



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2015

No. 126

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, August 7, 2015, at 11 a.m.

Senate

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2015

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise, continue to lead our lawmakers like a great shepherd. May they be watchful among the unwatchful and awake among those who sleep. Give them the wisdom to speak and act with such pure minds that joy will follow them like gentle winds.

Lord, guide their consciences so that our Senators may faithfully serve our Nation and uphold Your values and truths. As we near the August break may our lawmakers appreciate that substantive things have been accomplished, but much remains to be done.

Thank You that the illumination of Your wisdom enables us to more clearly see Your truth.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The majority leader is recognized.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, as the administration's agreement with Iran comes under greater scrutiny, there is growing bipartisan concern. It is widespread, and it is well founded. The leading House Democrat on the Foreign Affairs Committee recently said the deal "troubled" him because "it doesn't prevent Iran from having a nuclear weapon, it just postpones it."

Yesterday another House Democrat said the deal lacks "sufficient safeguards" and "could lead to a dangerous regional weapons race." She warned that the agreement would leave the international community with limited options to prevent Iran's nuclear breakout.

These are strong words, and they are from congressional Democrats who are otherwise supportive of the President. It is clear that this deal is making Members of both parties uneasy—and with good reason.

America's role in the world, its commitment to global allies, and the kind of future we will leave our children are all tied up in this issue. That is why I have called for a debate worthy of the importance of the agreement when the Senate takes it up in September.

I hope the President will echo this tone of seriousness in his remarks later today. I hope he will avoid tired, obviously untrue talking points about this being some choice between a bad deal and war. Of course it isn't. He knows it isn't. He himself has said that no deal is better than a bad deal.

There is also no need to insult the man who negotiated this agreement and the man who stood by his side

when he announced it by falsely conflating debates from more than a decade ago with the unique and consequential realities of today.

Now is a time to aim higher. Now is a time to dig deeper. What I am asking is for President Obama to join us in rising to the moment.

Senators and the American people are being asked to weigh the consequences of what it would mean to allow Iran to become a nuclear-threshold state with the power to dominate its neighbors, spread its influence, and threaten our allies. This is a serious decision to make with serious consequences for our country. America deserves a debate worthy of it.

I imagine the many Democrats with serious reservations about this deal feel the very same way. Nearly every Member of both parties voted to have this debate when they passed the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act this spring. Given the widespread bipartisan concern about this deal, it is clear that a serious and proper debate, followed by a vote on the agreement, is now just exactly what our country needs.

CYBER SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, a cyber attack can feel like a very personal attack on your privacy. A criminal with your medical records, your credit cards, and your Social Security number; a stranger with emails from your boss, texts to your friends, and pictures of your kids—it is personally violating, financially crippling, and it

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



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can be just plain creepy. But with effective cyber security legislation, we can help protect America's privacy.

It seems the White House agrees too. We were glad to see such a strong statement of support yesterday for the strong bipartisan and transparent cyber security bill before the Senate. The President's spokesman said "the Senate should take up this bill as soon as possible and pass it." That is what the President's spokesman said just yesterday about the bill that is currently on the floor. It is easy to see why. This bipartisan legislation would help the public and private sectors protect America's most private and personal information by defeating cyber attacks.

It contains important measures to protect "individual privacy and civil liberties," as the top Democrat on the issue put it. It has been scrutinized and supported overwhelmingly—14 to 1—by both parties in the Intelligence Committee.

Our colleagues said they would be happy to consider the bill in a timely fashion—a couple of days "at the most" is what the Democratic leader told us—if allowed to offer some amendments. That seemed reasonable enough to me. That is why I offered a fair proposal yesterday that would have ensured at least 10 relevant amendments to be pending and debated for each party. That is actually more than what Democrats have been asking for. So I think everyone was a little taken aback when they chose to block the proposal anyway.

I am still determined to see if we can find a way forward on this bipartisan bill. Republicans support it, Democrats support it, and President Obama supports it. I am asking colleagues to join me to open debate on it today. With a little cooperation, we can pass a strong bipartisan cyber security bill this week.

TRIBUTE TO RUSS THOMASSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on one final matter, I know my friend from Texas will have some words to say about the man who has been helping him run the whip operation so effectively the last few years, and I know Senator CORNYN won't mind if I share a few thoughts first.

