

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.

My judgment is clouded by the people I have worked with here who would never consider anything like this.

Mr. DURBIN. I will ask the Senator from Nevada a further question. Didn't we also have a similar precedent when Senator McCAIN and Senator Kerry were leaders in an effort to finally establish diplomatic recognition of Vietnam and normalize relations? This was a bipartisan effort to try to move us beyond a painful chapter in our history which cost so many American lives. That, too, was bipartisan, as I recall.

Mr. REID. And if anyone should have some ill feelings about Vietnam, JOHN McCAIN, who came to the House of Representatives with the Senator and me, was in a prison camp for 5 years and 4 of those years were in solitary confinement. John Kerry was shot, was wounded—highly decorated, but he had a little beef with the Vietnamese. And they worked together because they thought it would be good for our country to reestablish relations with that country.

So my mind is—I repeat—clouded with the experience I have in this body with leaders such as Mark Hatfield, a Republican, who would never ever consider anything like this.

I am dumbfounded that 47 of my colleagues would sign a letter. Last week they were over here, as I said, jumping up and down and cheering the Prime Minister of Israel because he was denigrating what was going on in Iran—you can't negotiate with these people—and now they are sending a letter to the same people whom they were cheering against just a week ago?

Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with the time equally divided in the usual form, and with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The assistant Democratic leader.

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF BLOODY SUNDAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last Saturday marked the 50th anniversary of what has come to be known as Bloody Sunday. In March of 1965, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, then a young man fresh out of college, and Rev. Hosea Williams led 600 brave civil rights activists across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL.

These courageous men and women, and children marching with them, were marching in pursuit of the most funda-

mental right—the right preservative of all others—the right to vote. What they received that day, however, were brutal beatings from police batons as State troopers turned them back and chased them down.

A few days later, President Lyndon B. Johnson addressed the Nation and called on Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act. Within months, the legislation was signed into law—guaranteeing that the fundamental right to vote would not be restricted through clever State and local schemes, such as poll taxes and literacy tests.

I was proud to join Congressman LEWIS on a trip to Selma about 10 years ago for a ceremonial walk across the bridge to mark the 40th anniversary of Bloody Sunday. As we marched on a Sunday morning in the footsteps of the civil rights giants, we celebrated a bill that has often been called the most significant civil rights law ever passed by Congress. Little did we know that 8 years later, in 2013, the Supreme Court would strike down a major provision of that law.

In *Shelby County v. Holder*, by a 5-to-4 vote, a divided Supreme Court struck down the provision of the Voting Rights Act that required certain jurisdictions to preclear changes to their voting laws with the Department of Justice. The decision effectively gutted the Voting Rights Act.

In the aftermath of the *Shelby County* decision, several State legislatures pushed through discriminatory and onerous restrictions on voting that previously would have required Department of Justice clearance.

We have heard disturbing stories of a 93-year-old veteran and a nearly 70-year-old doctor who were turned away from the polls in Texas because their IDs did not meet the specifications of an onerous new State law. We heard about Florida's faulty voter verification efforts that disproportionately flag Hispanic citizens for removal from the voter rolls. And we have heard how the elimination of out-of-precinct voting and cuts to early voting impacted minority voters in North Carolina.

It is hard to believe that 50 years after Selma, we are watching State legislatures pass legislation restricting opportunities to vote in America. None of us want to subscribe or endorse voter fraud—not a person on either side of the aisle—but this goes far beyond it.

As chairman of the Judiciary subcommittee on the Constitution, I held hearings in Florida and Ohio, where they were enacting restrictive laws to limit opportunities to vote—limiting the time you can vote, requiring IDs.

In each of those States, I called as my first witnesses elected officials of both political parties. I asked, in both States, the same question to the first panel of witnesses: What has happened in your State by way of voter fraud that has led you to restrict the opportunity to vote in your States of Ohio and Florida? The answer was: Nothing—nothing.

Then we discussed how many people have actually been prosecuted for voter fraud that led to this tightening of the laws and limiting the opportunity to vote. In Ohio, the answer was: We think in the last 10 years, a few people might have been prosecuted. This clearly was not a problem in need of a solution. This was clearly an effort made in these State legislatures to restrict the opportunity to vote for certain Americans. Why? If you believe in this country, if you believe in democracy, if you believe in the right to vote, why do so many State legislatures—under the guidance of a group called ALEC—why are they changing their laws to restrict the right to vote? Clearly it is because they want certain people to find it more difficult to vote.

When I chaired this subcommittee and I had this series of hearings, we heard over and over again that these laws have a disproportionate negative impact on lower income individuals, minorities, youth, elderly, and other vulnerable populations.

I wish that 50 years after Bloody Sunday, our society had reached a point where the protections of the Voting Rights Act were no longer necessary. But we have seen in State after State that we still need the protections of the law, or people—good American citizens—will be denied their opportunity to cast a vote in an election.

So in order to truly honor the foot soldiers of Bloody Sunday, we have to do more than vote for congressional medals. We have to work together to pass the Voting Rights Amendment Act to ensure the Federal Government is once again able to fully protect the fundamental right to vote for all American citizens.

The Voting Rights Amendment Act, which Senator LEAHY, Senator COONS, and I plan to reintroduce soon, will undo the damage of the *Shelby County* decision. Our bill will restore the Voting Rights Act by updating the formula that determines which jurisdictions must preclear changes to their voting practices with the Justice Department.

In 2006, Congress reauthorized the Voting Rights Act with an overwhelming bipartisan vote. The spirit of Bloody Sunday—the spirit of Selma, AL—was alive and well 9 years ago, when both political parties stood up and said: We are both going to endorse it. It is the right thing to do.

Mr. President, 390 Members in the House out of 435 voted for it, and 98 Senators—from both political parties—voted to reauthorize it, 9 years ago. Congress, after all the hearings—21 of them—with more than 90 witnesses testifying, produced a record that exceeded 15,000 pages, and the bill was solid in the law.

We recognized then that despite the progress we have made in the years since that famous march, there still was unlawful and unfair discrimination against Americans who wanted to exercise their right to vote.