

freight, and passenger rail systems that say the costs could rise to \$10 billion.

Senator Richard Blumenthal, Democrat of Connecticut, said in a statement on Wednesday that delaying the technology “only leads to preventable and predictable tragedy.”

Investigators said they were examining the speed of the derailed Amtrak train, which they said was going 106 miles an hour on a stretch of track where the speed limit was half that. But they said no firm conclusion had been reached on what caused the derailment.

Edward G. Rendell, the Democratic former governor of Pennsylvania, lashed out at Republican lawmakers on Wednesday for refusing to increase Amtrak funding. He said the requested increase of \$251 million over the Republican budget of \$1.14 billion could significantly improve safety by upgrading tracks and installing positive train control systems in the busiest part of the system. “It is absolutely stunning to me,” Mr. Rendell said of the funding vote. “It shows that ideology trumps reality, and it shows that cowardice reigns in Washington. The callousness and disregard was shockingly contemporaneous.”

Representative Steve Israel, Democrat of New York, also criticized his Republican colleagues, saying they should have used the aftermath of the Amtrak accident “as an opportunity to do the right thing, instead of sticking to their ideology.”

The Northeast Corridor is the nation’s busiest rail corridor and accounts for more than a third of Amtrak’s ridership. It is also the most profitable part of its national network. But some bridges, like the Portal Bridge near New York, for instance, are more than a century old and in desperate need of replacement. Trains come to a crawl when they travel through Baltimore’s 100-year-old tunnel. Some parts of the tracks still have wooden ties.

Meanwhile, the Acela—Amtrak’s high-speed train that runs between Washington and Boston—can reach its top speed only in a handful of places. On a 30-mile stretch near Cranston, R.I., for example, the Acela speeds up to 150 m.p.h. About five minutes later, it needs to slow down.

“These trains have to be thought of as a national asset,” said Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a professor at the Harvard Business School. “Amtrak is a political whipping boy for Congress. But how much is it going to take to wake up Congress that this stuff has to be invested in? It is aging, it is not properly maintained.”

Amtrak has its passionate supporters, including Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., who often joins many lawmakers who race to Union Station for a quick trip home. But the rail system also has many detractors, who say its annual losses are a drain on the public treasury. Many argue that privatization of the rail lines would improve service, cut costs and create innovation that could rival the gleaming train systems in Japan, China and across Europe.

Representative John L. Mica, Republican of Florida, is pushing a plan to privatize the improvement of Amtrak’s system in the Northeast region. He said that the rail system needed money for improvements, but that lawmakers did not trust Amtrak to spend it well.

“What they own is poorly maintained and outdated infrastructure,” Mr. Mica said. But he added, “They don’t have the trust of Congress to get substantial money because they’ve not spent the money well that they’ve gotten.”

“When you give them money, they squander it,” he said.

In the meantime, however, Amtrak’s funding is failing to catch up to its ridership,

which peaked at 32 million last year, up nearly 50 percent since 2000. In 2014, its latest fiscal year, Amtrak lost \$1 billion with revenue of \$3.2 billion.

“Amtrak has really suffered from congressional schizophrenia over funding levels,” said Ray LaHood, the Republican former member of Congress who served as President Obama’s first secretary of transportation.

Mr. LaHood said much of the blame rested with lawmakers who came to Washington from states where Amtrak does not run. “They think Amtrak is just the easy place to cut,” he said, adding that he had little optimism that anything would change without pressure from voters during election time.

“All Americans should be concerned that there is no vision,” Mr. LaHood said. “There is no plan. There is no courage for taking up what needs to be done in terms of fully funding infrastructure. We are limping along.”

Since the passage of the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation, as Amtrak is officially called, is the only provider of national passenger rail service in the country.

Successive Amtrak chief executives—there have been six since 2002—contend with a dual mandate: to provide a public service while also trying to make money, which has proved an impossible task, Ms. Kanter said. Her latest book, “Move: Putting America’s Infrastructure Back in the Lead,” addresses the importance of investing in transportation infrastructure.

