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Senate

The Senate met at 1 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.

Gracious God, the center of our joy, we thank You for all the blessings we receive daily as gifts from You. Though we don't deserve them, Your mercies provide for all our needs.

Help our lawmakers this day to move from simply knowing about You into a vital relationship based on faith in the unfolding of Your loving providence. Inspire them to rely on Your love as they seek to live faithfully.

As You cleanse our hearts and keep us clean, birth within us all a burning desire to flee from all habitual and willful sin.

We pray in Your merciful 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. SASSE). The majority leader is recognized.

REMEMBERING STATE TROOPER JOSEPH PONDER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, Joseph Ponder was proud to be a Kentucky State police trooper. "He was eager and just absolutely loved his job," is how a State police spokesman described him.

Ponder tragically lost his life in the line of duty this week. We are thinking of that 31-year-old Rineyville native today in the Senate. We are praying for his family and for his friends.

I know his fellow officers in the law enforcement community feel the loss and so do Kentuckians whom he worked every day to protect. So I ask the entire Senate community to join me in honoring Trooper Ponder.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on a different matter, as the Senate continues debating President Obama's deal with Iran today, I think it is appropriate to consider a quote from the President himself. Here is what he said:

I believe Congress owes the American people a final up-or-down vote. We need courage. You know, in the end, this debate is about far more than politics.

When it comes to the Iran deal, you would have to say the President is right. After all, do Senators think it is right for the world's leading sponsor of terror to be able to maintain an American-recognized nuclear program? Do Senators think it is right that this deal would effectively subsidize Hezbollah, Hamas, and Bashar al-Assad by channelling literally billions of dollars to their benefactors in Tehran? Do Senators approve of a deal that would leave Iran with an enrichment capability just as the Iranian leadership is again calling for Israel's destruction and praying for ours as well? It is hard to see how Senators could agree with these things.

Many Democratic colleagues, including the top Democrats on the Foreign Affairs Committees in both Houses of Congress who are among the most familiar with the President's deal with Iran, have already come out in opposition. A strong bipartisan majority of the House of Representatives voted to reject the deal. A strong bipartisan majority of the Senate would vote to re-

ject it as well, if only Democratic Senators would stop blocking the American people from even having a final vote on one of the most consequential foreign policy issues of our time.

Democratic Senators will have a chance to vote on behalf of their constituents later today. Perhaps they will consider the President's words I quoted earlier. It is from a 2010 speech about ObamaCare. If the President was so insistent on "courage" and a "final up-or-down vote" back then on ObamaCare, how can he justify blocking a vote now on an issue of such immense magnitude as the Iran deal? It is part of a larger retreat to campaigning instead of engaging on this important issue, ad hominem attacks instead of serious debate, campaign one-liners instead of intellectual arguments, and simply ignoring reality when it becomes inconvenient. That is why you see the President claiming "strong support of lawmakers and citizens" for his Iran deal.

Well, here is what the Washington Post's Fact Checker had to say about that:

Any way you slice it, it is difficult to support the claim that there is "strong support" for the Iran deal among lawmakers and citizens. This is clearly a case of winning ugly, in the face of minority support among lawmakers and increasing opposition among American citizens.

The White House certainly did better than many analysts expected, since enough Democrats supported the agreement to prevent a final Senate vote on the merits. And Obama avoided a veto fight. But that's different than having "strong support" for the deal.

That is the Washington Post Fact Checker.

So if Democrats share the President's determination to "win ugly" on this important issue, then they have sufficient numbers to do that, apparently, but I would remind my colleagues of something. 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.

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



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Consider this advice from an editorial that appeared in Bloomberg last month:

Tactics aside, it would be far better to win this fight fairly. The pact is not a treaty: A future President and Congress might overturn it, arguing that it was sealed without proper consideration. And history often looks with disgust at causes built on fear, especially if they go awry.

This is an important moment for the Democratic Party, but more importantly it is an important moment for our country. Let's stand up for the people we represent. Let's allow them to vote on what is one of the most consequential foreign policy issues of our age.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

MR. REID. Mr. President, my friend the Republican leader, among other things, said he wanted an intellectual argument. The outline he just gave has nothing to do with intellectual credibility.

The agreement that was finalized last week dealt with one subject and one subject only: whether Iran should have a nuclear weapon, and that answer was resoundingly no. That is what it was all about. All the other rhetoric my Republican friend talked about is not in keeping with what the agreement is all about. He tried to make the agreement that was finalized into something it isn't. I would suggest in the future, realistically, the Republican leader should be factual on what the agreement is between Iran and China, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, France, and the United States because what he just outlined has nothing to do with the actual facts are.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

MR. REID. Mr. President, it comes as no surprise to anyone watching the Senate that the Republican leader and I disagree on many things, but I was very glad to hear the Republican leader say last week that he believes any government funding bill must be clean and that using the appropriations process as a vehicle to attack women's health is, as he said, "an exercise in futility."

