

There has been a lot of talk in the last couple of days about how to handle this issue, and the way to handle the issue is very simple: Just take it out of the bill. It could be done with a consent agreement in the matter of a second or two. So that is what we proposed, and we have been proposing it for the last several days. Take the abortion language out of this bill. If my Republican colleagues want to get something done, just take the abortion politics out of this bill. Unfortunately, for those who want to see this trafficking bill pass, Republicans are ignoring the obvious path forward while setting a new low standard on all bipartisan business that is conducted in the Senate.

By saying that Democrats should always assume their Republican partners are just not being forthright, I guess it is our fault because time and time again, whether it is on the funding of Homeland Security or whether it is trying to solve a problem we have in the Middle East, there is always something that comes out of nowhere—something so unusual, so unbelievable that we would have 47 Senators sign a letter directed to the Ayatollah. Never in the 200 years of this body has there been this level of interference in negotiations by the President until just a few days ago.

The bottom line is this: Democratic Senators have been working in good faith on this critical legislation for years. Assuming their Republican partners were being forthright when they provided a list of changes that did not include the addition of the Hyde language, Republicans are now saying that trusting them was a mistake.

There is a clear path forward to passing this trafficking bill, which is the goal shared, I hope, by Democrats and Republicans. Republicans should work with us to remove the unrelated abortion language that has no business being in this bill. Democrats are open to any number of ways to improve the language in this bill, but it is so simple: Just take it out. Take the abortion language out.

Today, Senator LEAHY, a senior Member of this body, submitted text that omits the abortion language. One way forward would be for the Senate to adopt, not simply vote on, this text. Voting to reject the change Democrats are seeking, as Senator MCCONNELL says he wants to do today, is not a viable path forward since it does not address Democrats' concern that abortion language has no place in a bill designed to protect victims of human trafficking.

This trafficking bill could pass quickly if the abortion language were removed, as I said. We hope Republicans will do the right thing in the interest of passing this bill and will work with us to remove the completely unrelated abortion language that has no business being in this bill.

I, therefore, object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I want to make sure everybody understands what has been objected to. The provision that was in the bill has been in there for 2 months. Everybody had a chance to read it. It came out of committee unanimously. No one objected to proceeding to it on the floor.

I just offered the minority an opportunity for a simple up-or-down vote to strike the provision they recently discovered, and they have objected to it.

Senator CORNYN, Senator GRASSLEY, and a number of others of you have worked very hard on this extremely important legislation. I brought it to the floor the other day, open for amendment, but we have not been able to offer any amendments because the minority doesn't want to have an open amendment process and is insisting on trying to kill this important bill because of a provision they claim somehow they missed. After its being in there for 2 months, they now suddenly find it offensive.

So where we are is we are still on the bill, and we are going to pass this bill, I assure you. I want to assure Senators CORNYN, GRASSLEY, and all the people out in America who have been clamoring for this bill—and I might ask Senator CORNYN, how many groups are there that are supporting this measure?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. If I could respond, Mr. President, there are about 200 different law enforcement and victims' rights organizations, including the one from the chart I mentioned earlier, the Coalition Against Trafficking of Women. This is one of those rare subjects where people have genuinely come together in revulsion to this terrible crime but also in an attempt to do something meaningful to address it.

Mr. MCCONNELL. So what I want to say to those groups is that we are going to stay on this bill until we pass it. I have offered the minority an opportunity to have an up-or-down vote to take out the provision they have suddenly discovered is offensive to them even after having it in the bill for 2 months. Even the most casual observer would have to conclude that the minority is going to great lengths to prevent the Senate from even doing business on things that are overwhelmingly supported. But I will say this to everybody out there who cares about this bill: We are going to stay on it until we finish it.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON HART NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Christopher A. Hart, of Colorado, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of two years?

Mr. INHOFE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 97, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 70 Ex.]

YEAS—97

Alexander	Flake	Murray
Ayotte	Franken	Nelson
Baldwin	Gardner	Paul
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Perdue
Bennet	Graham	Peters
Blumenthal	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Hatch	Reed
Booker	Heinrich	Reid
Boozman	Heitkamp	Risch
Brown	Heller	Roberts
Burr	Hirono	Rounds
Cantwell	Hoeven	Sasse
Capito	Inhofe	Schatz
Cardin	Isakson	Schumer
Carper	Johnson	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Cassidy	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Cochran	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Lankford	Sullivan
Coons	Leahy	Tester
Corker	Lee	Thune
Cornyn	Manchin	Tillis
Cotton	Markey	Toomey
Crapo	McCain	Udall
Cruz	McCaskill	Vitter
Daines	McConnell	Warner
Donnelly	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Enzi	Mikulski	Wicker
Ernst	Moran	Wyden
Feinstein	Murkowski	
Fischer	Murphy	

