

tries to divert anything to a covert facility, we will know.

This agreement also sets up a dedicated procurement channel. Any dual-use item Iran wants to purchase from the international community must go through this channel.

The U.S. and its allies have a veto over such purchases. It makes it almost impossible for Iran to import anything of benefit to a nuclear weapons program.

Lastly, Iran must also abide by the Additional Protocol forever. This allows the IAEA to have access to non-nuclear sites in a timely fashion, in as little as 2 hours. The agreement also requires any disputes over access to these non-nuclear sites to be resolved in short order. If not, Iran would be in violation of its commitments and sanctions could quickly snap back.

Critics have complained about the time period our nuclear experts negotiated. But as Secretary Moniz and many others with Ph.D.'s have pointed out, uranium has a half-life of 4.5 billion years. It doesn't disappear like invisible ink. It cannot be cleaned up in a matter of weeks. If Iran cheats, we will know.

President Reagan was correct to negotiate with the Soviets when there were strategic openings and President Obama is doing the same thing with the Iranians. The potential benefits of this deal are too significant, and the costs of not doing so too high, to just walk away.

If we walked away, the international sanctions regime would crumble and Iran would have few if any restrictions on its program. Imposing more sanctions or simply bombing Iran today would create an even greater security risk to the region.

In fact, if we bombed Iran today, it would almost certainly withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and kick out inspectors. As soon as that happens, Iran's nationalistic backlash would almost assure that the regime would build a nuclear bomb. Over the longer term, if Iran were to fail or cheat despite its international commitment, we retain the right to use military force and we would be in a much better position internationally to do so. And accepting this deal does nothing to stop the U.S. and allied efforts from countering Iran's behavior elsewhere in the world. Key sanctions on Iran's support for terrorist groups will remain in place. Our support for regional allies will remain strong, if not stronger. And, critically, an Iran determined to destabilize parts of the Middle East with a nuclear weapon in its arsenal, will no longer be an option.

No doubt this is why some 60 of the most respected names in foreign policy, Democrats and Republicans alike, recently wrote in support of this agreement. Those signing included Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; Secretary of Defense William Perry; Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill; National Security Advisors Zbigniew

Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft; Under Secretaries of State Nicholas Burns and Thomas Pickering; U.S. Ambassadors Ryan Crocker and Stuart Eizenstat; U.S. Senators Tom Daschle, Carl Levin, George Mitchell, Nancy Landon Kassebaum, and many others. We should do the same and support this agreement in the Senate.

I see the Senator from South Dakota is here, and I will wrap up.

Let me conclude. When I sat down to read this agreement—and I don't know how many of my colleagues have—I was struck on the third page with this statement in the agreement with Iran: Iran reaffirms that under no circumstances will Iran ever seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapon. That is quite a statement. It was our goal at this negotiation. Do I believe it? Some, but I have my doubts. That is why we had to have an inspections regime from the Iranian mines right through the production facilities. That is why we had to dramatically cut back on their capacity to build weapons-grade fuel, and that is why this agreement is now—most of the countries believe—moving us in the right direction in Iran.

There are critics. We heard a lot of them here in the Senate. There isn't a single critic who has stepped up with a better idea. They said: Well, let's go back to the sanctions regime. The countries that joined us in that sanctions regime did it to bring Iran to the negotiating table, and it worked. They now have an agreement they believe in and we should believe in too. To think that we are going to renew sanctions or place unilateral sanctions—that to me is not likely to occur if Iran lives up to the terms of this agreement.

I will add the other alternative. We know the cost of war. We know it in human lives, we know it in the casualties that return, and we know it in the cost to the American people. Given a choice between the invasion of Iran or working in a diplomatic fashion toward a negotiation so we can lessen this threat in the world, I think President Obama made the right choice.

I support this administration's decision to go forward with this agreement. I will be adding my vote to the many in the Senate in the hopes that we can see a new day dawning and in the hopes too that like President Nixon and President Reagan and even like other Presidents before us who have sat down to negotiate with our enemies, at the end of the day we will be a safer and stronger nation because of it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

THE HIGHWAY BILL

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I will speak about the Iran nuclear agreement in just a moment. But before I do that, I will briefly talk about the legislation before us on the floor, and that is the reauthorization of the highway

bill, which is something we have to do on a fairly regular basis around here. Every so many years the authority to spend out of the highway trust fund expires, and we can't fund the infrastructure needs that our country has in terms of roads, bridges, construction, maintenance, and all of those things that are so important to our competitive economy.

This week we have an opportunity to do something that hasn't been done around here in a long time, and that is to fund a multiyear highway bill. The reason that is important is because people who rely upon highway funding that comes through the highway trust fund need to be able to make plans. State departments of transportation, those who are involved in the construction, such as contractors, and all the people who are involved and the jobs that are associated with this process need the certainty that comes with a long-term bill.

Today I was told that there have been 33 short-term extensions over the last few years since the last long-term highway bill was passed. I believe, somewhere around the 2005 timeframe. I was part of that. I was a member of the Environment and Public Works Committee at the time. I worked on highway bills as far back as my days in the House of Representatives, when I served on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. This is something that we have to do here on a regular basis if we are going to ensure that we have a competitive infrastructure in this country suitable to moving people and goods in a way that keeps our economy moving forward and growing. That is why, in my view, when we have an opportunity to get a multiyear bill, we shouldn't pass on it.

If we continue to pass 6-month and 1-year extensions, all we are simply doing is kicking the can down the road. I would say that 33 short-term extensions is not a very good way to run a railroad and certainly not a very good way to run a highway program.

I know there are going to be differences. The committee that I chair, the commerce committee, was involved with marking up portions of the highway bill that pertained to highway safety and some railroad provisions and other items that would be included in this bill. We worked on that through the weekend, and I think we addressed many of the concerns that Members on both sides had, and I feel very good about where that part of the bill is. I worked as a member of the Finance Committee and tried to find ways to pay for this.

If we can get a multiyear bill in place that provides the certainty, the predictability, and the reliability that we need in our highway funding process in this country, it would be a very good thing. As we all know, it is incredibly important to economic growth and to jobs. The certainty that comes with a long-term bill is something that we all ought to strive for.

So I hope, notwithstanding the differences that exist in the vote we had earlier, that tomorrow when we take up this legislation again we will get the votes that are necessary to proceed to the bill and begin to move forward with the process in the hopes that we might get something to the House that they might be able to act on and then we can get it to the President's desk. Then, at least for the foreseeable future, we can get this issue dealt with so we don't have to come back and do this every 6 months or every 3 months or whatever those 33 extensions have consisted of over the past few years.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, former President Jimmy Carter was recently asked about President Obama's successes on the world stage. He said in response:

I think they've been minimal. . . . [O]n the world stage, just to be as objective about it as I can, I can't think of many nations in the world where we have a better relationship now than we did when he took over.

He went on to say:

If you look at Russia, if you look at England, if you look at China, if you look at Egypt and so forth—I'm not saying it's his fault—but we have not improved our relationship with individual countries and I would say that the United States influence and prestige and respect in the world is probably lower now than it was six or seven years ago.

That is former President Jimmy Carter describing current President Obama's foreign policies. Unfortunately, that is an accurate assessment of President Obama's rocky history on foreign policy.

Last week's deal with Iran does not look likely to improve the President's record of minimal success on the world stage. Last week the administration announced that the United States—along with five other nations—had reached an agreement with Iran that the administration claims will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. The contents of the agreement, however, were met with skepticism and concern from a number of quarters.

Former Senator and Democratic Presidential candidate Jim Webb said that the deal sends a signal that “we, the United States, are accepting the eventuality that they will acquire a nuclear weapon.”

The senior Senator from New Jersey said, “The bottom line is: The deal doesn't end Iran's nuclear program—it preserves it.”

The Washington Post noted that Tehran “fought for, and won, some troubling compromises” on inspections, especially considering Iran's record of violations. The Post also pointed out what many Republicans have noted—that “Mr. Obama settled for terms far short of those he originally aimed for.”

Israel, the only functioning democracy in the Middle East, called this

deal a “historic mistake,” and neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia expressed concern that this agreement may actually increase the threat Iran poses to their security.

