It was bipartisan, and it was one that had an overwhelming vote on the Senate floor.

This had to be done. It had to be done because we have all seen firsthand our Nation's failing immigration system was tearing families apart. Each day Senate offices all over America would receive pleas—I did in Nevada—from loved ones who have fallen victim to our Nation's flawed immigration system.

I met with these people personally. I have talked with them on the telephone, I have read their letters, I have seen their emails, and it is heart-breaking to listen and hear some of their stories, their experiences. So I always try to do everything within the law to help, and sometimes we can help. Other times they cannot be helped within the confines of the law, so they wind up very unhappy.

Early this year I was able to—for example, the experience that we have all had—unite Edith Fawkes, a mother from Las Vegas, with her 12-year-old son Brahym. That was a festive occasion, it was touching, but it is all too rare. For every one family who is reunited, thousands and thousands of others have been decimated by deportations.

That is why the Executive action taken by the President is so very important. It helps mend our Nation's broken immigration system, gets criminals off the streets, strengthens our border security, and spurs our economy. It spurs our economy. Underline and underscore that.

President Obama's action keeps families together. That is the most important thing. It allows parents with children who are U.S. citizens or green card holders to temporarily stay in our country, this country they call their home. By acting, the President said mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters are no longer relegated to the shadows of American society.

The American community now knows there is a path forward. There really is a way. President Obama took the first step. It is a good first step, but it is only a temporary solution.

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



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If I had my way, the President would have signed a comprehensive immigration bill into law, one that came out of the Judiciary Committee, instead of announcing Executive actions. But we could not sit idly by waiting for the Republicans to act while homes are broken up all over our country—and, frankly, their actions hurt our economy. The President has taken the first step. I repeat, the first step. Now Congress must act to address all the issues in our broken immigration system.

The House Republicans can still and should pass the bipartisan immigration bill that the Senate passed 520 days ago. In the meantime, I will keep fighting in Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform that brings permanent long-term relief to our Nation.

We have done all we can in the Senate. We need to do more. I am begging the House to do something. If they brought this bill to the floor, it would pass overwhelmingly.

AGENDA

Mr. REID. I will spend a minute and talk about what we have to do this next week, 1 week, 2 weeks—hopefully not 3 weeks, but we may have to be here through the weekend. I hope everyone understands that our most important task at hand is to pass bills to fund our government, keep it from shutting down.

We have a number of vitally important nominations that must be confirmed.

We need to consider an extension of tax cuts for working families and businesses and we are going to work hard. I had a conversation today with Senator WYDEN.

We need to work on reauthorizing Defense authorization legislation. We have a lot to do, and there isn't much time to accomplish it, so I urge all Senators to work hard and work in a timely and efficient fashion. We may have to be here the week before Christmas—and hopefully not into the Christmas holiday—but there are things we have to get done.

I talked to the Secretary of Energy today. He has seven nominations to fill. These are important positions in the Department of Energy—Chief Financial Officer, head of the science division, fossil fuels—all of these important issues that these people deal with. We need to confirm these Cabinet-level officers, so I hope people will cooperate and help us get these done.

Will the Presiding Officer announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be

in a period of morning business until 5:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Vermont.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, while the distinguished Senate leader is still on the floor, I thank him for his comments on the immigration bill. I would note he was kind to talk about hundreds of hours. I may not have spent that, but a whole lot of other Senators did—and that bill would not have been on the floor and would not have been voted on without the leadership of the Senator from Nevada. He made sure there was a calendar, that there was time, and that he would keep the Senate in session while we had rollcall after rollcall. We had 136 amendments that were adopted in committee, and more than a dozen were considered on the floor. But we passed that bill by a 2-to-1 margin. The Republicans and Democrats joined together, and I applaud the leader for what he did.

I would tell one short story. Not long after that I was in Oregon, north of Portland, and went to a farming area. I went to church on a Sunday. My brother-in-law was saying the mass. He is fluent in Spanish. There were hundreds and hundreds of workers—these are all taxpayers, hardworking people. They make the community and they make the economy of the area.

I was introduced at the end. They all stood, raised their hand, and asked blessings on me and on the Senate for what we had done because it gave them hope for themselves and their families.

As long as I live, I will remember that, and I would hope—knowing at that time that we had enough votes, or enough votes to pass it in the House, I would call on the House leadership to do the right thing, allow it to come to a vote. Let Republicans and Democrats, everybody who does speeches on immigration, let them do what Senator REID had us do in the Senate, actually vote yes or vote no. Let them do the same—vote yes or vote no, and let the blessing the people gave for us in the Senate also be a blessing for those in the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, through the Chair to the distinguished President pro tempore of the Senate, for me in Nevada it is very important in the State of Nevada because the State of Nevada is 10 or 15 years behind the State of California as far as demographic changes. We have the largest number of Hispanics and Asians in the State of Nevada now. But my friend, the senior Senator from Vermont, basically has very few minorities in the State of Vermont. He did this—led this bill—because it is the right thing to do.

The people of Vermont, I know, are very cognizant of their senior Senator.

He has taken on issues during his time in the Senate not because necessarily they are important for the State of Vermont—which they are, because anything that is good for the country is good for Vermont—but he takes these issues on because it is certainly the right thing for the country. There is a long list of things he has done over the years that have very little bearing on the State of Vermont but have a tremendous bearing on this country. That is why he is the tremendous leader he is.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the distinguished majority leader.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FALSE CLAIMS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Just before our August recess, this body passed S. Res. 525.

I thank Senator WYDEN, the vice chair of the Whistleblower Protection Caucus I am starting next year, for being an original cosponsor of the resolution.

S. Res. 525 recognized July 31 as National Whistleblower Appreciation Day. On that day way back in 1778, the Continental Congress passed the first whistleblower law in the United States. I would like to quote it:

Resolved,

That it is the duty of all persons in the service of the United States . . . to give the earliest information to Congress or other proper authority of any misconduct, frauds or misdemeanors committed by any officers or persons in the service of these states, which may come to their knowledge.

This resolution was passed by the Continental Congress in 1778 without a recorded dissent.

Then and now, Congress's control of the purse strings has given us an obligation to guard against wasteful and fraudulent spending.

On this past July 31, whistleblower groups met to honor some of our colleagues on the Hill for their support of whistleblowers who report waste or fraud. I was not able to be there because the House of Representatives Judiciary Committee held a hearing on oversight of the False Claims Act. I am always wary when I hear the biggest violators of a law hire people to talk about "strengthening" the False Claims Act. So at the House of Representatives, I had an opportunity to comment on a chamber of commerce release of a report on the False Claims Act. It claims the act "plainly is not getting the job done" since "the government has recovered only \$35 billion since 1987." The current number as of