United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161 WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2015 No. 153

Senate

The Senate met at 10 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.

Righteous and Holy God, we worship You. We see Your glory in the beauty of sunrise and the splendor of sunset. Great and marvelous are Your works, for Your faithfulness sustains us. Guide our lawmakers to connect to Your eternal, essential, and unchanging holiness. With the power of Your righteous presence, renew their minds, cleanse their hearts, and guide their steps. Liberate them from the chains of pessimism, reminding them that all things are possible to those who believe. Lord, thank You for the wonder of Your love, the beauty of Your mercy, and the power of Your grace.

We pray in Your Holy 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. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

SANCTUARY CITIES BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, just before the State work period, I asked Senators to consider some important questions: In a time of limited Federal resources and tough choices, is it fair to treat localities that cooperate with Federal law enforcement or work hard to follow Federal law no better than localities that refuse to help or actually actively flout the law? When a deputy sheriff puts her life on the line every day, is it fair to make her live in constant fear of being sued for simply trying to keep us safe? When felons enter our country illegally and repeatedly, is it fair to victims and families to not do what we can now to stop them?

The answer is that it isn't fair. That is why colleagues should support the legislation we will consider this afternoon. It aims to ensure more fairness to cities and States that do the right thing, redirecting certain Federal funds to them from those that choose not to do the right thing. It aims to support law enforcement officers who risk everything for our safety, protecting them from lawsuits for simply doing their federally mandated duties. It aims to deliver justice for victims and their families, substantially increasing deterrence for criminals who commit felonies and then try to illegally reenter our country—endeavoring to save more Americans from the pain these families continue to experience every day.

We all know the heartbreaking story of Kate Steinle. Kate was walking arm in arm with her father one moment, begging for help the next as she began bleeding to death in his arms. The man who ended her life shouldn't have even been there that day. He had been convicted of seven—seven—felonies and deported five times, but San Francisco is a so-called sanctuary city that arbitrarily decides when it will cooperate with the Federal Government and when it will not, and it refused to even honor the Federal Government's request for an immigration detainer.

What happened to Kate is tragic, and it is not an isolated incident. Consider this letter from Susan Oliver, who lost her husband just last year. Here is what she had to say:

The man that killed my husband, Deputy Danny Oliver, was deported several times for various felonies. However, due to the lack of coordination between law enforcement agencies, his killer was allowed back into the country. . . .

I [am] asking for only one thing. I do not want your sympathy, I want change so others will not have to endure the grief we have in our lives every day.

The bill which we will consider this afternoon is supported by law enforcement organizations such as the National Sheriffs' Association, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, and the National Association of Police Organizations.

Here is what the International Union of Police Associations had to say about it:

The International Union of Police Associations is proud—

Proud—

to add our name to the list of supporters of the bill addressing ''Sanctuary Cities'' titled Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act.

As it now stands, our officers can be held liable for sharing relevant information and honoring immigration detainers, even when they are from federal immigration officials. This legislation remedies that.

Additionally, the bill provides a financial disincentive for cities to become or remain ''sanctuary cities''. . . .

The organization also noted that this bill would help end the ''revolving door'' of criminals who ''even though convicted of felony criminal activity and deported, unlawfully return to prey upon our citizens.''

The issue before us is not truly about immigration; it is more about keeping our communities safe. Those who defend so-called sanctuary cities callously disregard how their extreme policies hurt others. The President's own DHS Secretary has used terms such as ''not acceptable'' and ''counterproductive to public safety'' when referring to sanctuary city policies. Such extreme policies can inflict almost unimaginable pain on innocent victims and their families.

As the father of three daughters, I know—I know—we can do better. I am

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

calling on every colleague to put compassion before leftwing ideology today. This bill would support the deputy sheriff who puts her life on the line every day. This bill would provide hope and justice for victims and their families. So let's vote to support them, not defend extreme policies that actually hurt them.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 2181, S. 2182, AND S. 2183

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2181) to provide guidance and priorities for Federal Government obligations in the event that the debt limit is reached.

A bill (S. 2182) to cut, cap, and balance the Federal budget.

A bill (S. 2183) to reauthorize and reform the Export-Import Bank of the United States, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

SANCTUARY CITIES BILL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have watched over the years my Republican colleagues who are supposedly concerned about States' rights wipe them out with a speech like the one we have just heard and the legislation before this body today.

I am told and have always believed, Republicans think States and communities should have the ability to do the things they think are appropriate. Any one of these States that my friend refers to—any one of these communities—has a right at any time to change the law. This is not a Federal law they are trying to change; they are trying to change what is taking place in cities throughout the country.

