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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, January 30, 2015, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2015

SCHEDULE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today we will have two stacks of votes culminating in passage of S. 1, the Keystone bill. Senators should be expected to stay close to the floor as these will be 10-minute votes. We will have five or six votes at 11 a.m. and four or five votes kicking off at 2:30 p.m.

The Senate will be in session tomorrow morning but no votes are expected. The first vote of next week will be at 5:30 p.m. on Monday.

KEYSTONE ENERGY DEBATE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in the past few weeks we had a whirlwind, but the Keystone jobs debate has been important for the Senate and for our country. We took about one dozen more rollcall votes on amendments yesterday. That means the Senate has now taken more than twice as many of these amendment votes on this bill alone than were offered or allowed all of last year.

We obviously had a busy afternoon yesterday, and we will continue it again today. It has been an instructive exercise, too, because we learned about more than just the lesser prairie-chicken. We also discovered something about this body. We learned that open floor debates and open amendment processes require hard work, they require dedicated Members, and they require constructive cooperation from across the aisle.

I thanked Senators HOEVEN and MURKOWSKI for their work before. I thank them again now. I note the efforts,

once again, of colleagues such as Senator CANTWELL.

The debate over these American jobs has shown that with bipartisan co-operation, it is possible to get Washington functioning again. This debate is also proving the new Congress is ready to work and work hard for the middle class, even in the teeth of opposition from powerful special interests.

Let's notch one more win for the middle class by passing this important infrastructure project. Constructing Keystone would pump literally billions into our economy. It would support thousands of good American jobs. As the President's own State Department has indicated, it would do this with minimal environmental impact.

The Keystone infrastructure project has been studied endlessly—endlessly—from almost every possible angle. The same general conclusion keeps becoming clear, build it. We need to build it.

Let's make some progress for the American people by voting to pass the Keystone jobs and infrastructure bill.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The acting minority leader is recognized.

A CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me say at the outset while the majority leader is still on the floor, it is true we have had a constructive relationship during the last several weeks as we have considered this bill. Although

- This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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those of us on the Democratic side don't want to get comfortable in our minority status, we are determined to make sure it is, as described, a constructive relationship.

To that end we have not used some of the tactics we have seen in past years. We have not insisted on burning 30 hours and 60 hours at a time, causing people who subscribe to C-SPAN to call their cable operators and say why am I paying for the Senate; nothing is happening. Instead, we have tried to use that time to put together packages, bipartisan packages of amendments and we have been successful.

I hope we can continue with that. As long as there is mutual respect, good faith, and cooperation, I look forward to in my role—as soon as Senator REID returns—as the whip on the Democratic side to do our best to continue this constructive relationship.

I have said it before and I will say it again. What we have seen over the last several weeks is the Senate I remember, the Senate I was elected to, the Senate where there was active debate, deliberation, amendments. For some Members, it is a new experience. I hope in our role as the minority we can work with the Senators with a feeling of mutual respect to achieve at least debate on the floor, if not some significant legislation.

Mr. McCONNELL. If the Senator would yield.

Mr. DURBIN. I would be happy to yield.

Mr. McCONNELL. I thank the Senator from Illinois for his comments. I agree, this has been good for the Senate, good for both parties, and good for America. We are getting back to normal, and I thank the Senator for his comments and for his cooperation.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the majority leader.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 29 days from today, on February 27, the Department of Homeland Security of the United States of America will run out of money. The only way to prevent this is for Congress to pass legislation to fund this Department. We should not even be debating whether we are going to fund the Department that protects America from terrorism threats, but that is fact.

Republicans in the House, when we did the budget bill, insisted that we would fund the entire Federal Government through September 30, except for the Department of Homeland Security. The reason they withheld regular budget funding for that Department was they wanted to make a political point. They are angered at President Obama for stepping forward with Executive orders on the issue of immigration, even though the same House Republicans have refused for over a year and a half to call the comprehensive immigration reform bill that passed this Senate on

a bipartisan basis and refused for over a year and a half to address any aspect of immigration. In a fit of pique they said: We are so angry President Obama is going to do something by way of Executive order, we are going to withhold regular funding from the Department that protects America from terrorism.

