

I say to my Republican friends, especially the leaders in the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate: Start governing in a way that is not an embarrassment to Congress and the American people.

Mr. President, please announce what we will be doing here today.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF ANN DONNELLY TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Ann Donnelly, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 11 a.m. will be equally divided for debate in the usual form.

The assistant Democratic leader.

REFUGEE CRISIS IN GREECE, NOMINATION OF GAYLE SMITH, AND UKRAINE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I had the privilege of joining Senators SHAHEEN, KLOBUCHAR, and WARREN during the recess that just concluded to travel to Europe to assess the refugee flow that is spilling into Greece and ongoing Russian aggression during our visit to Ukraine.

I will start with the visit to one of our most important NATO European allies, Greece. Greece is struggling, as we all know, with its own economic challenges, but now it is facing an overwhelming flow of refugees across its border.

Almost half a million refugees have flown into Greece just this year. The bulk of the refugees come from across the Aegean Sea from Turkey. They are fleeing war and economic instability in the region. Most are from Syria, but there are many others from Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries in peril. Many are middle-class families who are simply exhausted from years of horrific war in Syria.

I met many of them and had a chance to speak to them. Their stories are heartbreaking. They are fleeing with their children and whatever they can carry. Their destination is uncertain, but they know they can't stay in the camps or in Syria. They are the victims of smugglers and exploitation. Some of these desperate people are charged 1,000 Euros just to cross a 2-mile stretch of ocean between Turkey and Greece.

We were on the island of Lesbos, and those who were able to watch "60 Minutes" this week saw a presentation of what is happening on that small island of about 80,000 people where more than 400,000 refugees have come through in the last several weeks. Many of these refugees are unaccompanied children.

At one of the camps, I met a young man who said he was 17—probably 15—who had come across that stretch of water with his 8-year-old sister. Think for a moment what that family must have gone through in deciding that it was safer for this 15-year-old to take his 8-year-old sister and try to find their way to a safe place in Europe rather than stay in war-torn Syria. That is the reality of many of these refugees and the plight that they face.

On this island of Lesbos, 2,000 refugees are arriving every single day. The Greek Coast Guard showed us stacks of discarded rubber rafts. These rubber rafts are made to hold about 20 people as they cross this 3-mile stretch of ocean. They packed them with over 50 people. They charge 1,000 Euros for each adult and 500 Euros for each child.

We saw these rafts stacked up and piles of life preservers. Some of them are the types of life preservers and jackets that you might expect, but others are ridiculous. Some of them are literally pool toys, and they say so. They have written right on them that they are not to be used as life preservers. These pool toys are strapped to those little kids who are put in these rafts that come across that stretch of ocean. There were rows upon rows of cheap outboard motors that were used to propel these rafts across the straits.

Incidentally, the smugglers picked someone in the raft and told them that they were in charge. They would ask if they knew how to operate the motor. If they didn't know how to operate it, they would show them how to use it and point them in the right direction. The refugees would then head out in the hope that they would make it across safely, and many times they didn't.

Despite Greece's economic hardship, I was impressed with how the Greek people were handling this refugee crisis. Processing registration centers had been established, and many refugees were quickly on their way to resettlement in Europe.

I mentioned the 15-year-old with his 8-year-old sister. I ran into four others who spoke English, and all of them were college graduates in their 20s. One of them was a premed student who said: We just couldn't live any longer with war in Syria. We were ready to risk our lives to find a safer place.

The mayor of Lesbos has been generous and thoughtful in addressing the suffering. He told me he often thought he was handling a ticking time bomb with this refugee crisis. Instead, this island has become an example of what the rest of the world can do.

In Athens, we visited with an impressive NGO known as Praksis that is giving

unaccompanied minors a safe, nurturing place to stay while they attempt to place them with families.

The United States leads the world in financial assistance for this Syrian refugee effort, but we have a moral obligation to do that and more. I have called on the administration to accept 100,000 Syrian refugees. I am a cosponsor of the emergency supplemental bill addressing refugee assistance, recently introduced by Senators GRAHAM and LEAHY.

