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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, March 13, 2015, at 11 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2015

The Senate met at 9:30 a.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.

Lord of life and love and laughter, You are the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end. Thank You for the gift of this day, for life and health, for forgiveness and freedom, for family and friends. Lord, we are grateful for the hope we have in You and for the joy we find in Your presence. You have given us this great gift of prayer, enabling us to reach out to You whenever we desire.

Today, use our Senators to make our Nation stronger and our world better. Open their ears to the cries of despair and give them wisdom to solve difficult problems. Sanctify their thoughts, words, and deeds so that they will live worthy of Your great love.

We pray in Your merciful 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 PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, every year in America countless innocent victims, including children, are bought and sold into modern-day slavery. This heinous crime of human trafficking is shameful and disgraceful, and the Senate can do something about it by passing the bipartisan human rights legislation before us today.

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, introduced by Senator CORNYN and his Democratic colleague Senator KLOBUCHAR, would give voices to the voiceless and justice to the children suffering in the shadows. Their bipartisan human rights bill may not be that long, but it sure is effective, and it is transparent. This bill has been available for any Senator and any member of the public to read since January. This bipartisan legislation was considered and strengthened in an open and transparent committee process. This human rights bill conforms with longstanding bipartisan law that so many of our Democratic friends have supported repeatedly. It is no wonder that once Senators have read the bill, they can't seem to help but support it.

We welcome the 13 Democratic co-sponsors of this human rights bill. We welcome the messages of support our Democratic friends have delivered as well.

Here is what one Democratic Senator from New York had to say just a few days ago. "We should pass Senator Cornyn's Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act," she said. She explained that this bipartisan bill would "support programs for survivors of human trafficking and child pornography and ensure that the johns who are buying trafficking victims are actually prosecuted in Federal court." She is right. All of those measures are contained in the text of this bipartisan bill.

We also heard the Democratic Senator from North Dakota who called on me to bring "S. 178, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, to the floor for a vote." I was happy to do it. I am appreciative of her support.

I am appreciative of the support from so many from across the aisle who have read and support this bill. The children who suffer from such terrible oppression and injustice must appreciate their support too. They must appreciate our Democratic friends closely examining this bipartisan human rights bill of modest length and then voting unanimously to support it in the Judiciary Committee.

On Monday they must have appreciated seeing our Democratic friends join with us to unanimously advance the same bipartisan human rights bill. Here is what the Democratic leader had to say that day—right after I called for strong bipartisan backing for our human rights legislation. "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

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



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Senate's time to have a vote on a motion to proceed and a waste of time afterward. . . . I doubt there will be problems on my side," the Democratic leader said. "If there are, I will work to clear them." I was very appreciative of my good friend making that statement after examining this bipartisan legislation.

This bipartisan human rights bill may not be that long, but it is critical to helping lift innocent victims out of the shadows.

A broad coalition—everyone from the NAACP to the National Domestic Violence Hotline—has called it "vital."

They wrote:

The [Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act] provides unprecedented support to domestic victims of trafficking who are too often invisible and underserved.

They continued:

As leaders in the anti-trafficking, anti-violence, child welfare, civil rights, runaway and homeless youth, and human rights movements, we urge Congress to pass this critical piece of legislation.

So I would urge Members on both sides of the aisle to help pass this transparent and bipartisan human rights legislation overwhelmingly.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

HEALTH CARE SUBSIDIES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, around the country we see a number of stories appearing. I will take one of the stories from the New York Times and read just a little bit of it. It is a long article, but everyone gets the drift of it. There are a few paragraphs I am going to read.

The Obama administration said Tuesday that 11.7 million Americans now have private health insurance through federal and state marketplaces, with 86 percent of them receiving financial assistance from the federal government to help pay premiums.

About three-fourths of people with marketplace coverage—8.8 million consumers—live in the 37 states served by HealthCare.gov, the website for the federal insurance exchange. The other 2.9 million people are in states that created and operate their own exchanges.

Sylvia Mathews Burwell, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, underlined the importance of subsidies for people in states using the federal exchange—subsidies that could be withdrawn if the Supreme Court rules against the Obama administration in a pending case.

Administration officials suggested that more than 7 million people could lose subsidies, making insurance unaffordable, if the court ruled that such assistance was unavailable in the federal exchange. The plaintiffs contend that the Affordable Care Act does not allow subsidies in the federal exchange.