What were they thinking? Look at the world we live in: a world of Charlie Hebdo, a world of beheading of Japanese journalists, a world that is in danger of terrorist threat, and the United States has felt that danger. We will never forget what happened on 9/11. After that experience, we made the Department of Homeland Security a critical, viable part of America's defense against terrorism.

The Republicans have said: No, before we fund this agency, we have to have five riders on the appropriations bill that attack President Obama. Then we might consider giving regular funding to this Department. One aspect of those riders is particularly troubling.

It was 14 years ago that I introduced the DREAM Act, a simple concept. Children brought to the United States by their parents who are undocumented should be given a chance—simple. Children who were brought to the United States as infants and toddlers and had no voice in the decision of their family and end up here undocumented should be given a chance—a chance to complete school, to be good citizens, to go on to college, to serve in the military, and then a path to legal status. It is not a radical idea.

At times many Republicans have openly supported the DREAM Act. When we couldn't pass it I appealed to the President, at least protect these DREAMers from being deported. These kids did nothing wrong. They were brought here by their parents. Why hold these children accountable? The President agreed and 2½ years ago created DACA.

DACA is an Executive order that says to these young people who would otherwise qualify for the DREAM Act, you come forward, you identify yourself, you let us make sure you have no criminal record that would be of worry to anyone, pay your fee, and we will allow you to temporarily stay in the United States as a student or a worker without being deported. It is just that simple.

We estimate 2 million young children are eligible for the DREAM Act—2 million—and 600,000 have already registered under DACA, the President's Executive order.

What did the House Republicans say? They said, before we will fund the Department of Homeland Security protecting America against terrorism, you have to deport the DREAMers, refuse to renew the DACA protection for 600,000 who have signed up, and refuse to allow any new young person to sign up for this protection.

I have come to the floor for a long period of time and I will continue to because I want people to know what the

DREAM Act means. It is something, I guess, of significance to stand and give a speech, but it truly doesn't touch people until they hear actual stories.

The story I wish to tell today is of a young woman whom I know. I was just with her in Chicago. Her name is Karen Villagomez. She was brought to the United States at the age of 2. Incidentally, that was the same age my mother was brought to the United States as an immigrant.

Karen was brought here at the age of 2 from Mexico. She grew up in Chicago. She was an outstanding student, and she always had an interest in public service. In May of 2012 she graduated from the University of Rochester in New York with a major in political science. She was not only the first person in her family to graduate from a 4-year college—because Karen Villagomez is undocumented, she didn't receive one penny of government assistance. She made it through college on her own without any help because as an undocumented young woman that was the only chance she had.

Just 1 month after she graduated, President Obama created the DACA Program. After she applied and cleared and received DACA protection from deportation, she found a job as a paralegal in a law firm in Chicago, where she has been working for the last 2 years.

I saw her 1 week ago Friday. She was in Chicago, and she is amazing. She served as an intern in my office. She is one of the brightest, most engaging people one could meet. She looked me in the eye and said: Senator, I am going to law school. I have just been accepted. She is supposed to start this fall. But if the House Republicans have their way, this fall she will find herself being deported from the United States of America.

Think about it. All we have invested in her, all we have put into her life in terms of education, not only K-12 but a college degree now, and the House Republicans would say to Karen Villagomez: Thank you for being part of America, but no thanks, leave. Take whatever skills you have, whatever determination you have to make a difference and take it someplace else. America doesn't need your idealism, the House Republicans say.

I couldn't disagree with them more. If they have their way, Karen would never attend law school. She will never be an attorney. She will be deported back to Mexico, a country she hasn't lived in since she was 2 years old.

Karen got up every morning in the classroom—just as we do on the Senate floor—and pledged allegiance to that flag. That is the only flag she knows. When she sings the national anthem, it is not the national anthem of Mexico, it is the national anthem of the United States of America. Karen wants to be part of the future of this country.

Two weeks ago when she joined me at Erie House in Chicago for a press conference, this is what she said: