

THE CONFEDERATE BATTLE FLAG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, I would like, first of all, to thank the Speaker of this House and the other Members who came to Charleston last month to help us with the ongoing ceremonies for Senator Clementa Pinckney.

I would also like to thank especially my colleagues—Senator TIM SCOTT, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, and Congressman MARK SANFORD—for joining with us as we stood with the Governor of South Carolina and called for removing the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of the statehouse.

This afternoon, at 4 o'clock, as a result of a very definitive vote early this morning of 94–20, the Governor is going to sign the bill, and tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock, the flag will be removed from the statehouse.

I regret that I am not going to be able to accept the Governor's invitation and be there this afternoon because, around 4 o'clock this afternoon, we are going to be voting here on this floor.

I understand there will be around 25 votes, and 24 of them, I might not feel all that bad about missing, but one of them, I cannot afford to miss because that one vote, the Calvert amendment, will reverse votes taken by this body to join with South Carolina, Alabama, and activities going on in Mississippi to get rid of any official application to this flag, the Confederate battle flag.

Now, I think it is important for us to point out that this is not the Confederate flag. The Confederacy had three flags. This was never one of them. This flag was the Confederate battle flag of the Army of Northern Virginia, Robert E. Lee's Army; and when Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, he asked all of his followers to furl this flag.

"Store it away," he said. "Put it in your attics." He refused to be buried in his Confederate uniform. His family refused to allow anyone dressed in the Confederate uniform to attend his funeral. Why? It is because Robert E. Lee said he considered this emblem to be a symbol of treason; yet, Mr. Speaker, Calvert puts up an amendment that we are going to vote on this afternoon to ask us to allow this flag to be sold and displayed in our national parks.

I was so proud when the decision was made by the National Park Service, Fort Sumter, a national park where the Civil War started off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina, they decided to take away all of these symbols; but the Calvert amendment is saying: No, don't take them away, put them back, and we are going to ratify the action to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I call upon all of my colleagues who come to this floor this afternoon to remember that it was on this date in 1868 that South Carolina—where it all started—South Carolina was the State that gave the votes necessary to ratify the 14th Amendment.

To me, this was a very, very important amendment calling for due process and equal protection of the laws.

A BAD DEAL WITH IRAN IS WORSE THAN NO DEAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, in March, before a joint meeting of Congress, the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, warned "history has placed us at a fateful crossroads."

As a world leader at the forefront of this crossroad, I believe America has a responsibility to prevent a nuclear Iran. An Iran with nuclear weapons capabilities would further exacerbate and destabilize the region and would certainly inspire an arms race among other nonnuclear nations.

The Obama administration's foreign policy missteps do not inspire confidence that the current negotiations will conclude any differently. After numerous delays, negotiations are veering further away from any type of reasonable agreement that would contain Iran's nuclear ambitions.

I do not trust this administration as it approaches the reversal of a half century of nuclear nonproliferation policy. As Chairman ROYCE stated over the weekend: "The Obama administration's fundamental misread of the Iranian regime is part of what makes this potential agreement so dangerous to our national security."

The sanctions relief numbers that are being reported now are staggering and would directly undercut years of democratic success. Sanctions are a vital tool when working to keep our citizens and allies out of harm's way.

In dealing with an aggressive state sponsor of terror, there should be no daylight between the position of Republicans and Democrats in Congress, nor Congress with the President or the United States with our allies.

Civilized nations must stand united against the destructive output from rogue regimes like Iran. As it stands now, the reported details of the deal will not dismantle the nuclear ambitions of the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, if the past is any indication of the future, we can expect that Iran will continue to employ its stonewalling tactics, blocking any real transparency or inspections of its nuclear facilities.

Why isn't Iran answering questions asked 4 years ago by the International Atomic Energy Agency about their past activities? How can we trust a country that won't answer simple questions or allow scientists to be interviewed? How can we set up a sanctions relief system that is based on trust and verification if the country has proven objectively incapable of trust and transparency?