Then, of course, there was Iran's reaction. Iran's President hailed the agreement, while Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei praised negotiators.

Let anyone think this marked a softening of Iran's attitude toward the United States, however, Khamenei emphasized that “our policy toward the arrogant U.S. government won't change at all.” Echoing the chants coming from the people, he stated, “You heard ‘Death to Israel,’ ‘Death to the U.S.’ . . . we ask Almighty God to accept these prayers by the people of Iran.”

These are not the words of a reliable partner. These are the words of the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism.

There is good reason to be concerned about this agreement. This deal not only fails to provide reassurance that Iran will not acquire a nuclear weapon, it may actually enhance Iran's chances of acquiring a bomb.

For starters, this deal fails to include any adequate method of verifying that Iran is complying with the agreement. Time and time again, Iran has made it clear that it cannot be trusted to comply with any deal. Iran has a history of building nuclear facilities in secret. The enrichment facility at Fordow, which will remain in place as part of this agreement, is just one example of an enrichment facility that was originally hidden from the outside world. The fact that Iran cannot be relied on to follow the outlines of an agreement means that verification—specifically, “anytime, anywhere” inspections of suspicious sites—is an essential part of any credible deal. But the final deal that emerged doesn't come close to ensuring anytime, anywhere inspections. It does provide for 24/7 inspections of Iran's currently known nuclear sites, but it forces inspectors to request access to any other site they deem suspicious. Iran can refuse requests, and appealing those refusals could take close to a month, leaving the Iranians plenty of time to hide evidence of suspicious activity.

Forcing Iran to dismantle its nuclear infrastructure and halt uranium enrichment would have provided some assurance that Iran's quest for a bomb had been halted. But the nuclear agreement the administration helped reach doesn't require Iran to dismantle any of its nuclear infrastructure. The agreement does require Iran to take some of its centrifuges offline, but they do not have to be removed or dismantled—simply put into storage.

The agreement also explicitly allows Iran to continue enriching uranium. While it prohibits Iran from enriching uranium to the level required for a nuclear weapon, the restriction is of limited value considering that Iran retains

the equipment and production capacity it would need to build a bomb.

I haven't even mentioned other areas of concern with this agreement.

In exchange for Iran's agreeing to—supposedly—stop its effort to acquire a nuclear weapon, billions of dollars in Iranian assets will be unfrozen and the sanctions that have crippled the Iranian economy will be lifted. Right now, despite its struggling economy, Iran manages to provide funding and other support to Syria's oppressive government, to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Gaza Strip, to Houthi rebels in Yemen, and to militias in Iraq. It is not hard to imagine what it will do with the billions of dollars it will gain access to under this agreement.

The deal negotiators reached with Iran will also expand Iranian access to conventional weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are generally used as a vehicle for the delivery of nuclear weapons. While the deal does temporarily extend restrictions on the import of these weapons, it does so for just 5 years in the case of conventional weapons and for just 8 years in the case of ballistic missiles. That means that in as few as 8 years, Iran will be able to purchase a ballistic missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

Obviously, there is a lot to be concerned about when it comes to this deal, and after the agreement was released last week, both Democrats and Republicans expressed the desire to examine those provisions and hear from members of the administration. So what did the President do? He declared that the agreement was a triumph of diplomacy and took immediate action to send the bill to the United Nations for a vote. That is right. The President didn't wait to hear from Members of Congress or the American people; he just went ahead and asked the United Nations for its approval. In other words, the President unilaterally committed the United States to supporting the deal without knowing whether the United States Congress or the American people are in favor of the agreement. This is especially disappointing considering that just 2½ months ago, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate voted overwhelmingly to require that the President submit full details of any nuclear agreement to Congress before it could be agreed to. The President signed this legislation—the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act—into law on May 22, but apparently he feels free to ignore the spirit, if not the letter, of the act.

When word emerged that the President was going to send a resolution directly to the U.N. without waiting for the American people or Congress to weigh in, both Democrats and Republicans asked the President to hold off. Democrats who requested that the President wait to submit the agreement included the leading Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who characterized the White