

hope they will ask themselves, Isn't this exactly the kind of vote that I came here to the U.S. Senate to cast? I hope they will pray on it, and I hope they will think long and hard before saying no to the abused children and the victims of human trafficking.

That is what this is all about. It is not based on any Hyde amendment language in this legislation. It is based on a determination to render this institution dysfunctional, not because of any principal policy disagreement, because, as I point out, our colleagues on the other side have voted for similar language time and time and time again.

Our colleagues on the other side realize that on November 4, the voters rejected the then-majority and gave this side of the aisle the opportunity to serve in the majority because, frankly, they were sick and tired of the way that Washington operates and the dysfunction that prevailed here for so long. I had higher hopes that after the election we would all learn something from what the voters were telling us on November 4 and thereafter and that we would take advantage of the opportunity to try to work together to find areas where we could agree, in a bipartisan way, to actually move the ball forward and help people who need our help. If we cannot do that on an antihuman trafficking bill, what can we possibly work together on?

This whole phony issue of the Hyde amendment provision in this bill is a joke. It is a sick, sad joke, after time and time again voting for similar provisions in other legislation. As I pointed out, you have 12 Democratic cosponsors of the legislation. Do you think they did not read the legislation? That is ridiculous. Do you think their staff did not tell them what was in the legislation? Do you think before the Judiciary Committee voted unanimously to pass it out people did not know what they were voting on? I do not believe that for a minute. I have too much respect for our colleagues and their professionalism to think they missed it.

Our colleagues have an important choice to make tomorrow morning. I hope they will say yes to these victims of human trafficking and no to the kind of political gamesmanship that gives this institution a bad name.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

SENATE AGENDA AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH IRAN

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I listened to the impassioned speech by my colleague from Texas on the issue of human trafficking. There is no dispute here. This legislation is bipartisan. Democrats and Republicans are prepared to support the bill that has been offered on human trafficking by Republican Senator CORNYN and Democratic Senator KLOBUCHAR. There are amendments pending I think which improve the bill—one by Senator LEAHY about runaway children. In fact, we are so

prepared to do this that we have put together a comprehensive substitute amendment to what has just been described which could be quickly passed on the floor. I do not believe there would be more than a handful of Senators voting no. I certainly would support the passage of the Leahy version.

What is the difference? Senator CORNYN has injected into this important issue a side issue, but not an inconsequential one, on the Hyde amendment.

Henry Hyde was a Congressman from Illinois who served in the House of Representatives with me for a period of time. He authored the Hyde amendment that said no Federal funds shall be used to pay for abortion procedures except in very limited circumstances—rape, incest, and the life of the mother. That has been put in appropriations bills every year since—without question, without challenge.

What Senator CORNYN is trying to do is to make this permanent law, and make it part of a human trafficking bill. I do not doubt this is an important issue. I know it is because I have served in the House and the Senate. But I do question whether we should make every bill that comes along a vehicle or carrier for debating abortion or other really controversial issues.

This question of passing a human trafficking bill to protect the scores—thousands—of victims of human trafficking is one which would pass in a heartbeat in the Senate if the Senator from Texas would remove this controversial section. Senator LEAHY has offered that substitute. I hope we will have an opportunity to vote on it, and vote on it soon.

As to whether this is a reflection of a dysfunctional Congress, well, most of the people back in Illinois and Chicago whom I run into—particularly this weekend—have raised that issue from time to time, and I can see where the argument could be made. We now have a Congress controlled by Republicans—the House and the Senate—and the White House, obviously, with a Democratic President. It is a tough political terrain under the best of circumstances, and we certainly have not been facing the best of circumstances for a long time. There are just a lot of differences between the House and the Senate and the President and the White House, and many of those are manifest.

What was the first bill the Republican majority in the Senate called—No. 1, Senate bill 1? The Keystone Pipeline—a bill to authorize the construction of a pipeline owned by a Canadian company in the United States. That was the highest priority for the Senate Republicans. The President said at the outset: Do not try to preempt my authority as President. I will veto it.

