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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 10, 2015, at 12 noon.

Senate

MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2015

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Our Father in Heaven, clothed in dazzling splendor, we bow our hearts in Your presence. You are our helper, our defender, and our refuge. You are our hope for years to come.

Strengthen our Senators for today's challenges. Direct their thoughts, words, and actions, enabling them to follow Your leading. Lord, use them to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows. Give them peace during turbulent moments and a faith that will not shrink under pressure. Make their words fountains of light.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 9, 2015.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TOM COTTON, a Senator from the State of Arkansas, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. COTTON thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

MOTION TO INVOKE CLOTURE WITHDRAWN—MOTION TO PROCEED TO S. 625

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to S. 625 be withdrawn.

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, for the information of all Senators, the first vote of the week will occur at 5:30 p.m. this afternoon on confirmation of the nomination for Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator. There

are three other votes in the series tonight, and those nominations will be confirmed by voice vote.

Tomorrow the Senate will begin consideration of legislation to combat human trafficking. Members on both sides of the aisle have amendments to the bill, and those Senators should be working with Chairman GRASSLEY and Senator LEAHY to get in the queue for consideration. It is my expectation that votes in relation to the trafficking bill will kick in after the policy lunches tomorrow.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, Senators from both sides of the aisle and from multiple committees have worked hard to address the terrible crime of human trafficking. This is a growing area of domestic and international activity. Victims are counting on us to act. That is why tomorrow the Senate will begin consideration of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. It is authored by the senior Senator from Texas and boasts sponsors from both parties. Victims groups and advocates have called this bipartisan measure the most comprehensive and thoughtful piece of antitrafficking legislation currently pending, and similar legislation has already passed the House of Representatives.

It is no wonder the Judiciary Committee supported, without opposition, the bipartisan bill we will begin considering tomorrow. After a reasonable period of debate and amendment, we hope

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



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to see strong bipartisan support here on the Senate floor as well.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on human trafficking, I underscore, appreciate, and agree with the statement of the Republican leader. I feel very confident we will clear on our side moving to that. I think it would be a waste of the Senate's time to have a vote on a motion to proceed and a waste of time afterward, so I hope we can get on this legislation tomorrow. I doubt there will be problems on my side. If there are, I will work to clear them.

NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as I speak here today President Obama and his administration are engaged in negotiations to prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon. These negotiations are unprecedented and very critical to our country and the world. The stakes couldn't be higher. We as leaders should do everything we can to help these negotiations succeed. When it comes to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb, we should put partisanship way to one side.

Sadly, though, the judgment of my Republican colleagues seems to be clouded by their abhorrence of President Obama. Today Republican Senators actually sent a letter to the Iranian leadership aimed at sabotaging these negotiations.

Let's be very clear. Republicans are undermining our Commander in Chief while empowering the Ayatollahs. Just last week Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was here in the Capitol decrying the evil intent of the Iranian leadership. Republicans at that speech, which took place down the hall from where we stand today, in the House Chamber, stood, applauded, stomped their feet, and yelled in support of what the Prime Minister of Israel had to say. Today those same Republicans are trying to negotiate with the very same leaders in Iran with whom Netanyahu said we shouldn't be negotiating. This simply doesn't make sense.

The outcome of the negotiations between the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, Russia, and the entire world is so important. The main participants in these negotiations are the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, and Russia. Even though we are one of the negotiators, the negotiations affect the entire world. This letter is a hard slap in the face of not only the United States but our allies. This

is not a time to undermine our Commander in Chief purely out of spite.

We should always have a robust debate about foreign policy, but it is unprecedented for one political party to directly intervene in an international negotiation with the sole goal of embarrassing the President of the United States.

Throughout the 8 years of President Bush's Presidency, Democrats—I disagreed with his foreign policy. I spoke about it on the floor lots of times. We know the disaster of the war in Iraq. But even at the height of our disagreements with President George W. Bush, Senate Democrats never considered sending a letter to Saddam Hussein or other Iraqi leaders at the time—never considered it, nor to be an embarrassment to the Commander in Chief, George W. Bush.

So I say to my Republican colleagues: Do you so dislike President Obama that you would take this extraordinary step? Obviously so.

Barack Obama is the President. This is an extraordinary step, and why it was taken, I really don't understand, other than a dislike of the President. Barack Obama is President. I have agreed with him on certain things, and I have disagreed with him on certain things, but he is my President, and he is a President to all of us. It is time for Republicans to accept that the citizens of our country twice elected President Obama by large margins as President of the United States.

Obviously Republicans don't know how to do anything other than attempt these seemingly juvenile political attacks against the President. Congressional Republicans don't know how to get things done. They don't know how to govern. If you don't believe what I just said, look at the press today; read a newspaper; look at the news. The pundits all agree that the Republicans are in a state of disarray here in the Congress of the United States. They don't know what to do or how to do it.

Today's unprecedented letter, originated by a U.S. Senator who took his oath of office 62 days ago, is a kind of pettiness that diminishes us as a country in the eyes of the world. The Republicans need to find a way to get over their animosity toward President Obama. I can only hope they do it sooner rather than later.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. REID. I will be happy to yield to the assistant leader.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator for his remarks on this letter.

I can't think of a precedent where we have had one political party in the Senate try to intervene in international negotiations.

In this situation, if these negotiations fail, it is pretty clear to me that one of the options on the horizon will be military action against Iran. I pray to goodness that we never reach that point.

But I wish to ask the Senator from Nevada, those who are so anxious to

scuttle these negotiations, to undermine these negotiations, do you think they have reflected on the fact that the alternative could be another war in the Middle East?

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, with whom I have served in this Congress for 33 years, I have never seen anything like it. I have never seen anything like it.

I disagreed with President Bush so very much on what he was doing to our country, but I would never ever have considered anything even close to this.

The only thing I can figure out is what I said. The dislike of the President is so intense by the Republican leaders that this is what they are doing. They can't accept the fact that this good man, Barack Obama—this man with the unusual name—was elected twice by overwhelming margins by the people of this country, and he is doing his very best to try to alleviate a problem that exists.

It would be better for the world—I think everyone should acknowledge that—if we could work something out with Iran so they don't get nuclear weapons, and we have to try to do that. To prejudge what is going to come, if anything—the President of the United States said there is less than a 50-percent chance he can get it done, but shouldn't we let him try?

Mr. DURBIN. If the Senator will yield for another question, in the history of the Senate to date, back to the 1940s when Senator Vandenberg from Michigan joined in a bipartisan effort on foreign policy as one of the hallmark events in the history of this great body, and for decades when we served in the Senate, kind of the stock phrase was that politics ends at the water's edge when the President is representing the United States overseas. We can argue and use our constitutional powers to argue back and forth, but we want to give the President the authority to try to protect and defend this country.

Can the Senator from Nevada, who is a student of history, recall any other time when a group of Senators—a partisan group of Senators—reached out to a party in negotiations with the United States directly, as this letter has done?

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, I guess my thoughts have been clouded by the people I have worked with here. It was just a few years ago that two outstanding U.S. Senators who will go down in the history books—Dan Inouye and Ted Stevens. One was a good Republican, and one was a good Democrat. They worked arm in arm on issues that made our country a better country. They would never ever consider such a thing. If they were here today, they would be on this floor demanding: What is going on here? One of these two men was a ranking member of the defense appropriations committee that funds the military. These two men worked together on that subcommittee for more than a decade, and they worked together.