“We have to do something big instead of just repairing. We need to repair, of course, but we have to reinvent, too, because the whole model is broken,” she said. “We don’t want to be stuck with the same crummy, shabby system after we fix Philadelphia. We have to do something more, and better.”

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 6, 2015, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) until 10 p.m.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it has been quite an eventful week. We have taken up many things, and I couldn’t be more proud of my friend from Texas, Chairman THORNBERRY.

He has done tremendous work on the National Defense Authorization and is to be applauded for trying to prevent the military from being weakened further than the sequester has already made it.

One of the bills that we took up and passed today was the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, and I am anal enough I will get these bills and read them, so that is what I did.

Amazingly, the first paragraph—of course, this bill came to us from the Senate as the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, and many of us had concerns about it, but I didn’t realize that the actual title of the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act was—and this is the opening paragraph of the bill:

Resolved, That the bill from the House of Representatives, H.R. 1191, entitled “An act 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,” do pass with the following.

That is what it is. It is an IRS bill to adjust the Affordable Care Act, and it is hard for me to use those words “Affordable Care Act” because it is anything but affordable. It has cost people their insurance, their doctors, their health, their health insurance. It is laughable to call it affordable.

Nonetheless, this is a bill to attempt to amend the Affordable Care Act; and, Mr. Speaker, you might wonder, wait a minute, I thought you said this was the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act—well, exactly. It is an IRS bill to fix this exception for emergency services volunteers that they not be considered under the Affordable Care Act.

Then we go to the Senate bill. This is like the Affordable Care Act because they take a House bill that is intended for one purpose, delete, beginning with line 1, page 1, delete everything in it, and then make it the Iran Nuclear Review Act—talk about democracy in action, really impressive. They strip out everything to do with making the ObamaCare bill better and, instead, replace it with the Iran Nuclear Review Act.

There were a few dozen of us that had major concerns about it. First of all, we had already heard that this bill was going to turn the Constitution upside down. The constitutional requirements for a treaty—what is a treaty? It is an agreement between one country and another. The President has authority to negotiate those agreements.

Then, under the Constitution, if we still care about the Constitution, then that treaty has to go before the Senate and get two-thirds of the votes of the Senators; otherwise, that treaty means nothing, and it is not binding.

It doesn’t matter what the President or the executive branch or the Secretary of State call that agreement, that treaty; it is a treaty between one country and another. For purposes of the Constitution, it should go before the Senate for ratification.

But Congress has gotten so used to this President just ignoring it, so used to the Justice Department saying: We don’t care what you are requesting. We are not going to give you any of those documents or any of the information.

We have gotten so used to that, we said, okay, we will pass a bill that will force the administration to let Congress know what is going on, even though we are going to flip the Constitution upside down and go from requiring, as the Constitution does, a vote of 67 Senators in order to ratify a treaty, or agreement, with a foreign country, and we are going to go with requiring 67 Senators to vote it down, completely reversing the constitutional requirement, but we will make it better because we will add a requirement that the House has to have two-thirds vote, get 290 votes, to vote it down, but at least this way, Congress gets to be a player and gets to know what is going on.

What is it that is in this bill that will teach the executive branch a lesson

about why you don't mess with Congress? It is in here, and it is actually at page 8. It is entitled—number 5, on page 8—“Limitation on actions during congressional reconsideration of a joint resolution of disapproval.”

So here we are, the President supposedly under this bill will send the agreement that he wants Congress to see, kind of like the trade act that they classified and we hadn't gotten all of it, but we are going to vote on it anyway, it makes no sense; but for those of us that are anal enough to want to read these things before we pass them, this has got to have enough teeth that it will teach the President a lesson if he dares to betray us and not give us what we need in order to make a proper determination.

The structure is both the House and Senate under this bill, this Affordable Care Act bill—now Iran Nuclear Review Act—we get the chance to strike that down if we can come up with two-thirds votes in both the House and the Senate.

