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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Guide us, great God, for we are pilgrims in this land. We are weak, but You are mighty. Guide us with Your powerful hands. Transform our memory so that whenever we encounter challenges, we will recall how You have blessed us in the past.

Today give our lawmakers insight to discern truth from untruth, the high from the low, and the enduring from the transient. May they discern truth through the illumination of Your sacred Word. May they know the high from the low through Your Holy Spirit's guidance. And may they distinguish the enduring from the transient by numbering their days and becoming more aware of life's brevity. Strong Deliverer, continue to be a shield for America.

We pray in Your great 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.

THIS WEEK IN THE SENATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this week promises to be a busy one. Just across the street, an important ObamaCare case will be argued before

the Supreme Court, and tomorrow, here in the Capitol, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu will address a joint session of Congress. It is an important speech that comes at a very important time. Iran's longstanding determination to develop nuclear capabilities poses a threat to Israel, America, and the world. It is a threat Netanyahu is singularly capable of explaining at such a critical moment in U.S.-Israeli relations.

Meanwhile, the new Senate will continue to pursue good ideas for the middle class. On the floor and in committee, both this week and in the weeks to come, we expect to see more bipartisan action on behalf of the American people on a range of issues, from human trafficking to the NLRB. For instance, we will offer Senators a chance to stand tall for basic fairness in the workplace by overturning the administration's ambush rule, which seeks to weaken workers' rights, and we will keep up the fight for sensible, bipartisan ideas such as the Keystone jobs bill.

This positive approach stands in stark contrast to the partisan posture we have seen from our friends on the other side of the aisle.

The President's veto of the bipartisan Keystone bill represents a victory for partisanship and for powerful special interests. The President's veto of the bipartisan Keystone bill represents a defeat for jobs, for infrastructure, and for the middle class. That is why Congress needs to try and overturn it.

We had hoped to have that vote tomorrow, but for some reason Democrats are actually filibustering that vote. It takes 67 votes to overcome a veto, more than the 60 required to overcome a filibuster. So there is no reason for a filibuster, other than to cause delay and gridlock simply for its own sake.

It is certainly disappointing. But the new Congress won't be deterred from fighting for jobs and the middle class.

We will keep fighting for this good idea, and we will keep fighting for other good ideas.

We will also keep up our fight to fund the Department of Homeland Security. The people watched Democrats filibuster Homeland Security funding for weeks. On Friday they watched Democrats—including many who implied they would actually do something about the President's overreach—filibuster a commonsense bill from Senator COLLINS. Now Americans are learning that Democrats might even try and prevent the Senate and the House of Representatives from reconciling their bills to get the Department funded. It just doesn't make any sense, especially when we consider the words of the minority leader himself. He said that going to conference "has been the custom in the Senate and the House of Representatives for more than 200 years." At 5:30 p.m. we will have a vote to do just that. We invite the minority leader and his party to join us in supporting this effort to go to conference.

It is interesting to see the distance between rhetoric and reality with some of our good friends on the other side—not just on conferencing bills, not just on addressing the President's overreach, but also with the use of the filibuster itself. Some of the folks who are now filibustering simply for the sake of delaying and causing gridlock are the same folks who used to denounce the use of the filibuster. It is easy to see that they really weren't very serious.

The truth is that a better way is possible for our colleagues. I invite our Democratic friends to drop all the negativity, drop all the gridlock, and join Republicans in advancing a positive agenda for the American people instead.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

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



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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2015

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany H.R. 240, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House Message to accompany H.R. 240, an act making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2015, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to insist upon the Senate amendment, agree to the request by the House of Representatives for a conference, and authorize the Presiding Officer to appoint conferees.

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

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH TO CONGRESS

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, our strongest and most loyal ally in the Middle East faces a growing existential threat under the specter of a nuclear Iran. I am deeply troubled that our President's solution won't work. Rather than enforcing punitive measures that would stem Iran's nuclear progress, this administration has opted for a policy of conciliation that does nothing to curb this growing threat. All the while, the threat to Israel grows stronger every day.

Now more than ever the Congress and the American people must stand with our Israeli allies to ensure the safety and security not only of our two nations, but the Middle East as a whole. Far from being a political stunt, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to a joint session of Congress provides our Nation with a vital opportunity to demonstrate our unyielding resolve to stand with Israel and oppose Iran's development of nuclear weapons.