I am sure not everyone on his side of the aisle agrees with him, but there is no doubt it is the right thing to do. I agree that any budget deal must be clean; that is, no riders—nothing with Planned Parenthood, nothing with repealing what the Environmental Protection Agency has done, no repealing what the Dodd-Frank bill put into effect to stop us from having another Wall Street meltdown, no riders dealing with immigration—just a clean continuing resolution for a short period of time to allow us to do a more

full and more complete deal in the very near future.

I agree any budget bill must be clean. I say that again. I am glad to see the Republican leader coming around to that. Democrats will not support a continuing resolution that has all these riders on it and especially a Planned Parenthood rider that was talked about so much in the House.

I read in the paper today that there are 32 Republicans in the House who have signed a letter to the Speaker saying they are not going to vote for anything unless it defunds Planned Parenthood. That is a nonstarter and the Republican leader rightly has acknowledged that. I am glad the Republican leader wants a clean continuing resolution instead of one that attacks women's health.

I am disappointed by his refusal at this stage to negotiate with the White House or any Democrats in the House or in the Senate dealing with the budget. We have a looming government shutdown. It is right before our eyes. The Republican leader has already wasted far too much time dithering and doing nothing on that. We know from experience 2 years ago that the Republicans actually did shut down the government for almost 3 weeks. For months, we have overheard them calling for bipartisan budget negotiations. We have 9 session days left before the government shuts down. Now is the time to sit down—Democrats, Republicans, getting the White House involved—and negotiate a bipartisan funding measure for the rest of the year, but by the look of this week's schedule, the Republican leader doesn't seem to be in any hurry to avoid a shutdown. That is truly unfortunate.

The Republican leader has not scheduled any budget votes today. Instead, the Senate will waste precious time on another failed vote. And then what comes next? What is the Republican leader's plan for the rest of the week? Political show votes on abortion that have nothing to do with keeping the Federal Government open. There is no reason why we can't pass a bipartisan funding measure as soon as possible—this week, even. But that depends on the Republican leader's willingness to sit down and negotiate, and sooner rather than later. Then, Congress can move on to our next budget priority: reversing sequestration and its harmful cuts.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

MR. REID. Mr. President, today, September 15, marks the beginning of Hispanic Heritage Month, a celebration that dates back to 1968.

This month also includes the anniversary of independence for many Latin American countries. Hispanic Heritage Month is an opportunity for us as a nation to recognize, celebrate, and honor the history, culture, and contributions of America's Latino community.

We see those contributions in all facets of our society, from the battlefields to the boardrooms and from the classrooms to the halls of government. Every segment of American life has been enriched by Latinos and their proud culture. Without the contributions made by generations of Latinos, Nevada and the United States would not be what we are today.

In Nevada, Hispanic influence and history is everywhere. Consider the name of my State and the name of our most famous city. "Nevada" means snow covered. "Las Vegas" means the meadows. Las Vegas, one of the most famous cities in the world, has a Hispanic name. Today, more than one-quarter of Nevada's population is Hispanic.

Nationally, Latino Americans number nearly 60 million and are expected to make up to 60 percent of the population growth in coming decades. America's future depends on a strong and prosperous Hispanic population.

That is why Democrats have fought hard for policies to protect Hispanic families and strengthen Hispanic communities. We passed the Affordable Care Act, which allows millions of Latinos to have access to affordable health care. Because of the Affordable Care Act, 4.2 million previously uninsured Latinos now have health insurance. An estimated 8.8 million Latinos are newly covered for expanded preventive services, with no cost-sharing, including mammograms, colonoscopy screenings, and immunization vaccines under the Affordable Care Act.

Democrats also passed the bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill out of the Senate a couple years ago. That legislation, which House Republicans refused to consider, even though it would have passed overwhelmingly—all Democrats would have voted for it and enough Republicans would have voted for it to be an overwhelming victory—but it didn't happen. The Republicans refused to consider something that protected families, reduced the deficit, and strengthened our national security.

We also supported President Obama's Executive actions, which, as we speak, are protecting immigrant families from the threat of deportation and taking criminals off the streets. Meanwhile, Republicans are doing everything in their power to undermine Hispanic families. A person need only watch 5 minutes of a Republican Presidential debate to see how Republicans really feel about America's Latino communities. Republicans are clamoring to amend the Constitution to repeal birthright citizenship. Republicans want to roll back President Obama's Executive actions that are keeping families together and preventing DREAMers from being deported.

Republicans are constantly attacking the Affordable Care Act, which has covered 4.2 million previously uninsured Latinos with health insurance. Republicans refuse to boost the minimum