What happens, what is the meat, what is the real teeth in this bill that will teach the President and the entire State Department a lesson if they mess with us and we vote in the House and the Senate two-thirds to disapprove it?

Well, here it is. If a joint resolution of disapproval passes both Houses of Congress and the President vetoes such joint resolution—wow, people forgot that even though we are going to give ourselves the opportunity to vote with two-thirds to strike it down, if he vetoes that, here is the real punishing aspect for the President who many of us believe has been violating the law by loosening sanctions that were put in place by Congress.

You are not supposed to be able to change the law unilaterally when Congress and another President has passed and signed law into being, but the sanctions are there, duly passed, signed into law.

Well, this says, here it is, this will teach him a lesson. If the disapproval passes both Houses of Congress and the President vetoes such joint resolution—here it is, ‘the President may not waive, suspend, reduce, provide relief from, or otherwise limit the application of statutory sanctions with respect to Iran under any provision of law or refrain from applying any such sanctions pursuant to an agreement described in subsection (a)’—here it is—for a period of 10 days.

If the President has been violating the law, as some of us believe, by lifting sanctions that he doesn't have authority to lift and we come along and the House and Senate disapprove the treaty with Iran and he vetoes that treaty—here is the lesson—he can't illegally lift sanctions against Iran for 10 whole days—10 calendar days. It says 10 calendar days.

□ 2145

Man, that is going to teach him a lesson. This is a powerful bill that will

teach the President that you don't mess with Congress. If you loosen the sanctions that the law put in place, why, we will pass another bill that says you can't do it for 10 whole days, and that is what we did here.

Now, on page 9, we have got “the effect of congressional action with respect to nuclear agreements with Iran.” It is a sense of Congress.

B says: “It is a sense of Congress that these negotiations are a critically important matter of national security and foreign policy for the United States and its closest allies.”

Then C: “This section does not require a vote by Congress for the agreement to commence.” That is helpful.

Anyway, that “these negotiations are a critically important matter of national security and foreign policy for the United States and its closest allies” is interesting. I don't really agree with that because the way I see this agreement, Mr. Speaker, is it has been drug out for months and, apparently, for years. I know friends at Judicial Watch have tried to get what are supposed to be public documents—those are the travel logs for Valerie Jarrett—so we can find out when she first started flying over to Iran to start negotiations and open up the dialogue with Iran. It would be nice to know.

Most of us on both sides of the aisle staunchly agree that Israel is a very dear friend and ally. What this negotiation has meant is that—and Israel understands this—if President Obama and John Kerry and Wendy Sherman, who is the lady who gave North Korea nukes, are negotiating with Iran and are telling the world, “Oh, we have got a deal. We are nearly at a deal. We have almost got one worked out” and Iran is saying, “We have got no deal. We haven't agreed to any of that. That is not true,” then it doesn't matter what Iran is saying. If the United States' leaders are saying, “We are getting close to a deal, and we have almost got a deal,” if Israel does the right thing by Israel and attacks Iran's nuclear capability and takes it out as best they can without our best bunker buster and without our best planes to deliver it—they would probably need two or three sorties to take out four—if they actually do the self-defense process of hitting Iran, then this administration would be able to unite the world against Israel—call them warmongers, call them all kinds of things—because, “Oh, gee, we almost had a deal with Iran. Yes, they have been dragging this out for 2 years or so, but we nearly had a deal. Oh, don't pay any attention to Iran's saying we didn't have a deal. We were so close to having a deal. Therefore, Israel is a bunch of warmongers. Therefore, the whole world and the U.N. should punish them.”

That is what Israel, I believe, understands that this deal means regardless of whether a deal is ever reached, and I wouldn't put it past this administration to agree to keep dragging it out

and dragging it out for the rest of this President's administration. It is, certainly, in Iran's interests because they are continuing to enrich uranium, and nothing has slowed them down. As we know now, they are not even letting anybody at the IAEA examine all of their facilities. Forget the openness that this administration says they are going to get.