But they insisted. We went through several weeks—2 or 3 weeks—of amendments, and we cooperated on the Democratic side. I think there might

have been 30 or more amendments offered during that period of time. In the end, the bill passed with six or eight Democratic votes, was sent to the President, and was vetoed.

So the first 3 weeks were spent on this politically controversial issue, for which, at the end of the day, the President's veto was sustained, and it was wiped off the slate.

Then we went into a rather bizarre chapter here where the House Republicans insisted that before—before—they would fund the Department of Homeland Security—you know, the folks at the airport, the people who are guarding our borders—before they would fund the Department of Homeland Security to guard us against terrorism, we had to vote on five separate riders relative to the President's immigration Executive orders.

They held up this appropriation—giving partial funding to it week after week after week—until we finally said: Enough is enough. Fund this agency that keeps us safe. Stop playing political games with this issue. It went back and forth and back and forth. Another 3 weeks were wasted on this issue before finally—finally—on a bipartisan basis we passed this measure funding the Department of Homeland Security and said to the House of Representatives: Please, stop putting extraneous issues on important matters like funding our government.

I thought perhaps we turned the corner and moved in a more positive way, but we are mired now over this one, small provision in this bill which Senator CORNYN could remove in a heartbeat.

Then last week came a blockbuster issue. I did not realize a week ago today that still a week later I would be going on Chicago television being questioned about a letter signed by 47 Republican Senators which was sent to the Ayatollah of Iran, a letter sent by 47 Republican Senators to the Ayatollah of Iran telling him and his government not to negotiate with the President of the United States in an effort to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The author of this letter, Senator COTTON of Arkansas, and those who signed it, went to great lengths describing how they would, in fact, have the last word on anything negotiated by this President and that they planned on being around for a long, long time, urging the Ayatollah to not enter into negotiations with the President of the United States of America.

There is no historic precedent for what just occurred—none. We have never had 47 Senators of any party send a letter to a head of state and say: Stop negotiating with the United States of America. And they did it. The press reaction across the United States has been overwhelmingly negative to this action that was taken by these 47 Senators. I could go through the long list here of what newspapers across America have said about that letter.

The Detroit Free Press said: “A blot on the 114th U.S. Senate.”

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: “The senators who signed the letter should be ashamed.”

The Salt Lake Tribune: “Cringe-worthy buffoonery on the global stage” is how they described that letter.

The Courier-Journal in Louisville, KY, asked the question: “Has Congress gone crazy?” when they reflected on this letter. The Courier-Journal went on to call those who signed it: “Senate Saboteurs.” Those are their words, not mine.

The Salt Lake Tribune said: “. . . the foolish, dangerous and arguably felonious attempt by the Obama Derangement Caucus of the Senate. . . .”

The Kansas City Star said: “Was Iran letter traitorous or just treacherous for GOP [Senators]. . . .”

The Los Angeles Times called it “insulting.” They said: “The Republican senators’ meddling in that responsibility is outrageous.”

It goes on and on. I won’t read them all. It doesn’t get any better. It gets worse. And to think that 47 Republican Senators would try to preempt any President of the United States.

Today in Geneva, Switzerland, former Senator and current Secretary of State John Kerry sits down at a negotiating table across from Iran. On our side of the table are major allies trying to stop the development of a nuclear weapon in Iran. They will struggle. Maybe they will never reach an agreement. But what the 47 Senators said in a letter to the Ayatollah of Iran will not help.

What is the alternative? If these negotiations fail, the alternative is Iran develops a nuclear weapon and endangers not only Israel but the Middle East and far beyond, and triggers an arms race in the Middle East for nuclear weapons. That is an outrageous, unacceptable outcome. Or, military action. Military action by Israel, perhaps, as Prime Minister Netanyahu suggested 2 weeks ago; military action by the United States. Is it worth our time to be negotiating to try to find a peaceful resolution, to try to find a way for Iran to stop developing nuclear weapons with verifiable inspections? We won’t take them at their word. There have to be inspections. Or is it better, as these 47 Republican Senators insisted, to walk away from the table? I think it is far better to continue these negotiations. I don’t know if they will end up with a good agreement, but don’t we owe it to our President, our Secretary of State, our government, our country, to at least see these negotiations through and then to read the agreement before 47 Senators send a letter condemning it and rejecting it? It was a sad day. But now let’s turn the corner.

