



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2015

No. 140

Senate

The Senate met at 4:30 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.

From the depths of gratitude, O Lord, we lift our hearts in prayer. Hear our petitions and fill us with Your peace. Lord, still and quiet our hearts, bringing to us a serenity that comes from trusting the power of Your providential love.

Inspire our lawmakers to develop such a close relationship with You that they would strive to please You always. As You fill their hearts with Your life-transforming Spirit, may Your image in them be more clearly seen. Free them from any thoughts, words, and actions that are contrary to Your love, making them spiritually mature through the power of Your Spirit.

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 (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, a new Senate majority came to office this year with a new outlook on government funding from the previous majority. First, we passed a budget. Then

we worked across the aisle to pass through the committee the dozen bills necessary to fund the government. That is the first time either of these things has happened in 6 long years.

Our commonsense approach represented real hope that with the necessary cooperation from across the aisle, a new and better way of funding the government was actually possible. Democrats initially gave Americans reason to believe they might be ready to offer that bipartisan cooperation. Democrats gave bipartisan committee backing to nearly all of the dozen government funding bills, and a majority of these bills attracted support from at least 70 percent of Democratic Appropriations Committee members. Democrats even bragged about supporting these funding bills in press releases to their constituents.

But this was before Democrats hatched their filibuster summer plan—in other words, block all of the government funding bills in the hopes of provoking a crisis Democrats might exploit to grow the IRS and the DC bureaucracy. As a result, you actually saw Democratic leaders declare that they would use procedural moves to prevent the full Senate from even debating the same funding legislation members of their party had already praised in their press releases to the media.

Democrats even voted repeatedly to block the bill that funds our military. Think about that—funds for our military. It would have been cynical enough for our colleagues to block a bipartisan defense spending bill Democrats had hailed as a “win, win, win” and a “victory” for their States in their press releases, but we are all living in a time of unparalleled international crises. Threats seem to mount less by the day than by the hour. Yet last week Democrats voted again to block the bipartisan bill that funds pay raises and medical care for our troops. It was very extreme.

I wish I could say it was the only extreme position our Democratic friends took last week. On Thursday Senators were given a choice between funding women's health or funding a scandal-racked organization called Planned Parenthood. Republicans stood up for women's health; Democrats stood up for their political friends.

I think Democrats will come to regret their continued prioritization of the needs of the far left over women, over our military, and over seemingly everything else. The question before us now is how to keep the government open in the short term, given the realities we face.

This is what the president of National Right to Life had to say on the matter:

There are two different roads that we can take. One is to insist that no more money go to Planned Parenthood and cause a government shutdown (which [interestingly enough] won't result in actually defunding Planned Parenthood). The other is to take a slightly longer-term approach, taking advantage of the fact that we have the attention of the country as probably never before. . . .

Had Democrats not prevented the Senate from passing the same appropriations bills they voted for and praised, we wouldn't be having this discussion right now. But they did. They pursued a deliberate strategy to force our country into another of these unnecessary crises. This leaves the funding legislation before us as the only viable way forward in the short-term. It doesn't represent my 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 23rd choice when it comes to funding the government, but it will keep the government open through the fall and funded at the bipartisan level already agreed to by both parties as we work on the way forward.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all time during the quorum calls until 5:30 p.m. be charged equally between both sides.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S6961

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

GOVERNING BY CRISIS

Mr. REID. Madam President, a path to avert yet another Republican-manufactured shutdown is before us now. This evening the Senate will vote to invoke cloture on a clean continuing resolution that keeps the Federal Government open and funded. We believe debate should continue on this issue, and that is why we are voting the way we are going to vote. Following that vote, the Senate will then proceed to final passage of a clean funding measure—sometime tomorrow or Wednesday. That will take a simple majority. I am pleased that we are on the verge of avoiding another Republican-sponsored shutdown of the Federal Government. We are fortunate cooler heads are prevailing.

But I would be remiss if I didn't remind everyone—especially my Republican colleagues—that this last-minute scramble to do our most basic job is as unnecessary as it is reckless. We are 2 days from a shutdown—only 2 days. And why? Because Republicans made it their No. 1 priority to undermine women's health. Keeping the government open, funded, and serving the American people was a secondary concern for these extremists in the Republican Party. My friend the Republican leader, in talking about this choice a few days ago, the choice between—he said Planned Parenthood; I say the health of women—understand, the Republicans couldn't even get a majority vote on this. They couldn't get a majority vote; they were down in the forties. So even the Republicans think what is going on now is foolish. Keeping government open and funded and serving the American people was a secondary concern for those extremists. That is too bad.