Allow me to put the 100,000 number in perspective. Germany has agreed to accept 800,000 of these Syrian refugees. It is estimated that there are 4 million total. The United States accepted 750,000 Vietnamese refugees and over 500,000 Cuban refugees after the Castro regime took over. Those Cuban refugees included the fathers of two sitting U.S. Senators, one of whom is running for President of the United States. We accepted over 200,000 Soviet Jews who were being persecuted in that country. We have accepted refugees from Somalia and from different places around the world, such as Bosnia. We have assimilated them into America, and we can do it again.

When we go through this process of accepting refugees, we carefully check their backgrounds to make sure that they are not a threat to the United States or anybody who lives here. I think we should continue to do that, but the fact that only 1,700 have made it to our Nation in the last 4 years tells us that we need to do more.

I will continue to be a strong advocate for humanitarian safe zones in Syria so the people there can have a safe place to be treated for their illnesses and to at least live until this war comes to an end.

Let me say something else. It is embarrassing for me to stand before the Senate and note that on our Executive Calendar, which is on the desks of Senators, there includes one nominee, Gayle Smith, who has been nominated to be administrator of the United States Agency for International Development. She has been sitting on this calendar since July 29 of this year.

The USAID, which she seeks to head, is the premier frontline agency for helping refugees. Yet this good woman with a lifetime of experience is being held up in the Senate for entirely political reasons. There are no objections to her personally, and there are no objections to her background.

One Senator is holding up her nomination because the Senator stated publicly that he objects to the President's Iran nuclear agreement. Gayle Smith had nothing to do with that. The USAID had nothing to do with that. Shouldn't we appoint this good person to manage this agency to deal with this international refugee crisis?

While we are at it, they are asking that Thomas Melia of Maryland be the assistant administrator. Wouldn't we want competent management when we are talking about billions of American

tax dollars being spent wisely in this humanitarian effort? Yet they languish on this calendar.

If there are objections to these nominees, state them. If not, approve them.

After Greece, we had a visit to Ukraine. I believe what is happening there is deeply important to us in the United States, and I am committed to seeing that Ukraine succeed as a Democratic sovereign nation. It is hard to describe what has happened there in a year and a half. A shamefully corrupt regime which is deeply influenced by Russia was rejected by the Ukrainian people. As the country tried to get back on its feet and build a more transparent and Democratic future, Russia and Vladimir Putin staged an invasion first by taking over Crimea and then by invading eastern Ukraine.

The Russians have turned eastern Ukraine into a dysfunctional, grim, and abandoned wasteland, somehow under the illusion that it would be the new Russia. More than a million people have been displaced in eastern Ukraine and thousands have been killed. The captured land was even used as a base to shoot down a civilian airliner, killing hundreds. A recent Dutch investigation showed that this was done with Russian weaponry. If only President Putin would try to help with the investigation of the Malaysian plane that was shot down instead of nakedly blocking the effort of the U.N. Security Council, we would have even more information about this horrible tragedy.

Despite agreeing in Minsk to a pull-back of heavy weapons, exchange of prisoners, and return of border control in the east, Russia has dragged its feet on every term of the agreement, incorrectly hoping that the world will not notice. We notice.

Yet amid all this transparent and barbaric effort to undermine Ukraine, the country has found a new unity and determination. It has taken on significant reforms. During my visit with my fellow Senators, I was struck by how many dedicated Ukrainians are working for a better future. They are now members of Parliament and local officials coming right out of the Maidan demonstration. They are giving everything they can for the future of their country.

I have been a strong supporter of President Obama's efforts to support Ukraine to train and equip its military and provide significant assistance for their courageous effort. As the world's attention is distracted to many other challenges, let's not lose sight of the ongoing struggle in Ukraine. The United States and Europe must remain united on sanctions against Russia as long as it continues to invade and occupy a sovereign nation like Ukraine.

I will conclude by recognizing the many dedicated Foreign Service officers working in our embassies that we meet with on our trips. They are on the frontlines of American leadership and generosity. Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt in Ukraine and Ambassador David

Pearce in Greece are two we worked with during our recent visit.

