Congress would now have the correct judgment to insist that its Members and the Americans each of us represent be considered in this critically important conversation. Passing the bipartisan Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act is key to ensuring that happens, and in the process of doing so, we will ensure that the voices of all Americans are heard with the kind of robust amendment process I mentioned on the floor last week.

In that vein, we appreciate the Democratic leader's comments about an open amendment process where, no matter how a person feels about this bill, they will have an opportunity to offer amendments. I appreciate his supportive comments, and we encourage Senators to come to the floor today and to offer their amendments.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I express my appreciation publicly—I have done so privately—for the good work done by Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN, the chairman and ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee. They have done remarkably good work and exemplary work for us. Getting consensus on anything in the Senate is very hard. In spite of the monumental task they faced, the chair and ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN, were able to do just that with their Iran legislation. These two good Senators have worked very hard to find a middle ground that satisfies both Congress and the administration. I think they have done that.

The Corker-Cardin bill allows Congress to vote on a final agreement. It also provides for immediate reinstitution of the sanctions should Iran breach the terms of the agreement. After weeks of bipartisan negotiations, the Foreign Relations Committee reported the Corker-Cardin legislation with a unanimous 19-to-0 vote.

I, along with many of my Senate Democratic colleagues, support this legislation. In fact, I think all Democrats would support this legislation. Senators CORKER and CARDIN worked very hard to strike a very delicate balance. Now we must protect that delicate balance by working together to avoid major changes that could imperil the success of the bill.

I hope we can move forward with the same spirit of bipartisanship that got us here and bring the bill to a vote as quickly as possible. However, a number of my Republican colleagues stated publicly, in their efforts to be the Republican nominee for President, what they want to do with this bill. I am concerned that they and others want to use this good, bipartisan piece of legislation as a platform for their political ambitions. This bill is too important to be a pawn in anyone's political game. I have told Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN that I will support their efforts to preserve their work.

As we move forward, I am hoping we can all work together in the bipartisan spirit in which this bill was crafted and keep our eyes on the ultimate goal of preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

Having said that, I am very concerned about some statements made by my friend, the vote counter for the Senate Republicans, the senior Senator from Texas. He said in Politico—I am not going to state his full quote but basically enough to get the idea:

> Some of 'em might pass. I think it's going to be an interesting dance. . . . There are some that are interesting, that will be hard to vote against.

This is a bill which was brought to the Senate floor on a bipartisan basis. We should continue on that basis. It shouldn't be up to Democrats to kill these vexatious amendments; we should get some help from our Republican colleagues.

I look forward to this debate. It is important for the country. It is important for the world. I am grateful for the work done by those two good Senators. I just hope it is not maligned, messed up, and denigrated as a result of political posturing.

THE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when I first came to the Senate and when I served in the House, conference committees were an important part of the business we did here in Congress. But in recent years—very recent years—going to conference hasn't been what it used to be.

Going to conference on a piece of legislation used to mean there would be serious discussions and compromises that generally produced a product that could be supported by Members of both parties. It was a real conference. Democrats sat down with Republicans and in a public forum determined what should happen on that bill.

I can remember going to those conferences. They were tough, they were long, and there were a lot of compromises made. But that is what legislation is—the art of compromise. When we finished, we had a product that was supported by both parties.

That is why we used to do appropriations bills like that. Why? As an example, Senator Domenici and I for many years were the chairman and ranking member of a very important subcommittee, energy and water. It was very important, billions and billions of dollars. We did our work as a subcommittee, but then we were able to meet and work these out in conference. That is why we came to the floor. We did the bill in a few hours because everyone had had their input.

Sadly, under a Republican House and a Republican Senate, that is no longer the case. Here is an example: the budget conference resolution. There is all the chest-beating and flexing of muscles in the press. The Republicans have a budget. They worked and worked and got it done. They finished the conference.

The Republican majorities in the House and the Senate don't even bother to show that there is a bipartisan consensus building; they just do it. Any meetings that have been had on this bill with Democrats have been strictly for show.

There is no discussion. There is no public debate. There is nothing done. It is Republicans in the House and Republicans in the Senate meeting together. I would bet that the conferences even between the House and the Senate were done mainly by the two chairs of the committees. Not a word of input on this bill—not a word of input on this bill from Democrats. It is no conference. The party already knows what they want; they are not interested in our ideas.

Forbes magazine—I don't quote Forbes magazine very often for obvious reasons. It is a very conservative news outlet, but listen to what they said, and I quote verbatim:

> This will not be the start of a period of bipartisanship when it comes to budget issues. To the contrary, the budget resolution conference report that will likely be voted on this week will solely become a product of what the Republican majorities in the House and Senate wanted to do. There was little-to-no effort to involve Democrats in the negotiations because the leadership would risk losing GOP votes in both houses by doing so. They also would have risked alienating the GOP base, much of which continues to believe a compromise with congressional Democrats and the Obama administration is the political equivalent of collaborating with the enemy.

How about that; every word of this is true. It is so sad for our country when working across party lines is considered collaborating with the enemy.

I have said here on the floor many times, and I will say it again: When Obama was elected the first time, Republicans gathered here in Washington—a couple of days the meeting took, and it has been written up a lot of times—and they made two conclusions. They came to two conclusions: No. 1, we are not going to have Obama reelected. They failed miserably with that. But on the second thing they have been successful; that is, they would oppose anything and everything President Obama wanted. They have done that now for 6½ years.

