



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2015

No. 128

Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our King, we praise You for providing for our needs. Great is Your faithfulness.

Abide with our lawmakers, enabling them to discover the unshakeable even as they labor during shaken times. In this perishable world, show them what is truly secure and constant. Lord, keep them humble, tolerant, and open-minded, always aware of their limited, fallible knowledge. Remind them that the anvil of Your everlasting truth will wear out the many hammers of skepticism, cynicism, and despair.

Lord, thank You for being the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We pray in Your great 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. BARASSO). The majority leader is recognized.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT RESOLUTION OF DISAPPROVAL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today we will begin consideration of the resolution to disapprove the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action negotiated by China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United King-

dom, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the United States. This resolution seeks to constrain Iran's nuclear weapons program. I will ask all Senators to be present in the Chamber beginning tomorrow afternoon to commence debate on this important issue.

Let me extend my appreciation for the time and research many of our colleagues have given to understanding the details, the strengths, and the weaknesses of this agreement. For many, this has been a very difficult decision. For some, it was made even more difficult by assertions from the administration that the only choice was between this agreement and war. Of course, that was never, never true. All such political statements really say is that the administration lacks the will and the leadership to pursue a stronger agreement, additional sanctions, and policies intended to end Iran's enrichment program if it cannot attain congressional agreement on the President's deal with Iran.

The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act passed the Senate by a vote of 98 to 1 earlier this year. It provided each of us with the opportunity to truly represent our constituents on this important issue. I expect that every Senator who voted for that measure is now entitled to an up-or-down vote—not a filibuster or artificial limits on passage but an important vote—on this resolution.

Along with the Americans we were sent here to represent, countries, businesses, and proliferation networks seeking to expand ties with Iran stand to have a simple question answered. All of the people involved in this around the world deserve to have a simple question answered: Does the Senate disapprove of this deal with Iran? Does the Senate disapprove of this deal with Iran? The Senate should not hide behind procedural obfuscation to shield the President or our individual views.

This debate should not be about a President who will leave office in 16

months; it should be about where our country will be in 16 years.

The Democratic leader said that his party strove to preserve the Corker-Cardin bill and that it was incumbent on Congress to review this agreement with the thoughtful, level-headed process this agreement deserves. I agree that is exactly what is needed right now. I know that is exactly what nearly every Senator in this body voted for. And I call on every Senator to resist attempts to obstruct a final vote and deny the American people and Congress the say they deserve on this extremely important matter.

The facts have already led many of our Democratic colleagues—including the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee in the Senate and the Foreign Affairs Committee in the House, as well as the likely next leader of the Democratic Party in the Senate—to come out in opposition to this agreement. Certainly those were not easy decisions for them. But these Democrats are joined in their skepticism by Americans of every political persuasion who believe this deal will make our country less safe—less safe.

Even those lawmakers who have come out in favor of the President's agreement use terms such as “deeply flawed” to describe it. Let's remember why that is. The American people were led to believe that negotiations with Iran would be about ending its nuclear program, but that is not what the deal before us would do. We know the President's deal with Iran will not end its nuclear program but will instead leave Iran with a threshold nuclear capability recognized as legitimate by the international community—quite the opposite of the original goal. We know the President's deal with Iran will leave it with thousands of centrifuges, an advanced research and development program, and access to billions of dollars, at least some of which the President himself has acknowledged will be used to support terrorism. We know

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



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the President's deal with Iran will allow it to further ballistic missile research and strengthen its economy. In short, by almost any measure, we know Iran will emerge stronger from this deal in nearly every aspect of its national power and better positioned to expand its sphere of influence.

The Iranian nuclear program was never intended to produce nuclear energy for peaceful civilian purposes. That was never what they had in mind. Certainly Iran does not need an underground enrichment facility for those purposes or long-range ballistic missiles. Iran has employed every aspect of national power to defend the regime and the Islamic revolution to include support for terrorism, unconventional warfare, public diplomacy, cyber warfare, suppression of internal dissent, and, of course, support for proxies and terrorist groups.

We already know Iran is undertaking many activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device. As the International Atomic Energy Agency revealed in a November 2011 report, it has attempted to, No. 1, procure nuclear-related equipment and materials through individuals and entities related to the military; No. 2, develop pathways for the production of nuclear material; No. 3, acquire nuclear weapons development information and documentation from a clandestine nuclear supply network; and No. 4, develop an indigenous design of a nuclear weapon, as well as test components. All of that has been done, according to the IAEA.

Moreover, as Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz recently observed:

The final stages of the nuclear talks have coincided with Iran's intensified efforts to expand and entrench its power in neighboring states.

They warned:

Iranian or Iranian client forces are now the pre-eminent military or political element in multiple Arab countries. Unless political restraint is linked to nuclear restraint, an agreement freeing Iran from sanctions risks empowering Iran's hegemonic efforts.

I will have more to say later in the week concerning my opposition to this agreement, and I expect every Senator will wish to explain his or her respective vote. But I would ask every Senator to keep this in mind as well: The President has said that "no deal is better than a bad deal." And while he will be out of office in a few months, the rest of the country and the world will have to deal with the predictable consequences of the President's deal for far longer than the next year and a half.

If lawmakers determine that this deal is indeed a bad one, then they have a duty to vote that way. We can work together to prepare suitable sanctions legislation and other measures required to maintain our capabilities to deal with the threat from Iran, but no matter what, we should conduct a respectful and serious debate that is

consistent with the serious ramifications of this agreement.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

WELCOMING EVERYONE BACK

Mr. REID. Mr. President, first of all, I am very happy to welcome everyone back from our long recess. I am sure everyone worked as hard as I did. I had a week off, and I enjoyed it very much.

I also think it is important to recognize the new class of pages we have. I am always very happy to see these bright young men and women here who will devote the rest of the semester to us. They do so much and get so little recognition for it, so I appreciate all they do for us.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I gave a speech this morning at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and it is, I think, directly how I feel about this. I am glad it got some coverage this morning.

I ask unanimous consent that the full remarks of the speech I made this morning at 10 o'clock be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SENATOR HARRY REID: REMARKS ON IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

When the Senate is gavelled into session a few hours from now, a debate that has ignited passions from Tehran to Tel Aviv, from Beijing to Berlin, and from coast to coast across the United States will take center stage in the world's greatest deliberative body.

The question at hand is no small matter: Is the agreement between Iran and the international community, led by the United States, the best pathway to peace and security for America, Israel and our partners and interests?

I believe the answer is yes. And today I am gratified to say to my fellow Americans, our negotiating partners, and our allies around the world: this agreement will stand. America will uphold its commitment and we will seize this opportunity to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

While the formal debate begins this afternoon, the private negotiations that brought us to this point have been going on for years—and the public's review of the agreement has gone on for months.

During that long period, President Obama and Secretary Kerry were clear in their goals: above all, that the United States will not allow Iran to obtain a nuclear weapon.

The United States also would not sign any agreement that takes Iran at its word or relies on trust Iran has not earned.

And at the most difficult crossroads of this time-consuming and technical negotiation, President Obama and Secretary Kerry made clear that the hard choices belonged to Iran.

Now it's our turn. Now the United States has a choice to make: We can enforce an

agreement that forces Iran to walk away from any nuclear-weapons program, or we can walk away from that agreement and assume responsibility for the consequences.

We can take the strongest step ever toward blocking Iran from getting a nuclear bomb, or we can block this agreement and all but ensure Iran will have the fissile material it would need to make a bomb in a matter of months. But we cannot have it both ways.

Make no mistake: blocking the bomb and blocking this agreement are two distinct choices that lead to very different futures.

I've spent a lot of time talking, listening, and thinking about the various elements of this agreement, and so have my colleagues. I've heard from nuclear scientists, the intelligence community and our military leaders.

I've listened to diplomats and experts.

I've been briefed by Secretary Kerry and Undersecretary Sherman, by Secretaries Lew and Moniz—the brilliant nuclear physicist who knows more than almost anyone of the reality of this threat, the science behind the agreement and the agreement itself.

I've heard ardent supporters and passionate opponents. I've talked with Nevadans from all walks of life. I've spoken with Israel's leaders, including Prime Minister Netanyahu and Ambassador Dermer. And I've read the text of this agreement carefully.

In all my years, I cannot think of another debate with so much expertise, passions and good faith on both sides.

It is clear to me and to the overwhelming majority of my caucus that this agreement gives us the best chance to avoid one of the worst threats in today's world—a nuclear-armed Iran. In fact, I believe this agreement is not just our best chance to avert what we fear most—I fear it is our last best chance to do so.

Before I explain why, let me first acknowledge some of the people who helped us get to this historic moment.

I mentioned President Obama and his Cabinet Secretaries, who achieved a remarkable diplomatic breakthrough.

I also want to acknowledge my colleagues, led by Senator Menendez, who helped set the stage for those negotiations by rallying the Senate and the world behind sanctions that brought Iran to the negotiating table.

I also acknowledge Senators Cardin and Corker for their leadership. The legislation they wrote created the process to review the agreement in the Congress.

I support this agreement—and the United States Senate will support President Obama's veto of any effort to undermine it—for two simple reasons:

First, this agreement will do a tremendous amount of good.

And second, blocking this agreement would lead to a tremendous amount of bad outcomes.

The bottom line is that enforcing this agreement can prevent the things we most dread—but undermining it would permit those very same dreadful consequences.

And those consequences are, in fact, unacceptable.

We all recognize the threat Iran poses to Israel, with powerful weapons and hateful words, with anti-Semitic smears and pledges of the Jewish state's destruction. No one can underestimate this menace. And no one should dismiss how much more dangerous Iran would be in this regard if it were armed with a nuclear bomb.

We also recognize the threat of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps—the threat from Iran's support for Hezbollah and Assad—of Iran's brazen human rights violations toward its own people and the Americans it holds as political prisoners and those who have disappeared. We recognize the danger Iran poses