

A nuclear-armed Iran, an Iran that is nuclear weapons capable—whether that is in 6 months or 12 months or monitored or unmonitored—is a major threat, in my view, to the United States. It is a major threat to our allies in the region. Lifting these sanctions only empowers Iran to have more influence in the region. The sanctions did bring Iran to the negotiating table, but they have been given a lot of breathing room since these negotiations started a couple of years ago. We wouldn't be negotiating, I don't think, if the sanctions hadn't been working.

With what has happened to oil prices, those sanctions would have had a more dramatic effect on the economy of a country in which we have every reason to believe the population is inclined to be very friendly toward the United States. They are educated, they are capable, and they have long-term ties with many of their family members in this country. But, of course, the population is not in control of the country; the country is controlled by a small group who has only one view of how the world can work, and, frankly, that small group appears to have only one view of what they think about the United States of America. If you listen to the comments the Supreme Leader, the religious leader, makes over and over again, that view is dependably negative about our country and our people and our system of government and our ability to live side by side with each other. So we should be concerned about that.

The agreement would allow them to continue to enrich uranium. It would allow them to retain centrifuges, which we said, by the way, we wouldn't do. That was a point we wouldn't negotiate away. It would allow them to continue to have thousands of centrifuges—something we also said we wouldn't allow them to do. It would allow them to continue developing new and better and more sophisticated ways to enrich uranium, to weaponize, to have the ability to create a weapon.

Frankly, it is not even clear what agreement has been agreed to. To listen to our description of the agreement is a very different description of the framework. There is no agreement, everybody agrees to that, but there is supposedly a framework.

This framework would build two very different houses. If we listen to their description of the agreement and we listen to our description of the agreement, we are looking at very different things.

This week, for example, the Supreme Leader saw this very differently than the President—the so-called deal—with respect to when the sanctions would be removed and what would be happening.

President Obama and Secretary Kerry have put a tremendous amount of effort into reaching an agreement—in fact, such amount of effort that it has been clear from the very start of the negotiations who wanted an agreement the most. What hasn't been clear

and what isn't clear to me is why we are so eager to just check the box and move on here, and assume that sometime in the next few years Iran will become a friendlier state and will not want to head in a bad direction. Not only does it head Iran in a nuclear-weapons direction, but it heads many other people in the neighborhood in the direction of wondering if they have this capacity, why wouldn't we want to have this capacity?

Most Americans don't believe Iran will stick to a deal. Frankly, I have great questions about that myself.

Whether the President likes it or not, this is an international agreement with wide-ranging consequences. The Congress and the American people have a role to play here. The Foreign Relations Committee has made a proposal about what that role should be. But it seems to me that proposal is still a long way away from the constitutional protection that should be involved when we reach an agreement of this kind, or when we negotiate a treaty.

A number of us sent a letter a few weeks ago which got a lot of attention. I thought the reaction to that letter was pretty interesting.

The immediate reaction from the Secretary of State was: Well, this isn't a treaty, it is just an agreement. The Senate doesn't have to approve an agreement. The President would be bound by it, and it would be such a good agreement—according to the Secretary of State—that the next President would want to be bound by it as well.

This is a pretty significant moment to decide that we may or may not be bound by what is decided.

The Iranian Foreign Minister then was able to give us some sense of his understanding. I think the phrase he said the next day was: We know international law is what really matters here, not the law of any given country.

I have been all over my State, as many of us have, in the last couple of weeks. I don't think there is any courthouse, any coffee shop, or any gathering of people in Missouri where they would say: Well, really, international law is what we care about. We don't care about what the Constitution says when we are dealing with other countries.

Then 72 hours after that letter was sent, the President's Chief of Staff said: Really, the President would probably want to take this to the U.N., but he probably wouldn't want to take it to the U.S. Senate.

We will see how this debate goes on the proposal that the Foreign Affairs Committee is making, but it clearly does not bode in the direction of a treaty approved by two-thirds of the Members of the U.S. Senate. In my view, we are still a long way from a final agreement.