So while I am pleased that we now have a path forward to avoid a shutdown, I am nonetheless concerned about the Republican modus operandi of always governing by crisis. Remember, this is the fifth time in 2 years the Republicans have manufactured an unnecessary shutdown crisis. Two years ago they actually shut down the government. For 17 days, Republicans shut down the government, and we were only able to get ourselves out of that morass because—for example, in the House of Representatives, two-thirds of the Republicans in the House voted to keep the government closed. That is unbelievable, but that is the way it was. Here it is now 2 years later, and we are on the verge of another shutdown.

Remember this: This is the fifth time in 2 years that Republicans have manu-

factured an unnecessary showdown crisis—and it is a showdown. Too bad it is leading to a shutdown.

Exactly 2 years ago, as I indicated, of course, they shut down the Federal Government because of health care. Seven months ago, Republicans almost shut down the Department of Homeland Security. Why? Over an immigration issue. The Department of Homeland Security—they were going to shut it down. It was saved in the last minute. These are the agencies within this Department that protect us. They protect us from terrorists, and they protect us from those many things that happen in our country that we need protection from.

This past spring, it shut down key national security programs that were part of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Why? They were fighting among themselves. The Republican leader wanted a bill for a certain length of time. People within his caucus wanted one for another length of time. There was a fight among them, not among us, but they came close to wreaking havoc. They did wreak some havoc because the program was shut down for a while.

More recently, Republicans shut down the Export-Import Bank, endangering the hundreds of thousands of jobs this program supports. It is still closed.

Now we are just days from another shutdown—another kind of shutdown but a big one. And although it appears we will sidestep a Republican-manufactured crisis this week, the disaster is looming. We still have a long, difficult road ahead.

The continuing resolution will pass this week, but it is for a short term, and it funds our government through December 11. The measure is very shortsighted—December 11. That means within the coming weeks, we will again be negotiating with Republicans to avoid another shutdown.

We will also have to find a way to pay our bills to avoid a catastrophic default on our debt. Republicans tried that once. We came within minutes of doing that. The Federal Government—this great country of ours—wouldn't be able to pay its bills.

But we see the press. We see all these stories about the Speaker, who is going to step down in 5 weeks, and we hear the Republicans over there. They are joyous. One Republican running for President announced this, and there was cheering. And the person running for President—who serves in the Senate—was part of the cheer. Another Republican Presidential candidate came to the same meeting, and the same thing happened. It is hard to comprehend that people are cheering for this government to be closed. That is what they are doing. We shouldn't pay our debt?

The Republican House is in a sad state. Last week the far right showed that it can depose a Speaker and has emerged more powerful than ever,

more outspoken than ever. Members of the House will hold their leadership elections in the coming days, and I hope they elect some sensible leaders. I am deeply concerned.

I came to the floor on Friday and spoke as honestly as I could of my respect for JOHN BOEHNER. I think it is unfair that people are piling on. Did I always agree with him? No. But he never misled me and always told me the way it was.

I am deeply concerned that even those Republican leaders previously inclined toward compromise have already lost the courage to stand up to the far right when it matters the most, and they have said so in the press. That is too bad.

Come November 1, we have no way of knowing what House Republicans will do—this is after their elections to replace Congressman BOEHNER. We have no idea what they are going to do, whether they will try to again steer our government off a cliff, as numerous House Members have said in the last few days. Do they want to go off that cliff or do they want to recklessly hammer the global economy? Maybe both.

We need to get to work immediately to avoid being right back here on December 11 facing another Republican shutdown because if one thing is clear, it is that Republicans see impending catastrophe as a political tool that they need to exploit.

The American people don't want another 15 months of Republican brinkmanship. Our constituents don't want every simple legislative task to turn into a doomsday clock. So I invite my Republican colleagues to quit governing by crisis. Let's put the threat of government shutdown to bed now, and then let's turn our attention to something that both sides agree on—getting rid of the dangerous sequester cuts.

I have heard speeches given by the senior Senator from Arizona—someone who knows a little bit about the military—and he says sequester cuts are terrible. I agree with him.

These devastating cuts were never supposed to happen. They were meant to drive bipartisan budget negotiations. Getting rid of sequestration has wide bipartisan support in both Chambers, I hope. We should start working right now on a bipartisan budget fix that helps the military, helps the middle class, and puts our country on a more sound economic footing. And let's do it without the threat of a government shutdown. We can do it, but only if Republicans don't divert us to yet another catastrophe.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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