The first thing we should do this week—the absolute first thing we should do—is approve the President’s nominee to be Attorney General. Loretta Lynch appeared before our Judi-

cary Committee. Senator HATCH was there, and I think he may even concede what I am about to say: No one laid a glove on this magnificent lady—a prosecutor with a spotless record; an African American with a life story about witnessing the civil rights movement as it unfolded in this country in the 1960s; an extraordinarily good person—good family, good background, impeccable credentials. There wasn’t a single thing said about her that would stop anyone voting for her.

Now her nomination has been sitting for 128 days since it was announced. They are trying to set a record on the Republican side: No nominee for Attorney General has languished that long in the last 30 years. If they have a complaint about this lady, let them say so. Their complaint: She was chosen by President Barack Obama. That is not good enough.

This week, let us rise above the politics which have dominated the Senate since this session began. Let us do something constructive—approve this Attorney General, take this offensive section out of this bill, and move it for passage. We can get it done in a matter of hours.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, today we will again resume consideration of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. This is an important bill to me. I have been working on it for many years. Without a doubt, this legislation is incredibly important.

Right now in this country there are thousands of human beings—mainly young people—living as slaves. Women and children are stolen from their homes, stripped of their God-given rights, and robbed of their human dignity. These individuals live among us. They live in our neighborhoods and in our suburbs, our biggest cities and our smallest towns. They live in a world of silence, fear, hopelessness, and unspeakable suffering.

The State Department estimates that up to 17,500 individuals are trafficked to the United States every year. The majority of these are women and children. Some of them are forced into a life of unpaid servitude, many others into sex work. Worldwide, the International Labor Organization estimates that 4.5 million people are currently enslaved through sex trafficking. These numbers are staggering, but they only illustrate the scope of the problem. The suffering of each individual victim should not be lost in a sea of statistics. For victims of human trafficking, the surreal horror of their lives bears testimony to the gravity of the crime.

A number of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have worked tirelessly to update our legal framework for fighting this scourge. I wish to

commend them for their efforts, especially the senior Senator from Texas, the senior Senator from Minnesota, and the chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Their efforts represent exactly the sort of work that should be the mission of this body: working across the aisle to produce workable solutions to the most pressing problems facing our Nation.

The majority leader also merits praise for his decision to take up this bill and his unwavering support for it. Far too often, his predecessor focused the Senate’s time and efforts on taking partisan messaging votes and abusing the rules to score political points. By prioritizing the consideration of important bipartisan legislation such as this—and by restoring this body’s traditions of fulsome debate, an open amendment process, and regular order through the committee system—our new majority is putting the Senate back to work for the American people. While the sailing has not always been totally smooth—it rarely is—the progress we have seen in restoring this institution to its proper role as a productive legislative body is both real and meaningful.

Given the progress we have made thus far, the logjam that is currently impeding our progress on this important legislation is extremely disappointing. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have claimed that we somehow supposedly snuck a controversial abortion provision into an otherwise uncontroversial bill.

This claim is unequivocally ridiculous. First, the language in question was by no means snuck into the bill. It was in the bill when it was introduced at the beginning of this Congress. It was in the bill when those of us on the Judiciary Committee took part in an extensive markup of the bill. It was in the bill when it passed unanimously out of committee. It was in the bill when we undertook its consideration here on the floor. In fact, there were Democratic cosponsors of this bill.

Moreover, not only was this language in the bill from the beginning, but it has also been the law of the land for nearly four decades. Democrats in this body have supported countless other bills with similar language, including even ObamaCare.

Abortion is obviously a divisive and sensitive issue. While I am strongly pro-life, I recognize that many of my friends passionately disagree with me on this issue. As Members of this institution, it is incumbent upon us to respect the sincere beliefs of our colleagues with whom we disagree and to work toward responsible governing arrangements.

The Hyde amendment represents such a sensible and appropriate arrangement. It is predicated on the commonsense notion that while we may vigorously disagree on whether life should be protected before birth, we can broadly agree that taxpayer money should not be used—should not be