To demonstrate our solidarity with Israel, Congress should complement the Prime Minister's address with the threat of sanctions that properly secure both of our countries against the Iranian threat. We must achieve three commonsense objectives:

First, we must prevent Iran from developing or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons.

Second, we should reaffirm that Iran does not have an inherent right to enrichment and reprocessing capabilities and technologies under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Third, we must seek to reverse the development of Iran's illicit nuclear infrastructure and bring Iran into com-

pliance with all United Nations Security Council resolutions.

President Obama has failed to realize that Iran poses a serious threat to the West, and our response to that threat must be equally serious. Prime Minister Netanyahu understands the precariousness of the current situation, and he is doing his best to help us here in the United States understand. As the Prime Minister stated: "I am going to the United States not because I seek a confrontation with the president, but because I must fulfill my obligation to speak up on a matter that affects the very survival of my country."

The Prime Minister has good reason to be concerned. According to the Heritage Foundation, since the Obama administration began to relax sanctions after an interim agreement was implemented, the Iranian economy grew by an estimated 4.6 percent in the first quarter of Iran's calendar year—the first time it has grown after shrinking for the last 2 years under sanctions.

As we lose leverage by relaxing sanctions, we must not forget the most likely reason Iran agreed to negotiations in the first place was economic restrictions. When the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is reported to have said after the announcement of the Joint Plan of Action that "the centrifuges are spinning and will never stop," should we curtail our efforts in the one area that appears to give Iran pause?

Times such as these require strength of purpose, which is why we should clearly lay out a series of sanctions that will be imposed on Iran if negotiations fail. We should provide for short but reasonable periods of time for Congress, and, therefore, the American people, to consider if the Obama administration has succeeded in accomplishing the three objectives necessary to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Tomorrow, the Congress will hear from Prime Minister Netanyahu. In his message, I believe, he will tell us how we together can confront the growing Iranian threat. This is the time to rally as one Nation with one of our strongest allies to ensure a safe and secure world.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, tomorrow we will gather in the House Chamber to listen to an address from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. I welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu to Capitol Hill and eagerly await his speech. It is expected that he will paint a very vivid and very real picture of the danger a nuclear Iran

poses not just to Israel but to the international community as a whole. This threat seems of little concern to the administration—so little, in fact, that the President almost immediately dismissed the idea of meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu while he is in Washington. This is disappointing, to say the least.

Instead of taking the opportunity to join with us to reaffirm our support for the State of Israel, the administration has chosen to send the wrong message to our strongest ally in the region. Unfortunately, this has become a pattern. While the administration's official policy has been supportive of Israel, actions speak louder than words, and regrettably this administration's actions are often too quiet. This has not always been the case. During his first term, President Obama fought Palestinian efforts to delegitimize Israel at the U.N. He made clear that such tactics were counterproductive to the peace process and that the Palestinians would put their relationship with us in jeopardy if they sought action against Israel at the International Criminal Court.

Many Israelis are rightfully concerned that we will not have their backs when the Palestinian Authority becomes a full member of the International Criminal Court and follows through on this threat. I raised this issue with Secretary Kerry during an Appropriations Committee hearing last week, reminding him that the law explicitly prohibits funding for the Palestinian Authority if they initiate or actively support an International Criminal Court investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes. The Secretary said that the Palestinian Authority's actions amounted to a "terrible exercise in judgment" but stopped short of saying they have violated the law in a way that triggers the cutoff of aid.

Three-quarters of this body—Republicans and Democrats alike—don't see it that way. We sent the Israeli people a strong bipartisan message of support when we called on Secretary Kerry to suspend economic aid while the State Department reviews the Palestinian Authority's actions. According to Secretary Kerry's response at the hearing, the State Department will wait to see what the Palestinians do after the first of April before making a decision on economic aid. By then it might be too late.

This is exactly why the people of Israel are uneasy with the ongoing nuclear negotiations. The same administration that once spoke out forcefully against these types of tactics now plays a game of wait-and-see with the Palestinians, somehow expecting them to be an honest partner this time around.

Israel's lack of confidence in the administration's support is certainly understandable. Let's not forget that this same administration employs high-level officials who publicly disrespect our ally, including at least one willing