Russ Thomasson is preparing to bid farewell to the Senate after many years in the trenches. He is one of the most approachable and good-humored staffers around here. He is also incredibly effective.

This former intelligence officer always has his ear to the ground. When he takes the pulse of the Senate, it is with uncommon precision.

Russ loves a good nail-biter too. And in a more open, more freewheeling, and, by definition, more unpredictable Senate, you are inevitably going to have a few of those as well. What is important is that with Russ's help, we almost always seem to push through.

Russ has all of the qualities you would look for in a highly successful member of our leadership team—always willing to take on the difficult but necessary tasks, unafraid to offer his candid advice, working each vote until the gavel falls, and defined by loyalty and integrity. This is someone whose judgment I value greatly.

I am glad Russ's son Austin got to see him in action. He has had a front-row seat as a page here in the Senate. We hope Austin will be seeing more of his dad soon, the same with his sister Sasha and Russ's wife Cindy.

Thank you, Russ, for your service to the Senate. You have been an invaluable member of our team, and you will be truly missed.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Iran accord is the result of many years of hard work by lots of people. Congressional committees are conducting hearings to listen to the administration's case and others. For example, this evening at 5 p.m., we will have an all-Senators classified briefing. At that meeting, we will hear from Dr. Moniz, the Secretary of Energy, a man imminently qualified as a scientist—an MIT physics professor who is world famous for his scientific prowess—and Wendy Sherman, one of America's truly great diplomats during the last 20 years.

We have yet to see the language of the legislative response to the accord that has been negotiated. I know that Senator CORKER and Senator CARDIN are working on that, but it is not out yet. It is incumbent on Congress to review this agreement with the thoughtful, level-headed process that an agreement of this magnitude deserves.

Let's hopefully remember that we all agree, and now the world agrees, that a nuclear-armed Iran is unacceptable and a threat to our national security, the safety of Israel, and the stability of the Middle East. Like many Senators, I am continuing to consider this matter. I am looking forward to the briefing tonight. It is altogether appropriate for Senators to consider this deliberately and with the understanding that this is very important. I admire those Senators on both sides who have come to a conclusion on how they feel about this. A number of us have not and are looking for more information to better understand this very important time in the history of the world.

FUNDING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on another matter, unless Congress acts, there will be a government shutdown on October

1. That is a short time away—less than 2 months. Every day that passes we are another day closer to the crisis of an unfunded Federal government.

For months we have been warning Republican leaders that there is a need to find a solution to these budget problems. We have offered to meet with them. We have urged them to negotiate. The answer is always no answer.

The Republican leader knows he must negotiate. Here is what he said yesterday: "Different parties control the Congress from control the White House, and at some point, we'll negotiate the way forward." I am sure that didn't come out exactly the way he wanted, but I think I get the picture. He believes we have two Houses of Congress that are different from the White House. I am quite certain that is what he meant to say.

Regardless, the question remains: Why does the Republican leader continue to decline our invitation to sit down and craft a bipartisan solution and do it now? Why does he continue to tell us no? This should not come as a surprise, however, because Republicans are in the habit of governing by manufactured crisis. We have seen that over the past 7 months.

Their obvious distaste—some say hatred—of government generally is so deep that many take pleasure in closing it. We hear that from the statements that have been made over the last few days. That could explain why they keep fighting to not move forward on negotiations and finding excuses to simply close the government. Lately it has been women's health. They are going to close the government because they don't like the way women are getting their health care.

In the 1990s Republicans shut the government to force cuts in Medicare. In 2013 they shut the government to force repeal of the Affordable Care Act. It is clear that both of those times were total failures.

Earlier this year Republicans came within hours of shutting down the Department of Homeland Security. That is the agency which is tasked with keeping our homeland safe. They came within hours of closing down the whole Department.

There is always a new reason—some grievance from the partisans at FOX News, some complaint from whiners on talk radio, some attack from radicals in the tea party. It makes one wonder: What will be next? Will the Republicans again use shutdown extortion to try to repeal ObamaCare or to attack immigrants or to cut Social Security or to privatize Medicare?

As I just said, there is a new one. They are targeting the health of women in America. Could it be any more obvious that the Republican Party doesn't care about the health of women? That is obvious from the statements that have been made. The legislation before this body says money that goes to this organization which they dislike—other agencies will take