

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.

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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

main Justice and the Attorney General—in order to try to tackle and turn our city's public safety situation around.

Today there are critical issues facing this country—urgent issues facing this country—that deal with the relationship between our communities and law enforcement agencies. If there were ever a time when we would want to have a confirmed Attorney General in office without question marks surrounding when that confirmation will take place, it would be now.

Over the last few months, we have seen a series of controversies that have torn at all of us as we have watched challenges and distrust between communities and law enforcement agencies. In early August, Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old, was shot during a confrontation with an officer in Ferguson, MO. That shooting spurred nationwide protests and concerns against what many in Ferguson and elsewhere viewed as overly aggressive tactics by the police.

A month prior to the death of Michael Brown, Eric Garner died as a result of a police chokehold in July in New York when he was confronted over the selling of untaxed cigarettes. There have been similar instances in Cleveland and Madison. It is not limited to one part of the country. It is not limited to North, South, East, or West. There have been similar instances that have raised serious concerns about the connection between law enforcement and communities.

There have also been horrible atrocities committed against members of the law enforcement community, the deaths of two NYPD officers, Wenjian Liu and Rafael Ramos, who were shot pointblank weeks ago in New York City while they sat in their patrol car. Yesterday, as we heard reported, there were shootings of police officers in Ferguson, MO.

These instances in cities around the country demonstrate a significant level of tension and even distrust between the police and communities they serve, which are often minority communities or communities of color.

I am here to say these tensions do not have to exist. They can be bridged. They can be solved. But it takes a fully functioning Department of Justice with a leader at the helm who has been confirmed to solve these issues.

The Department of Justice has, throughout history and today, played a critical role in investigating cases such as this and some of the situations I mentioned. The DOJ has been able to come in and be involved and provide some calm to situations, provide some level of confidence that there would not be a sugarcoating or an effort to sweep legitimate questions into the closet in the community.

In the State of Virginia, there is currently a DOJ investigation concerning the police shooting death of John Geer, an unarmed Caucasian who was shot on the steps of his residence in August of

2013. Local officials in that county have welcomed the involvement of the Department of Justice because they knew that citizens would have a greater confidence in the outcome if it was being done by someone other than the officials who had been elected locally.

There is a critical need at this point to provide some confidence to communities that have questions about the relationship between their own concerns and the service of law enforcement departments, just as law enforcement departments want to have a way to build bridges with the communities they represent.

Loretta Lynch understands the significance of the Attorney General's role in these situations. She testified that one of her key priorities would be to work to strengthen the bonds between law enforcement personnel, whom she has worked with during her entire career, and the communities they serve which she well understands.

Last week, the DOJ released a report from their investigation into the Ferguson policing practices that laid out a number of significant concerns that, if left unaddressed, will continue to lead to distrust in Ferguson and elsewhere. A strong Justice Department that can help mediate and bring the sides together is a part of the solution.

I raised these issues only to highlight that right now we are at a critical time in the Nation's criminal justice system. A delay of confirming an Attorney General for 4-plus months is never warranted, given the importance of the position. A delay is not warranted in this case, given these strong credentials of Loretta Lynch, but the delay is especially unwelcome, given the urgent need to have leadership at the Department of Justice. They can try to calm any potential situations and build confidence in communities and among law enforcement agencies.

We need our incoming AG to be on the job, taking on these challenges in a manner that will bring different aspects of the community together, to make changes as necessary and to strengthen the equality of our criminal justice system for all.

Of course, beyond the issue of community policing, we face so many other challenges, such as national security and terrorism, and in that respect the Eastern District of New York, which is where Ms. Lynch has served, has had one of the most significant dockets of antiterrorism cases of any jurisdiction in the country. She is an expert in those areas. Cyber security, the very human trafficking issues we have been discussing on the floor today, are issues Ms. Lynch has worked on significantly in her role, protecting voting rights, and so many more.

Ms. Lynch is a no-nonsense, hard-working prosecutor known for her aplomb, her demeanor, her intelligence, and her ability to work with a wide variety of stakeholders. I am absolutely confident Ms. Lynch will approach these issues with the same

focus, fairness, and expertise with which she has approached her work in the past.

I stand today to urge my colleagues to not wait, and to support Loretta Lynch as our next Attorney General. It has been said to the point where it is a cliché, but nevertheless a true one, that justice delayed is justice denied. The refusal to confirm a leader to head the most important law enforcement agency in the United States is a delay of justice that for many seems to be a denial of justice. We can rectify that concern in communities across this country if we act with dispatch to confirm a person who is eminently qualified to hold the Nation's highest law enforcement position.

With that, I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senator from Mississippi has graciously allowed me to speak before him, and I ask unanimous consent that Senator WICKER be recognized immediately upon the conclusion of my comments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASSIDY). Without objection, it is so ordered.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we have been working on the issue of human trafficking on a bipartisan basis for almost a year, and it is usually bipartisan.

I know when we included my amendment on the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, most Senators voted for it. Only 20 current Republican senators voted against that victims act, and the rest voted for it. All the Democrats voted for it.

But on this issue today, the Judiciary Committee reported out a comprehensive bill with strong bipartisan support. We did that last fall. This year we reported out a less comprehensive bill with fewer protections for those at risk of human trafficking, and despite that setback, I agreed to keep working across the aisle to make it stronger, including the crucial prevention piece that was in last year's committee-reported bill.

We have been on this bill for 3 days. I think we can all admit the progress has been thwarted by the inclusion of a divisive provision that would limit the services available to victims of human trafficking.

I wish to propose a way forward. I know all Senators want to work together to end human trafficking. And just as we saw on my bill, the Violence Against Women Act, 78 Senators voted for that act with its provision on trafficking. We want to support a bill that will pass the Senate.

I filed a substitute amendment, Senate Amendment 300, to get us around