I think the bottom line of this bill that we passed today and that the Senate passed also is that we are going to ignore the President's and the executive branch's illegal actions in lifting the sanctions they are not entitled to lift if he will be kind enough to allow Congress to think about the sanctions some more and if he will give us information on how things are going in Iran. I mean, there is a requirement here for 30 days within which they have got to give us notice unless they think that is not enough time, and then they would give us 60-days notice. They have to give us a semiannual report. Every 6 months, we will find out what is going on.

The thing that concerns me, of course—one of many things—is that I have been asking for the documents that the Justice Department gave to people who were convicted of supporting terrorism in the Holy Land Foundation trial. The conviction occurred in November 2008. As part of the discovery in that prosecution, they were given massive numbers of documents from the FBI and from the Justice Department that they had obtained about radical Islam here in the United States. They gave it to the convicted terrorists. We now know they are convicted of supporting terrorism, and they got all of those documents.

When Eric Holder tells me in a hearing, basically, that there may be some classification issues, you gave them to terrorists, for heaven's sake. Don't you think you can afford to give them to Members of Congress so we can see what the evidence was that you had? For heaven's sake. They have not given us the information on that. They have obfuscated about the Fast and Furious evidence. They have covered up evidence in the administration about the IRS conspiracy to prevent conservative groups from raising money like the liberal groups were so that the Republicans would have a better chance in the 2012 election.

Now, this bill says we haven't been able to trust them on any of these other things, but we are going to trust them on this. We are going to trust Iran to let us have a full review of everything they are doing even though they have never done that before, and we are going to trust this administration for the first time in 6½ years to start giving us full information about what is going on. Some might think that is a little foolhardy, and I would be one of those.

Here at the bottom of page 17: “If the President, in his own determination, decides he is able to make the certification required,” then he will do that.

Nice. Real nice.

Page 18 is another sense of Congress: “The United States sanctions on Iran for terrorism, human rights abuses, and ballistic missiles will remain in place” under an agreement.

Of course, that is unless the President wants to ignore this like he has been ignoring the sanctions already; but you can’t forget that language on page 8. By golly, if he vetoes a bill, disapproving and if he can’t lift sanctions, he has got to quit doing that illegal stuff for 10 full days.

Now, it does say at the bottom of page 18: “The President should determine the agreement in no way compromises the commitment of the United States to Israel’s security.” It says he “should” do that, but it doesn’t say he “shall” or he “must.”

The good news is on page 19: Expedited Consideration of Legislation. “In the event,” as it says here, “the President does not submit a certification with all of the information that is required,” like he has ignored on lots of other things we have requested or at least the executive branch has, then we are going to introduce legislation—it says right here—“within 60 calendar days” of his not following the law.

It is going to go quickly to the House floor and the Senate floor. That is on page 21. We are going to get it to the floor quickly.

Page 22: “Qualifying legislation shall be considered as read.”

So we are going to get here quickly, and we are going to waive points of order against whatever legislation it might be. It may be that, if we really get our spines stiffened and we pass legislation that extends that 10-day period where he can’t lift sanctions like he has been doing, maybe we will extend that to 20 days and really show him that he can’t mess with Congress.

Yes, for the liberals who might someday read the transcript of this, Mr. Speaker, I am being sarcastic. Liberals have trouble understanding sarcasm sometimes, but this is a very, very deadly serious issue.

Iran has shown they can’t be trusted about anything. The Ayatollah cannot be trusted. For heaven’s sake, Jimmy Carter decided the other Ayatollah—the first Ayatollah Khomeini—was a man of peace. He welcomed him for the first time in a century or so—well, not quite a century—to let a radical Islamist take over a country’s military, and as a result, Americans have died in the last 35 years, 36 years, and I am afraid more will.