We certainly cannot continue to overlook Iranian compliance failures

as reported this week in The Washington Post, nor come anywhere close to lifting its successfully firm arms embargo. These negotiations will have long-term implications on every country on this planet.

I believe the United States has a responsibility to stand with Israel and other allies across the globe now more than ever. We must ensure our allies know they do not stand alone. With the current negotiations extended once again, it appears that the administration simply wants to get any agreement.

I believe it is a legacy item for the President, Mr. Speaker. This administration's willingness to ignore Iran's troublesome behavior throughout negotiations does not inspire confidence.

President Obama promised 7 years ago that he would not allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. He is failing to keep that promise to the American people and the rest of the world, in my opinion.

The stakes are too high. Negotiations are reaching a critical moment as we speak here today. This administration needs to understand one indisputable truth: a bad deal is worse than no deal.

VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 40th anniversary since the end of the Vietnam war and 20 years of normalized relations between the U.S. and Vietnam.

This week, our President hosted the General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong, a political leader but not an official leader.

During that meeting, I know that the two leaders discussed more normalization of economic and military issues, and I know that President Obama brought up the issue of human rights; but I am going to say this: after 19 years in this Congress of fighting for human rights around the world, the Vietnamese Communist Government always promises, when economic issues are on the table, to do something better with respect to their human rights record, but they never follow through. In fact, it gets worse.

Today, Mr. Speaker, as the co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Vietnam, I don't want to focus on what the economic implications are and the trade implications are that are going on with respect to Vietnam, but I want to remind my colleagues about what is happening with respect to human rights in Vietnam.

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Nguyen Dang Minh Man is currently serving a 9-year prison term after being charged with "attempting to overthrow the government" under article

79 of the constitution of that country. Her crime, she was arrested while taking photographs during a protest against Chinese encroachment of the Paracel and Spratly Islands.

Ho Duc Hoa, a community organizer and a contributing journalist for Vietnam Redemptorists' News, is currently serving a 13-year prison sentence for defending human rights and promoting democracy. He has been charged with "attempting to overthrow the government." He is currently suffering from harsh treatment in prison, including torture and denial to medical care, water, or adequate food.

Dang Xuan Dieu, another activist, is currently serving a 13-year sentence under article 79 in response to advocating for education—imagine this—for education for children living in poverty, for aid to people with disabilities, and for religious freedom in Vietnam. Mr. Dieu is also a victim of mistreatment and torture in the prison system.

Tran Huynh Duy Thuc, a human rights activist and entrepreneur, was also arrested for writing blogs that called for political reform and improved human rights in Vietnam. He only peacefully exercised his rights to freedom of expression; yet Thuc was charged of attempting to overthrow the government under article 79. He was sentenced to 16 years in prison and 5 years of house arrest.

These are just four of the so many people in prison in Vietnam.

The government of Vietnam continues to deny its citizens their rights to freedom of speech, to freedom of assembly, to freedom of the press, to freedom of religion. Although Vietnam strives to further its relations with the U.S., it does not grant human rights to its people.

I understand that President Obama has agreed to visit Vietnam in the near future, and I strongly urge that not only the President and the administration work on the issues of human rights with respect to the Vietnamese people, but that we in the Congress continue to push because, as we know, as Americans, people around the world look to us as the shining light of upholding democracy and human rights and freedom and liberty and freedom of the press and freedom of assembly.

IRAN NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, we are quickly approaching one of the most important deadlines in the recent history of the national security of the United States, the often postponed end of negotiations to halt Iran's nuclear weapons program.

I support the goal of stopping Iran's nuclear weapons ambitions forever, and I have grave fears that the United States is headed down a very dangerous path of concession and surrender to a

terrorist regime that has had American blood on its hands since 1979, military and civilian.

Each and every day, we read new reports that Iranian leaders are systematically "moving the goalposts" on these important negotiations.