As the Republicans threaten government shutdown after government shutdown, let us not forget that these men and women and many like them literally risk their lives every single day standing up and representing the United States around the world.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

STOP SANCTUARY POLICIES AND PROTECT AMERICANS BILL

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I rise again in strong support of the Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act, which we will be voting on later today. I was here on the floor yesterday laying out the strong case in support of that, talking to many colleagues before this vote today, as I have been for the past several days.

Today I rise to focus on some arguments from the other side that are erroneous and misleading, quite frankly, and to debunk those arguments so everyone has the full, true, and clear picture of why this legislation is so needed.

First, I have heard a few of my colleagues talk about the need for Federal and local authorities to do a better job of working together. For instance, Senator DURBIN, who just left the floor, said: "Federal and local authorities must do a better job of communicating and coordinating so that undocumented immigrants with serious criminal records are detained and deported, period."

Similarly, Senator FEINSTEIN said: "It is very clear to me that we have to improve cooperation between local, State, and Federal law enforcement."

Let me say that I completely agree with them, and they are laying out a strong case for this legislation, not against it, because we need to do something about the cause of the non-cooperation, the obstacle between that full cooperation, which absolutely needs to happen every day. Simply wishing for a better outcome isn't going to make it happen.

The fact is, there are dozens of sanctuary cities—jurisdictions that have those policies—that were cooperating in the past and that want to cooperate, but they have been faced with lawsuits from the ACLU and others and court decisions wherein local law enforcement officials could be held liable for violating an individual's constitutional rights simply for honoring a detainer request from ICE. That is ridiculous. That is an abusive threat. Our legislation on the floor today is going to remove that threat.

The Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act allows for that cooperation between local and Federal authorities to resume again because section 4 of the bill will facilitate State and local compliance with the ICE detainer and remove that onerous and unreasonable threat. Cooperation has been stifled by lawsuits aimed at

bullying local law enforcement, and this bill will grant local law enforcement the authority to clearly comply with ICE detainees without threat of liability. It will protect them from that liability for simply complying with ICE detainees.

I will remind my colleagues that it will do nothing to infringe on an individual's civil or constitutional rights. They still have the same ability to pursue those against ICE or anyone else they choose.

That is why this legislation is supported by people who know something about what needs to happen for local and Federal authorities to cooperate. Who am I talking about? The Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association—they know what they are talking about. The International Union of Police Associations—they live it every day. The National Association of Police Organizations and the National Sheriffs' Association—don't my colleagues think they know what is needed on the ground? They do. And because they do, they strongly support this legislation.

Second, some colleagues on the other side argue that this bill won't do anything; instead, we need so-called comprehensive immigration reform such as the Gang of 8 bill. But the Gang of 8 bill that my colleagues are pushing—1,200 pages long when it passed the Senate—didn't do anything to resolve this issue of sanctuary cities. It didn't do anything to change the abusive lawsuits I am speaking about. It didn't do anything to encourage Federal and local authorities to cooperate in real time—absolutely nothing. That is just the fact, once we read the 1,200 pages. All the Gang of 8 bill does is lead with a big amnesty—an amnesty overnight—for about 11 million illegal immigrants in our country today. So that comprehensive immigration reform bill—the Gang of 8 bill or whatever we want to call it—does nothing in this area that is so crucial to fix, does nothing about sanctuary cities, does nothing to remove these abusive lawsuits as obstacles to the clear and full cooperation between Federal, State, and local authorities, which even folks on the other side of the bill admit needs to happen and is a problem right now.

There are lots of myths about our bill versus the facts.

With that in mind, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a myth v. fact sheet that lays out clearly the myths, the arguments made against this legislation, and the real facts of the Stop Sanctuary Policies and Protect Americans Act, S. 2146.

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

MYTH V. FACT—STOP SANCTUARY POLICIES ACT (S.2146)

1. S.2146 does not punish illegal immigrants who come forward to report crimes.

Myth: Under S.2146, "reporting crimes or otherwise interacting with law enforcement could lead to immigration detention and deportation."¹