So they are States' rights, my Republican colleague's own words. It certainly doesn't belie the actions they have tried to take. The Republican leader tries to make the bill before this body a political issue. It is a Donald Trump-bashing-immigrants issue.

This bill is opposed by the National Association of Chiefs of Police, it is opposed by the National Council of Mayors, and many different organizations that believe in States' rights. My friend, the Republican leader, would just make things a lot worse, and that is an understatement.

With the provisions in this bill, it is estimated it would take 15 new huge prisons just to handle the people who would be arrested—huge prisons, costing billions of dollars. It is not smart police policy. It is not smart budget policy.

THE DEBT LIMIT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, over the last 10 months, congressional Republicans have proven they are incapable of governing—at least governing productively. Instead, Republicans are governing destructively. It is hard to understand or fathom, but this seems to be what they want: destruction. It is not a word I decided to bring into the conversation today. One Republican Congressman said very recently: ''We are looking for creative destruction in how the House operates.'' This Republican Congressman said, I repeat, ''We are looking for creative destruction in how the House operates,'' and they are as good as their word in the House and sadly also in the Senate.

Time and time again, Republican leaders have brought the United States to the brink of unnecessary disaster, and sadly here we are again, facing another manufactured crisis courtesy of Republicans in Congress. This time it is a debt limit crisis. On November 3, just 2 weeks from today, our great country—the United States of America—will default on its debt unless Republicans start legislating more constructively to solve the problem. Let's be clear about what the debt limit does and doesn't mean. Adjusting the debt limit—when it is absolutely necessary, and it will be in 2 weeks—is necessary to pay this country's bills that are already due. What we face now with the debt ceiling isn't about a penny of new spending. It is not about a penny of new programs or a penny of new taxes. It is not about creating new obligations, only meeting existing ones. The debt limit is about paying what we already owe.

What are these debts? A large, large, large chunk of these is what we owe as a result of an unpaid war, a second unpaid war, and tax breaks for the rich that were unpaid for. Remember, this great theory of President Bush was that these wars would bring a new democracy to the world. Well, the invasion of Iraq was the worst foreign policy decision probably in the history of the country. Look what it has done, and it has been done at the cost of trillions of dollars of taxpayers' money, and that is part of the debt that is due.

These tax breaks for the rich. Why did the Bush administration push these tax breaks? Because it would be great for the economy. Well, it has been great for the rich people. They are getting richer, the poorer are getting poorer, and the middle class are getting squeezed. All these tax cuts were unpaid for. If we don't act, we allow the United States to default. The day of reckoning will be terrible. We will hurt American jobs, families, businesses, and the fallout will be felt around the world. If some Republicans in Congress get their way, the United States will default on this debt. What happens then? The short answer is economic catastrophe.

The former Director of the Congressional Budget Office, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, described last week what will happen if the United States defaults:

The first thing you'll see is a market reaction. Then you've got dramatic impacts on consumer confidence, the world's melting down again and they go into an economic fetal position . . . there's just no good news there.

This wasn't some leftwing blogger; this is a man who did a good job representing this country on a bipartisan basis in the Congressional Budget Office—by the way, during a Republican administration. He said:

The first thing you'll see is a market reaction. Then you've got dramatic impacts of consumer confidence, the world's melting down again and they go into an economic fetal position . . . there's just no good news there.

The Republican chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, a reasonable PAUL RYAN, said as much last week:

If the United States missed a bond payment, it would shake the confidence of the world economy. All kinds of credit would dry up: loans for small businesses, mortgages for young families. We could even go into a recession.

That is what we will face in 2 weeks if Republicans don't get their act together, and by all signs, it doesn't appear they are going to. All signs indicate that House and Senate Republicans are still not serious about dealing with the debt limit. If they were serious about paying our bills and keeping America on sound economic footing, they would not be proposing an absurd idea of having a ''partial default.'' You can't be partially pregnant; you can't have a partial default. House Republicans have engineered legislation to pick and choose which debts to pay and which to ignore.

Listen to this: Their proposed legislation is going to pay foreign creditors first, such as China, but they don't want to meet our obligations to veterans, Medicare beneficiaries, and millions of middle-class Americans. No. They want to start paying down the debt we owe to China. Think about that. The truth is this pay-China-first approach is just default by another name. This approach would lead a middle-class family into financial ruin, and just imagine what it would do to world markets. I repeat: There is no such thing as a partial default. A partial default is a default.

We can't allow the Federal Government to be delinquent in paying its debts. We have 2 weeks to get something done, and we can if the Republicans come to their senses. This unnecessary drama over paying our bills is already rattling the financial markets. The bond market has already been hurt, and we can see it.