There seems to be a lot of disagreement as to what the framework means. But as we move toward that final agreement, our number one priority

should be to do everything possible to prohibit Iran—whose influence in the world and the region is already disproportionate—from having the capacity to ever have a nuclear weapon. I hope our negotiators continue to keep that in mind, and I hope there is not nearly as much disagreement about the final agreement as there is about what the framework itself says.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

THE BUDGET

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, later today, maybe as early as 11 o'clock or so, we are going to begin a discussion of the budget. As we know, the budget is a set of national priorities. A budget has to do with our vision of where America is and where America should be. We are now in the process of moving the budget to a conference committee between the House and the Senate.

When I think about a budget, I think about a document designed to address the problems facing our country. In that regard, I find the Republican budget that will likely pass to be totally inadequate, and a budget whose priorities are way, way out of place with where the American people are.

When we talk about the needs of America, the most significant need and the most significant economic problem we face is that for 40 years the American middle class has been in decline. Today we have over 40 million Americans living in poverty, almost more than at any time in the modern history of America. Our real unemployment is not 5½ percent; real unemployment is 11 percent. And despite the modest gains of the Affordable Care Act, we still have 35 million Americans who have no health insurance.

While millions of Americans work today longer hours for lower wages than used to be the case, despite a significant increase in productivity, what we are seeing as a nation is an obscene level of income and wealth inequality. That reality speaks to the fact that since the Wall Street crash of 2008, about 99 percent of all new income today is going to the top 1 percent. I know people find that amazing, but it is true. Which means that no matter what the GDP may be—2 percent, 5 percent—it doesn't really matter, because virtually all the new income goes to the top 1 percent.

In terms of distribution of wealth, what we are seeing in America today is worse and more unequal than any major country on Earth, and worse in America than at any time since the late 1920s. Today we have the top one-tenth of 1 percent owning more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. Unbelievable—the top one-tenth of 1 percent owning more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. Today we have one family owning more wealth than the bottom 42 percent of the American people—that is, the Walton family of Walmart.

A recent report came out by Forbes magazine which pointed out—and this is almost beyond belief—that the wealthiest 14 people in this country, Bill Gates, Warren Buffett, Koch brothers, others, saw their wealth increase between 2013 and 2015, a 2-year period, by \$157 billion. That is just an increase in their wealth.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I will be back on the floor dealing with the budget as the ranking member, but I am happy to yield the floor at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority whip.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGISLATION

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, for the last several weeks we have been trying to get unstuck on an important piece of legislation that would combat modern-day slavery.

At a time, I think most people were unaware of this phenomenon of sex trafficking primarily of teenaged girls between the ages of 12 and 14. I think the country has become much more aware about this scourge, this dark side to our culture and our society, and much more interested in trying to figure out what we can do to address it.

At a time when we are really beginning to see some true bipartisan cooperation and progress here in the Senate—and I say that because of things like the budget we passed last night, which was a very important piece of legislation we passed to reform Medicare, particularly to improve access for our seniors to Medicare services performed by doctors and hospitals by making sure they had a predictable and sustainable reimbursement rate, and what happened yesterday in the Foreign Relations Committee, where we had a unanimous vote on Congress's prerogative to represent our constituents on having a voice on the very important negotiations taking place between Tehran and the United States and our allies on Iran's aspirations for nuclear weapon.

Then I think about other things that are happening that are encouraging here, after a long period of stagnation and dysfunction over the last 2 years. I think we are on the cusp of a breakthrough on trade. Why in the world wouldn't we want to be open to markets when basically 80 percent of the purchasing power of the world and 95 percent of the world's population lies outside of our shores? Why wouldn't we want to open those markets to our farmers and ranchers and our manufacturers—people who grow things and who make things—and wouldn't that be great for our economy and job creation?

So imagine my surprise when after these past few weeks we have been stuck on something that has enjoyed such broad bipartisan support as com-

bating human trafficking. Senator after Senator has come to the floor and talked about this and why we ought to act to do something about it.