What a sad day for our country.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my friend, the senior Senator from South Dakota, be recognized as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

Mr. REID. Prior to recognizing my colleague, would the Chair note the business for the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The Senator from South Dakota.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, on April 2, President Obama announced that a framework had been reached for a nuclear agreement with Iran. If all goes according to plan—which hasn't happened often during these repeatedly prolonged negotiations—it means the White House would finish negotiating an agreement sometime in June. But the question remains as to what type of agreement the negotiations will finally produce.

Any deal with Iran needs to achieve one thing—one thing—and that is to prevent permanently Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. But the framework the President has unveiled seems unlikely to achieve that goal.

Far from eliminating Iran's nuclear capabilities, the framework does not shut down a single nuclear facility in the country. It doesn't destroy a single centrifuge. It doesn't stop research and development on existing centrifuges. It doesn't eliminate Iran's missile development programs. And it allows Iran to keep a substantial part of its existing stockpile of enriched uranium. It is no surprise that Members of both parties are deeply concerned the final agreement will not be effective in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

I don't need to tell anyone why Iran's possessing a nuclear weapon is such a dangerous prospect. First of all, Iran, as we all know, is a state sponsor of terrorism. Practically speaking, that means Iran provides support and funding to organizations that consider the slaughter of innocent civilians to be an acceptable negotiating tactic, which has kept millions of ordinary men, women, and children in the Middle East from living in stability and peace.

Iran's plan for the Middle East includes its stated goal of wiping our ally Israel off the map, which should tell us all we need to know about that country's commitment to peace in the region. Meanwhile, at home, Iran embraces the same violence and oppression it spreads abroad. Iran's Government is hostile to freedom of any kind. Thousands of Iran's citizens have been tortured, imprisoned, and executed for daring to stand up for their human rights. This is not a regime that can be trusted with a nuclear weapon.

In addition to the danger inherent in a regime such as Iran having nuclear weapons at its disposal, Iran's acquiring such a weapon could likely start a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Right now, we are witnessing a quasi-proxy war in Yemen, with Iran supporting the Houthis and a Saudi Arabia-led coalition bombing the Houthis and supporting the ousted government. Imagine this scenario if both major powers had nuclear weapons at their disposal?

There is also the other great danger in Iran's acquiring nuclear weapons—a chance it could give a nuclear weapon to a terrorist organization. Imagine a situation in which a nuclear weapon fell into the hands of such organizations. The consequences of that would be unthinkable.

This week the Senate is considering the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act negotiated by Senators CORKER and CARDIN. The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act would ensure that the American people's concerns about a nuclear deal are heard by providing for congressional review of any agreement the President reaches with Iran.

Specifically, the bill would require the President to submit the agreement to Congress and prevent him from waiving any congressional sanctions on Iran until Congress reviews the deal.

Congress passed sanctions that eventually brought the Iranian economy to its knees and drove the Iranian Government to the negotiating table. The only reason—the only reason—Iran is cooperating at all on a nuclear agreement is because it wants to see those sanctions lifted. This bill would ensure the sanctions could only be lifted after congressional review.

The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act would also make sure any agreement with Iran is verified and enforced. Under the terms of this legislation, every 90 days the President would be required to provide Congress with confirmation that Iran is complying with the agreement.

The bill also includes reporting requirements on Iran's record on human rights and support for terrorism and any ballistic missile testing it is conducting.

I plan to offer an amendment to this legislation to require the Secretary of State to investigate whether the International Atomic Energy Agency, which would be in charge of inspections under any agreement, would have access to military bases if they were deemed to be suspicious sites.

Recent reports have indicated that the Iranian military is hostile to any inspection of military bases. General Hussein Salami, deputy head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, told Iranian media, ''They [the inspectors] will not even be permitted to inspect the most normal military site in their dreams.'' Well, given that attitude, are we really supposed to trust Iran to fully comply with a nuclear agreement?

While I remain concerned about the framework the President has unveiled, one bright spot in this debate has been seeing Democrats and Republicans working together to ensure that any deal with Iran is verifiable, enforceable, and accountable and promotes security and stability in the region and around the globe.

This kind of bipartisanship has been more the norm in the Senate lately. When Republicans were elected last November, we promised we would get Washington working again for American families. That was not a campaign slogan. That was a commitment, and we have been delivering on our promise.

Since Republicans took control of the Senate in January, we have passed 13 bipartisan bills: legislation to approve the Keystone Pipeline, a bill to prevent suicides among veterans, reauthorization of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Program, legislation to give law enforcement new tools to fight human trafficking and provide support for trafficking victims, and the first significant bipartisan reform of Medicare in years.

Even the media is paying attention. On April 26, CBS published an article entitled ''Some Good News Out of Washington, For a Change.'' On April 24, an NPR headline asked: ''Has the Senate Found It's More Fun to be Functional?'' And a USA TODAY headline from April 20 noted: ''New Study Suggests a 'Healthier' Congress.'' It argues that we are getting things done again and working again and functioning here in the Senate.

The best way to solve the challenges facing our Nation is for Democrats and Republicans to come together and to develop solutions. We have been doing that for the past 4 months here in the Senate, and that is what we are doing on this crucial Iran legislation.

A nuclear-armed Iran is a threat to the safety, security, and stability of the globe, and I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1191, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1191) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1140, in the nature of a substitute.

AMENDMENT NO. 1179 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1140

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I call up the Corker-Cardin amendment, which is at the desk.