NOT VOTING—3

Boxer	Rubio	Sanders
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The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON DINH-ZARR NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Tho Dinh-Zarr, of Texas, to be a Member of the National Transportation Safety Board for the remainder of the term expiring December 31, 2018?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING ACT OF 2015—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the committee-reported amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the committee-reported substitute amendment to S. 178, a bill to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Shelley Moore Capito, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, Deb Fischer, Tom Cotton, Ron Johnson, Richard Burr, Daniel Coats, Roy Blunt, Chuck Grassley, Tim Scott, Pat Roberts, Bill Cassidy, Jerry Moran.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I send another cloture motion to the desk for the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on S. 178, a bill to provide justice for the victims of trafficking.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Shelley Moore Capito, Steve Daines, Roger F. Wicker, James Lankford, Deb Fischer, Tom Cotton, Ron Johnson, Richard Burr, Daniel Coats, Roy Blunt, Chuck Grassley, Tim Scott, Pat Roberts, Bill Cassidy, Jerry Moran.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived with respect to these cloture motions.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the first-degree filing deadline be at 5 p.m. on Monday, March 16.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from West Virginia.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015. I am proud to join with my colleagues to co-sponsor this important legislation, and I applaud Senator CORNYN and Senator KLOBUCHAR for putting together this bipartisan bill.

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act is a call to action. We heard a lot of discussion about it on the floor over the last several days. The horrible crime of human trafficking impacts thousands of Americans—mostly women and children—each year, and it occurs in cities, suburbs, and in rural towns. We cannot allow this horrendous crime to continue.

Last year, I hosted a forum at West Virginia State University to discuss how we could help in West Virginia to combat human trafficking. The event was very well attended and featured law enforcement advocates, academics, and State lawmakers. I also supported several bills when I was in the House of Representatives to further this fight and end this vicious crime.

It is monstrous to consider the sexual exploitation of a human being, especially a child. We must stand up for those voices that have been silenced and say “no more.”

While not in large numbers, trafficking occurs in West Virginia’s small communities and towns, in our hotels and in our truck stops, in schools, and online. Several things contribute to trafficking in the Mountain State—the interstates running in and around, our high poverty and unemployment rates. We also have a drug epidemic which contributes to this problem.

I am working in a bipartisan way with Senator JOE DONNELLY to address this drug epidemic, but we must also say “no more” to this shameful crime.

The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act will make it easier for law enforcement to identify and address patterns of human trafficking. It takes a needed two-pronged approach. It bolsters the tools available to law enforcement to crack down on human traffickers and helps victims restore their lives through increased Federal resources.

We need to take care of our sons, our daughters, and our neighbors and keep our eyes and our ears open. This is not a Republican or Democratic issue; it is a human issue. Now is the time to stand up and say “no more” to human trafficking. Now is the time to show broad support for these victims and punish traffickers to the fullest extent of the law.

This bill has gone through a very transparent process. It was carefully considered and unanimously approved in the Senate Judiciary Committee. It has been available for every Senator or member of the public to read for months. Earlier this week each and every Senator consented to consider this bill on the Senate floor. It has widespread support from over 200 advocacy groups, including the NAACP, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Rights4Girls, the National Association to Protect Children, the Fraternal Order of Police, and the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The innocent victims of human trafficking have suffered enough. Now is

the time for us to join together and pass this legislation and take a significant step to end this crime.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise to speak on behalf of the nomination of Loretta Lynch to be Attorney General of the United States.

It is interesting that this is a week when we have been engaged in a dialogue about human trafficking, which is a serious and significant issue, obviously. But it, along with many other issues, demands a strong Justice Department, and a strong Justice Department is not possible without a confirmed Attorney General as a leader.

Ms. Lynch has now been nominated over 4 months ago. It has been 124 days since her nomination, and she has still yet to be confirmed. I rise to speak on her behalf.

I have visited with Loretta Lynch in person. I have observed her throughout the nominations process. My brother-in-law worked as an assistant U.S. attorney with her in the Eastern District of New York in the late 1990s. I am impressed, as are many of my colleagues, by her credentials and her extensive experience, and I was gratified to see that the Judiciary Committee reported her nomination to the floor.

I am disappointed that it has taken 124 days to get to this point. I was pleased to hear the majority leader indicate that the Senate may take up her nomination next week, but I think it is important for the Nation to recognize how critical this appointment is and how we should not have let it go this long.

I want to reflect back to probably the hardest elected office I held or will hold, which was mayor of Richmond. When I was a city councilman and mayor from 1994 to 2000, my city had the burden of having the second highest homicide rate in the United States. We worked in our community together with everyone, especially law enforcement and community leaders, to try to bring down that scourge of violent crime that was affecting neighborhoods, especially the poorest neighborhoods.

We were able, over the course of 7 years, to achieve some very dramatic success to make our city safer, but along the way I learned a couple of very important things. The first was this. One can’t tackle major public safety challenges without a strong relationship between the community and the local police department. It is impossible to make progress if that does not happen. Secondly, I also learned that one cannot tackle a difficult public safety challenge without a strong Department of Justice. We relied upon that partnership with our local U.S. attorney’s office in the Eastern District of Virginia—all the way up through