Just to refresh everyone's memory, what we are trying to do is pass the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. What it would do is create a victims compensation fund, in essence, from the fines and the penalties assessed against people who are engaging in child pornography and other sex-related crimes. In other words, it would address the demand side, and take the money from fines and penalties assessed against the demand side and use that to help the victims—to help them be rescued, and to help them heal and get on with their lives.

This legislation has enjoyed broad support outside of these Chambers. More than 200 different organizations—law enforcement organizations, victims rights organizations, faith-based groups, people who want to lend a helping hand to provide beds and a secure place to stay while people heal. Unfortunately, there is just not enough money. There is a huge need across America for the resources this legislation would provide. We estimate, based on historic data, that there could be as much as \$30 million generated from the fines and penalties associated with the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act that would then be available to be granted by the Department of Justice to help these victims.

So imagine my surprise when after Senator after Senator on both sides of the aisle endorsed this legislation—I think at last count we had 30 cosponsors, an almost equal number on the Democratic side as the Republican side. Then this legislation sailed through the Senate Judiciary Committee and got the unanimous vote of all Democrats and all Republicans. Then it came to the floor, and at least initially we bypassed the traditional procedures to bring legislation to the floor because all 100 Senators agreed that this was important enough and significant enough and urgent enough that we needed to act on it quickly.

So imagine my surprise when, all of a sudden, it was brought to my attention that some people objected to a provision in the legislation known as the Hyde amendment, which has been the law of the land for 39 years.

To refresh everybody's memory, in the very polarizing debate over abortion, this is the one consensus item that has been the law of the land for 39 years that Republicans and Democrats have voted for repeatedly. What it says is that no taxpayer dollars can be used to fund abortion except in the case of rape or in the case of the mother's health. Those are basically the exceptions. Do you know what? I cannot imagine that those exceptions would not apply in the vast majority of cases involving human trafficking because tragically they do involve rape, certainly sexual assault of a minor who is incapable by virtue of their tender age,

unable to legally consent, and certainly people who are coerced into this sort of activity who do not want to be.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Hyde amendment itself would provide broad exceptions to provide health care services to the very victims we are talking about, some of our colleagues across the aisle said that what this bill does is it expands the Hyde amendment. The way it does it, they claim, is that it now would apply to the fines and penalties that would be assessed on criminals, primarily child pornographers, consumers, purveyors, and other people guilty of various sexual crimes. They claim that is somehow an expansion of the Hyde provision.

This is getting more and more baffling because actually last night, in an overwhelming vote—I think it was 92 votes in favor of the so-called doc fix and also funding community health centers and an extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program—the very same Hyde-type provision that was contained in the bill we voted on last night is contained in the amendment we are going to vote on tomorrow on the Senate floor. If this provision is good enough for doctors and hospitals, why in the world isn't it good enough for victims of human sex trafficking? I think the answer is obvious: It is and it should be.

In an effort to try to get us unstuck in order to try to catch a wave based on what we are doing generally here in the Senate—finally being productive and making things work—I have tried to take something that virtually all Democrats have voted for previously and to put that in the bill in order to eliminate their cause for concern. I am not going to question at this point whether it is a legitimate complaint. I, frankly, disagree. But let's get on with getting the bill passed and getting something important done.

This morning, I heard a familiar argument that was made by the Democratic leader, Senator REID. The good news is that I have made a change in the legislation that would directly address what the Democratic leader said is their main objection. Here is their objection. I don't agree with it, but here is what it is and here is what I have done to try to address it. Their claim is that the fines and penalties are private dollars, not public dollars, and that attaching the Hyde language to those fines and penalties is somehow an expansion of the Hyde provision.

As I said, I disagree with that, but what I would ask my colleagues to do is look at page 3 of the legislation, lines 3 through 7. What we have done to address their concern is to say that no longer will the fines and penalties associated with this fund be directly appropriated and paid out in grants to the victims of human trafficking. Instead, what page 3 of our amendment says—which we will vote on tomorrow, S. 178—this paragraph is entitled “Transfers.” It says:

In a manner consistent with section 3302(b) of title 31, there shall be transferred to the