It is ridiculous to play footsie with Iran. They only know one thing, and that is power. I read the statements by one of the Iranian military leaders who said they welcome war with America, and it clicked. I remember somebody in the Saddam Hussein regime saying the same thing and that, if we tried to do anything, it would be the mother of all wars. It was amazing because we moved faster and further than any military has ever moved in the history of the

world. Mistakes were made, absolutely, but the American military could put Iran in its place very quickly—and should—before they get nuclear weapons and hundreds or thousands or millions of people die.

There is one thing I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, before time runs out. We took up this week the USA FREEDOM Act. Actually, there are some very good things in here. Again, I just felt I have to read the bill. Sorry if that bothers some of my friends.

For example, one of the things that was heralded as a great accomplishment, we found out from Snowden that the FISA courts had just not really issued constitutional orders or warrants—no specificity—just an order saying, for example: Verizon, give the government every record on every caller you have in your records. Give it all to the government.

I would submit that is unconstitutional, and when we found out the FISA court did it, it was outrageous to me. That is not probable caution. That is not specificity. There are all kinds of problems there, and this bill was going to try to address that.

On page 35, one of the things that was heralded was—and it is a good idea—to create amicus curiae, which is a group of lawyers who will represent those people who have records that are being sought even though those people don’t know that their records are being sought.

It says in title IV, section 401, that the judges shall designate not fewer than five individuals to be eligible to serve as amicus curiae—or friends of the court—to represent those interests.

The trouble is—it says down here at the bottom of page 35—that the court shall appoint these lawyers and individuals who serve as amicus curiae to assist in any application if, in the opinion of the court, the government is presenting a novel or a significant interpretation of the law.

That means they are not going to be there to protect the civil rights of people whose records are being obtained, as they were under the FISA orders previously, unconstitutionally, because the court can just decide, no, this is not a novel interpretation, so we are not going to take it up. Then, even if it is a novel or a significant interpretation, it says: “unless the court issues a written finding that such appropriation is not appropriate.”

If you just look over at page 40, it tells you the government can discuss on an ex parte basis—that is without the other side’s being present—to the court. So they can tell the court we don’t want the amicus curiae here on this issue. That is just one of so many major, major loopholes.

We found out in the summer of 2007 there were perhaps 3,000 cases with the national security letters—the IG determined this—where FBI agents just sent out national security letters, demanding records. There was no case; there was no probable cause; and it was a

crime if the people from whom the records were sought revealed that to friends.

We thought that would be tightened up a little bit. It still says in here that the only people who can authorize what basically is a warrant is the FBI Director himself or herself, or he can designate his deputy, but nobody lower than that other than any special agent in charge anywhere in the country, which was the problem that we ran into in 2007 with all of the abuses.

There is still a lot of reason not to feel comfortable that people’s rights are going to be protected in the FISA courts. I am not comfortable with the FISA courts anymore, but, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time to point this out.

I yield back the balance of my time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

SENATE ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

The Speaker announced his signature to enrolled bills of the Senate of the following titles:

S. 665. An act to encourage, enhance, and integrate Blue Alert plans throughout the United States in order to disseminate information when a law enforcement officer is seriously injured or killed in the line of duty, is missing in connection with the officer’s official duties, or an imminent and credible threat that an individual intends to cause the serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer is received, and for other purposes.

S. 112. An act to amend the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act to improve the Act.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 10 o’clock p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, May 15, 2015, at 9 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker’s table and referred as follows:

1469. A letter from the Counsel, Legal Division, Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection, transmitting the Bureau’s final rule—Homeownership Counseling Organizations Lists and High-Cost Mortgage Counseling Interpretive Rule (RIN: 3170-AA52) received April 23, 2015, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Financial Services.

1470. A letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Civil Works, Department of Defense, transmitting the report on the authorization and construction of the Jacksonville Harbor Project in Duval County, Florida, for the purpose of deep draft navigation, pursuant to Public Law 113-121, Sec. 7002(1)(B); (H.