

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-

ciary 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

used—to fund a procedure that many Americans—in fact a majority, according to a number of polls—consider to be murder.

The responsible way for each of us to approach this bill, regardless of our view on abortion, is to embrace this long-standing, commonsense compromise on abortion funding and focus on passing the underlying measure—a bill that is so critical to our efforts to fight human trafficking and help alleviate the suffering of victims.

To hold up the passage of this bill to pick a fight over the Hyde amendment represents an unambiguous dereliction of Senators' individual duties to responsibly legislate.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have done. They are now threatening a filibuster unless we agree to their extreme pro-abortion position on this issue. There ought to be six of them who will stand up and vote with us and get this bill passed.

In response, the majority leader offered an eminently reasonable compromise—an up-or-down vote on an amendment to strip out the language to which they are suddenly objecting. But the minority leader objected, demanding a guarantee that the provision be removed. By doing so, the minority leader is once again resorting to outrageous “my way or the highway” tactics that are the antithesis of how the Senate should work. It is a move out of the same playbook that he used to give us a calendar full of messaging votes last year meant to produce political theater rather than meaningful legislation.

This ploy plainly demonstrates the desire of the minority leadership to muck up the majority's efforts to exercise reliable leadership, no matter the cost to the victims of human trafficking. By resorting to this sort of obstruction, they have demonstrated how desperately they want to derail our efforts to legislate responsibly and instead resort to their tired and discredited war-on-women rhetoric to win cheap political points.

Let me repeat a point I have repeatedly made about this impasse—words that the minority leader has tried to manipulate to support his shameful gambit. For all of my colleagues who are tempted by this irresponsible strategy: It would be pathetic to hold up this bill. This bill is absolutely critical to our families and our children.

I cannot believe the Senate has become so political that my colleagues would raise this issue—this tangential, long-settled issue at this time—after the same transparently clear language passed unanimously out of the Judiciary Committee.

For my colleagues to hold up this bill in an effort to impose their extreme policy, to overturn the law of the land that has long enjoyed bipartisan support, to pick a false fight over abortion, or to try to embarrass the majority is itself embarrassing.

I urge my colleagues in the minority in the strongest possible terms to reconsider their position and allow the Senate, once again, to do the people's business.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### A NUCLEAR IRAN

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I rise to discuss what many believe is the most dangerous threat to our national security, and that is a nuclear Iran.

Over the past few weeks, there have been a lot of discussions about the Obama administration's ongoing negotiations with Iran and what the role of Congress should be. I believe the debate this past week in Congress over how to best address this issue has distracted us from what I believe are the two key objectives in our effort to prevent Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability. First, Iran must be prevented from getting the bomb, and second, we in the Senate must decide the best way to guarantee that result.

For the past 10 years, I have been working hard to find the most acceptable and best way to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons capability. Note that word “capability.”

For me, it has long been not enough to just announce that we must not allow Iran to get a nuclear weapon. I am determined that Iran must not get the technical capability to manufacture such a weapon because a nuclear weapons-capable Iran is as dangerous as a nuclear-armed Iran because it throws up a cloud of ambiguity about its formal intentions.

There are many in the policy communities who find some mistaken sense of comfort from the intelligence agencies' current view that Iran has not yet made a formal decision to develop a nuclear weapon. This is a delusion. Iran's industrial-strength uranium enrichment enterprise has gone from 600 centrifuges 6 years ago when the international community first expressed alarm to 19,000 today. We know the Ayatollah is on a quest for 190,000 centrifuges as soon as international constraints are removed.

Let's state the obvious: The Iranian pursuit of uranium enrichment is not being created to manufacture medical isotopes and reactor fuel for producing electricity; its purpose is to produce nuclear bombs.

Throughout my many years of involvement on this issue—as cochair of the task force at the Bipartisan Policy Center along with former Senator Chuck Robb and a distinguished panel of experts and in the last 4 years here

in the Senate—I have called for using the full range of tools to prevent Iran from reaching its nuclear goal. These include negotiations coupled with ever-increasing sanctions pressure and a credible threat of the use of military force if the negotiations and sanctions fail to lead to Iran's commitment to cease its pursuit of nuclear weapons capability. This continues to be my view.

I do believe in diplomacy. I would very much like to see effective negotiations take place, led by insightful diplomats, focused on the right results. I would like to see that lead to a settlement that brings security and confidence. But we have every reason to fear this is not now happening.

I don't want to destroy the negotiations track, but I do want to refocus it with the firm backing it requires to achieve the goal we need to reach. I don't want to demand everything from the Iranians, but I do want to require enough to guarantee they give up on their nuclear weapons ambitions. I don't want to torpedo the administration's diplomatic efforts, but I do want to require that Congress have the final say on whether the results of negotiations are acceptable and achieve the goals of preventing Iran's nuclear weapons capability.

For me and I trust for the Senate, this is our most important task of the moment—to force the President to accept a congressional role. He has said repeatedly that he will deny us that role when it comes to approving any agreement. We must not let that happen.

The reason I did not sign the open letter to Iran is not because I disagreed with the goals of the letter. All Senate Republicans and, I believe, many Senate Democrats, are in agreement on the overall objective of avoiding a bad deal with Iran. But the strategy we need to accomplish this essential goal is now in question, and we are divided now in a way that makes this goal harder to achieve.

There are two bills pending that would require the President to present any Iran deal to us for review and action, and this is the course I believe we should take. One, which I cosponsored, has been introduced by both Senators KIRK and MENENDEZ—a bipartisan effort. The other, coauthored by Senators CORKER and MENENDEZ—also bipartisan—I also support. The latter bill, which would require Congress to approve any deal with Iran, is very close to achieving the support of 67 or more Senators needed to overturn President Obama's promised veto of any legislation on this topic.

Lack of bipartisan consensus at this moment on this issue is likely to lead to a fatally flawed deal that destroys more than a decade of effort to bring Iran to cease its goal of nuclear weapons capability.

We all know now that the Obama administration abandoned the core objectives at the very outset, even before these talks began. Four U.N. Security