Let me cite just a few examples. First, any prudent agreement would allow "no notice" inspections of suspected—not just declared—Iranian nuclear weapon sites; yet the Iranian parliament has passed legislation banning inspections of their military installations.

Senior Iranian officials have also taken it further, declaring: "Not only will we not grant foreigners the permission to inspect our military sites, we will not even give them permission to think about such a subject."

This attitude would make any agreement totally unverifiable.

Secondly, any worthwhile agreement would phase in sanctions relief as the regime proves, over time, that it is complying with all provisions; yet President Rouhani has declared: "We will not sign any deal unless sanctions are lifted on the same day."

Why would we allow Iran to boost its staggering economy by providing an immediate capital infusion with which to support their relentless military, intelligence, and political efforts across the globe?

President Obama's explanations have been nothing short of baffling. He told National Public Radio: "How, if at all, can you prevent Iran from using its new wealth over the next several years to support Bashar al-Assad of Syria, to support Hezbollah, adventures in Yemen, or elsewhere? I mean, there's been no lessening of their support of Hezbollah or Assad during the course of the last 4 or 5 years, at a time when their economy has been doing terribly."

Well, that is the point, Mr. President. The United States should not throw up its hands and actually allow the Iranian economy to be stimulated so they have even more money to solidify their place as the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism.

Immediate sanctions relief will only provide more resources for them to use their elite Quds Force and their proxy militias in Iraq; dominate that country; and advance their goals in Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere.

Of course, they will have more motivation to do so. The tentative agreement announced in April and everything we have heard and read since then seems to reinforce the lesson this administration is willing to give away much more in return for nothing in the way of changing their behavior. Once again, we must never forget that Iran has had American blood on its hands since 1979.

Iran has cheated before and is likely to cheat again; yet the administration makes concession after concession to Tehran, even as Iran spreads violence in Yemen, Syria, Iraq; threatens the

safety of our troops in the Middle East; and develops new ICBMs that will put America in its "crosshairs."

My colleagues, Iran's nuclear weapons quest must be blocked indefinitely, including the verifiable dismantlement of its weapons infrastructure. They cannot be allowed to remain a "threshold nuclear weapons state," only to join the "nuclear club" the moment the agreement lapses.

From where I stand and from what we know today, we must oppose this agreement. In fact, no deal is better than a bad deal.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE).

ENHANCEMENT OF UNITY IN AMERICA

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, let me thank the distinguished gentleman from New Jersey for his kindness.

Might I rise, really, to follow up to ask America to be unified and to be able to have a debate on the floor of the House on a resolution that I offered, H. Res. 342. To the gentleman from New Jersey, it says "the enhancement of unity in America."

What it speaks to is for this body to go on the record for saying that divisive emblems and symbols—swastikas or a rebel flag, a fighting flag—does not even represent the flag that most people think it is—the Confederate flag, this is the rebel flag—to put all those away; to be able to educate our children about the excitement of how diverse we are; to be reminded of the history of Reconstruction—African Americans who are Senators and Congresspersons; to look at schools who now carry names of people who really might be considered treasonists; to be able to stand on the floor today or next week, as those in South Carolina did, in a civil way, so that our children will know that these symbols that divide are not history; and to be able to stand together and support the diversity of America.

That is what I stand for, and I stand with Houston, who is reconsidering many school names at this time.

TAKE DOWN THE CONFEDERATE FLAG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. KILDEE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, overnight, House Republicans have dramatically and inexplicably reversed their position on taking down this terribly divisive symbol, the Confederate battle flag.

While they initially allowed House Democrats' amendments to remove this symbol from our national parks, late last night, they allowed an amendment on voice, which was challenged. I will be on the floor for a rollcall later today to keep—believe it or not—keep the Confederate flag as a symbol for sale and for display in America's national parks.

Of course, this morning's headlines, the scathing headlines, tell it all: