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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.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 rock, we trust You to guide our Nation. We find consolation in remembering how You have led us in the past.

Lord, our lawmakers need Your wisdom to make decisions that will reflect Your will. They can only guess about the future, but You comprehend the destiny of our world at a glance. The hearts of Kings, Presidents, and potentates are in Your hands, and You choreograph circumstances as You desire. So save us from ourselves by guiding our Senators with the might of Your prevailing providence.

Lord, let Your will be done on Earth as it is done in Heaven.

We pray in Your sovereign 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.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.J. RES. 61

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Thursday, September 10, at 3 p.m., the substitute amendment to H.J. Res. 61 be agreed to; the joint resolution, as amended, be read a third time; and the Senate vote on passage of the joint resolution, as amended.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— H.J. RES. 61

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motions with respect to the McConnell substitute amendment No. 2640 and H.J. Res. 61 be withdrawn; that the pending amendments and the motion to commit, with the exception of the McConnell substitute amendment, be withdrawn; that no other amendments, points of order, or motions be in order to the joint resolution or the McConnell substitute prior to the vote on the McConnell substitute amendment; that at 3:45 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to vote on the McConnell substitute amendment; that the amendment be subject to a 60-affirmative-vote threshold; further, that if the McConnell amendment is agreed to, H.J. Res. 61, as amended, be read a third time and passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.J. RES. 61

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture vote on the substitute amendment to H.J. Res. 61 occur at 3 p.m. today, with the time until 3:45 p.m. equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

Mr. REID addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Will the majority leader clarify the time of the vote?

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I withdraw that consent and propound another one.

I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture vote on the substitute amendment to H.J. Res. 61 occur at 3:45 p.m. today, with the time until 3:45 p.m. equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I have a few brief remarks, and then I will respond to my friend.

By the end of the day, the Senate will have spent 3 days debating one of the most critical national security issues of our time—and that is probably an understatement—whether to support the agreement to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

From the beginning of this process, Democrats have done everything within our power to support this debate. We allowed the Senate to begin important debate without any procedural hurdles—none whatsoever. Democrats understand the severity of the urgent national security issue that is before this body, and that is why we offered a consent agreement at the beginning of the week to eliminate all procedural hurdles and move straight to the final passage vote after the debate. I did that again this morning, but the Republican leader did not take that offer. Instead,

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



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he filed cloture on the debate. By rejecting our offer, the Republican leader has made the cloture vote the decisive and definitive vote on this issue. That is why I once again will put forward my consent to skip cloture and all procedural votes and move to a vote on final passage.

Every Senator in this body should understand that if they are forced to vote on cloture, it is because Senator MCCONNELL, not Democrats, wanted them to. The idea that Democrats are somehow trying to stop debate or keeping us from a final vote is foolish. It is simply untrue.

Let's be clear. Let's be clear who is moving to end debate. It is the Republican leader who is moving to end debate, not me, not us. It is the Republican leader who filed a procedural motion last night and today.

What Democrats are offering is an opportunity to continue debate and move straight to a vote on final passage. This is exactly what we have done on many policy issues in the past because of Republican demands. In fact, since 2007 the Senate has regularly held votes on passage at a 60-vote threshold on policy and national security issues—for example, on national security issues such as Iraq policy resolutions; the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA; United States-India nuclear cooperation; foreign aid prohibition for Pakistan, Egypt, Libya; FISA reauthorization; terrorism risk insurance, or TRIA. These are just a few of the many votes we have taken at the 60-vote threshold demanded by our Republican friends.

Actions speak louder than words. Democrats acted to get this bill to the floor and debate it. Democrats are ready to vote on final passage. But if we are forced to vote on cloture, all Senators should understand that the cloture vote would then become the defining vote that determines whether the resolution of disapproval moves forward to the President's desk. A vote against cloture is a vote for the Iran agreement, plain and simple.

Mr. President, may I have the consent agreement restated? I think I understand it, but basically we would have a cloture vote and move immediately to a vote? No, just a cloture vote. I am sorry.

The question before the body—and they are waiting for me to respond—is, we would have a cloture vote on this matter because the leader has objected to my consent request, and we would have it at 3:45 p.m. today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is the Chair's understanding.

Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Please wait. Staff is conferring here.

No objection.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, just a few short months ago, Senators of both parties came together to pass a bipartisan bill based on an important principle: that the American people through the Congress they elect deserve a say on one of the most important issues of our time. We rallied around that principle, voting 98 to 1 to ensure the American people would have a real say on any deal with Iran. What a tragedy it would be, then, if at the very last moment some of those same Senators decided to filibuster to prevent the American people from having a real say on this incredibly important issue.

I know some of our colleagues are currently under immense pressure to shut down the voice of the people. But I would ask colleagues to reflect on the gravely serious nature of the issue before us. I would ask colleagues to consider the expectations they set with their constituents when they voted for the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. I would ask colleagues to consider something else as well. This is a deal that will far outlast one administration. The President may have the luxury of vacating office in a few months, but many of our responsibilities extend beyond that time. The American people will remember. They will remember where we stand today. Let's stand on their side.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

HIRE MORE HEROES ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.J. Res. 61, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (H.J. Res. 61) amending the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exempt employees with health coverage under TRICARE or the Veterans Administration from being taken into account for purposes of determining the employers to which the employer mandate applies under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

McConnell amendment No. 2640, of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2641 (to amendment No. 2640), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2642 (to amendment No. 2641), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2643 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 2640), to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2644 (to amendment No. 2643), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell motion to commit the joint resolution to the Committee on Foreign Relations, with instructions, McConnell amendment No. 2645, to change the enactment date.

McConnell amendment No. 2646 (to the instructions) amendment No. 2645), of a perfecting nature.

McConnell amendment No. 2647 (to amendment No. 2646), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 3:45 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

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

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I understand we are moving back to the incredibly important debate on Iran. I will come back and address that a little bit later.

REMEMBERING ALISON PARKER AND ADAM WARD AND PAYING TRIBUTE TO VICKI GARDNER

Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay tribute to the victims of another horrific act of gun violence.

On August 26, a gunman opened fire during a live television interview at Smith Mountain Lake in Virginia. By now, I think everyone in this Chamber and all across the country saw that event on live television. The gunfire killed WDBJ News 7 reporter Alison Parker, News 7 photographer Adam Ward, and the shooting severely wounded Vicki Gardner, a local chamber of commerce official who was being interviewed. I know my colleague Senator Kaine has already spoken on this, but I speak for everyone in the Commonwealth when I say our hearts go out to the Parker family and the Ward family. We are all pleased to hear that Vicki Gardner was released from the hospital on Monday, and she is on the road to recovery.

So Smith Mountain Lake in Virginia is now added to the all-too-familiar, heartbreaking litany—Charleston, Aurora, Sandy Hook, Tucson, and Virginia Tech. It became clear in the days following the 26th that Alison Parker and Adam Ward represented the best of their community. The outpouring of love and support for them and their families was remarkable. I had a number of conversations with Alison's father Andy, whom I knew from local government, and I will be meeting with him later today. Vicki Gardner, who was released from the hospital, will soon, hopefully, be getting back to her job at the chamber of commerce.

We feel—particularly those of us in Virginia—as if we knew Alison, Adam, and Vicki because the crime committed against them was so horrible and the details were reported so widely.

How many more parents must lose their children to gun violence? How many more anxious families must maintain a lonely vigil at the hospital before all of us here in Congress move on commonsense gun legislation?

More than 30,000 people are killed by firearms in this country every year. The last time Congress meaningfully engaged in a debate about gun reform was more than 2 years ago, after Sandy Hook. Even after the horrific loss of 20 children and 6 adults in Newtown at Sandy Hook, the Senate was still unable to pass responsible, commonsense