In Florida, nearly 1.6 million people have selected or been automatically re-enrolled in health plans—the largest enrollment of any state in the federal exchange—and 1.5 million of them qualified for subsidies in the form of tax credits, which averaged \$294 a month.

In Texas, 1.2 million people selected or were re-enrolled in health plans, and one million of them qualified for financial assistance averaging \$239 a month.

In North Carolina, 560,400 people selected health plans in the federal marketplace, and 515,500 of them qualified for subsidies averaging \$315 a month.

A lot rides on what the Supreme Court does, affecting millions and millions of people. If the Supreme Court can't see the absolute clear language of that bill, millions of people will lose their health insurance, and that would be a tragedy. It would be so very bad if suddenly people find themselves with no health insurance after they waited for so long to get it.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, an ancient Greek philosopher once said, "To be doing good deeds is man's most glorious task."

Today the Senate has an opportunity to do a good deed. We have a chance to do something to address human trafficking. It is hard to fathom that in the 21st century, slavery continues to rear its ugly head in the form of human trafficking. But in the shadows of American society, there are children, women, and men who are literally being enslaved and subjected to the most shockingly inhumane treatment imaginable. The victims of human trafficking suffer physical and sexual abuse and violence. Forced to live in squalor, they have no hope. This legislation before this body aims to change that. It seeks to not only prevent trafficking but also gives survivors hope for a new life.

This legislation creates a domestic trafficking victims fund that will help support victims of trafficking and child pornography get back on their feet by providing housing, job training, and other support services. This legislation provides funding to train law enforcement in rescuing and supporting survivors of human trafficking and effectively prosecuting traffickers. It officially designates child pornography as a form of human trafficking and ensures that victims have direct access to child advocacy centers. It protects victims and witnesses by treating suspected human traffickers as violent criminals. It keeps victims of trafficking and child pornography informed regarding any plea bargain or deferred prosecution related to their cases.

This legislation is good for our country. It will go a long way in curbing human trafficking and child pornography. That is why it is supported by 200 law enforcement and victims' rights groups nationwide.

Unfortunately, Republicans are committed to turning a bipartisan bill into an unrelated and unconscionable political fight. We can give all the speeches out here we want saying somebody should have read the bill more closely.

The question is—and we can have all kinds of debates out here as to how it got in the bill. A number of people feel it was by a little bit of sleight of hand and that it shouldn't be in there. In this legislation that is meant as an outline to stop child trafficking and human trafficking generally, there is a provision dealing with abortion. It has nothing—nothing—to do with this.

I served in the House of Representatives with a very fine man. He has had his name affixed to an anti-abortion bill—anti-abortion legislation for almost three decades, and it has been continued year after year in appropriations bills. What I am talking about, what is happening in this legislation, it would make it permanent. It is wrong.

If my friend the Republican leader is so in tune with getting this passed, take that provision out of the bill; otherwise, it will not pass. Take it out.

It is unfortunate that Republicans are committed to turning a bipartisan bill into an unrelated, unconscionable political fight. Is it worth it? Is it really worth endangering a piece of legislation that would do good for our country?

Democrats will not allow a bill to prevent human trafficking and child pornography to be hijacked by a Republican ploy. We can do a lot of good with this legislation, and I hope my Republican friends will choose to do the right thing and take this out of this legislation and pass this bill without any gimmicks.

LETTER SENT TO IRAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, talking about gimmicks, there have been a number of reports in the press in the last couple of days about how this unprecedented letter to the leaders of the Iranian regime originated. We know 47 Republican Senators signed it. There are news accounts reporting that this was intended as a big joke. A big joke? Others say Republicans say it was a political organizing exercise after being hammered so hard with their non-funding of Homeland Security. Others say it was simply designed to sabotage negotiations. Pick whatever one of the three you want. Whatever the reason, one thing is clear: This is not a joke; this is not an organizing exercise; this is about Iran getting a nuclear weapon.

I am disappointed that so many of my Republican colleagues are destroying the long tradition of bipartisanship in defending Israel and stopping Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. I am heartened that a few Republicans—seven to be exact—didn't sign the letter. That is nice. Seven out of 54 didn't sign the letter. Seven is certainly better than nothing.

As some of the seven Republican Senators have said, they agree with Democrats that this letter was not appropriate. We are witnessing a fundamental test of Republicans' ability to govern. They are treating nuclear negotiations as a chance to play games—