

this agency. The Senate has an obligation to act.

None of these nominees are non-controversial. I want to repeat that. They are not being held by a Senator because of anything to do with their qualifications for the position for which they have been nominated. There have been unrelated issues for a long period of time compromising the critical missions of these agencies.

Just as tragically, there are 20 innocent USAID Foreign Service officers who have been held up. These 20 USAID Foreign Service officers are not nominated for Ambassador positions or Assistant Secretary position; these are folks who were plucked from a list of 181 promotions that must be confirmed by the full Senate for the promotions to take effect. In other words, their promotions have not taken effect because of an individual held by a Senator for reasons unrelated to their performance in office—career diplomats, civil service. These are civil servants who are working hard day in and day out serving their country in both Democratic and Republican administrations. They are not involved in the politics of the Senate, and yet they are the casualties of these politics.

These individuals are called upon to serve in challenging and sometimes very dangerous places. We are talking about a Supervisory Program Officer in Cambodia, the Deputy Director for East Africa Operations in Kenya, the Director of the Democracy and Governance Office in Rwanda, a Senior Advisor for Civilian-Military Cooperation, a Resident Legal Officer for the Resident Mission in Asia, an Education Officer in Honduras, a Regional Legal Advisor in El Salvador, a Deputy Controller for Financial Management in El Salvador, a Regional Food for Peace Officer in Ethiopia, a Regional Legal Advisor in Egypt, a Deputy Education and Youth Office Director in Kenya, the Director of the Food for Peace Program in South Sudan, the Democracy and Governance Director in El Salvador, the Economic Growth Team Leader in Zambia, the Economic Growth Office Director in Ukraine, and a Controller for Financial Management in Rwanda.

I went through that list because I think everyone would acknowledge that these are people who are serving in very dangerous places.

As I mentioned, we had a hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with General Allen, who is doing incredible public service for our representative in the Middle East. He said he wanted to thank the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the attention we have given to our diplomats.

Often on the floor of the Senate you hear glowing thanks—and I join in that—to the men and women who have worn the uniform of our Nation to defend our freedom. Well, our thanks go equally to our Foreign Service officers who serve in very dangerous positions in order to advance the U.S. principles

of democracy and human rights. We know about the casualties we have suffered in that regard. These individuals are entitled to their promotions, and it requires our action. To hold up their promotions for reasons unrelated to their job performance is just plain irresponsible, and we need to take up these nominees.

There are ambassadorships that have been open for way too long. I could mention many of the ambassadorships, but I will just mention two—Sweden and Trinidad and Tobago.

Sweden, of course, is a strategic ally and an Arctic Council member. Azita Raji has been nominated. She is a businesswoman who has been the vice president of J.P. Morgan Securities. She brings her unique expertise from the business sector to help one of our critical Ambassador positions. Again, she is a noncontroversial nominee who has been held up 10 months. Sweden is a critical partner for the United States.

In Trinidad and Tobago, John Estrada has been waiting 180 days for his confirmation. Trinidad is a critical place for the United States as far as drug-smuggling activities that bring drugs into the United States. We need a confirmed Ambassador to lead that fight against drug smuggling into the United States. Again, he is being held up for reasons unrelated to his own qualifications.

I could go through all the 16 nominees. I think I have made my point. My point is that I think the public would be surprised to learn that one Senator could block a nomination of a President, and that is used many times unrelated to the qualifications of that individual for the position for which he or she has been nominated. It has happened in the Senate numerous times, as I have just pointed out.

I think it is the responsibility of the Senate to say enough is enough. It is time for us to act on these nominees so they can continue their public service in a confirmed position to help us in our war against drugs, to help us in our international diplomacy, to help us in development assistance in order to resolve conflicts, and to provide the very best legal advice to make sure that what we are doing is consistent with our Constitution.

To do the services of the people for the people of this country, we have to do our service in the Senate, and that is to take up and vote on the President's nominees to these critical foreign policy positions.

I urge my colleagues to allow us to bring these nominees up for a vote so we can carry out our responsibility and so these people can carry out their critically important missions to the security interests of the United States.

With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMERCIAL SPACE BILL

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, it looks like there has been a resolution between the House and Senate on a commercial space bill which includes an update. This goes way back 31 years ago. When this Senator was a young Congressman, I actually participated in and sponsored the first Commercial Space Act. Very few people could have envisioned what would happen 30 years later with this legislation, for indeed commercial companies are delivering launch services not only to commercial customers, such as all of our satellites, GPS systems, and some communication satellites, but also government payloads for the U.S. Government, obviously Air Force payloads, and various other intel satellites and satellites for foreign countries.

Our American space launchers are putting these satellites up into space, and of course it has revolutionized our daily life. How many among us are so accustomed to using this device to look up the location of an address? How do you think that is happening? It is happening because we have hundreds of satellites up there in the GPS system—scores of satellites—that give you precise locations of any point on the globe where one might want to visit. These devices have gotten so sophisticated that they talk to you and say: Go 600 feet and turn right on such and such street and then turn left. It is just amazing. This doesn't just happen. It happens because of our space industry and in particular our commercial space industry.

Since this Senator, as a young Congressman, got into this in the beginning, which was about 31 years ago, we have had to update this legislation. A lot of things have happened, and now there are very significant things that are happening. For the past decade, we have had a national laboratory in space, which is one component of what is happening, and it is known as the International Space Station. There are six human beings up there. There is an international crew, which includes American astronauts, and one of them, by the way, has now completed 6 months of a 1-year stay so we can study the effects on the human body after a long duration in space. That will help us so we can be ready to go to Mars with human beings in the decade of the 2030s.

There are other activities on the space station that are commercial activities. There are all kinds of pharmaceutical experiments that are going on. As a matter of fact, there are drug trials right now, and the FDA, having used the properties of zero G on the International Space Station, is developing vaccines for salmonella and

MRSA. If using the properties of zero G may help us to develop vaccines that help us with diseases and bacteria on Earth, then that is a significant accomplishment. Those are some of the commercial activities that are taking place in space.

As we think way into the future, we could be mining other planets, and we could certainly be mining asteroids. Wouldn't it be nice if we found an asteroid that was suddenly full of diamonds. We don't even have to stretch our imagination that far. There are all kinds of elements on these asteroids.

This legislation should be cleared later on tonight and in the morning by both sides. Once it has been cleared, we can take the House bill that is down here, amend it on the Senate bill, and send it back to the House. The House has agreed with the far-reaching thought of mining on asteroids, which will be considered intellectual property so it is preserved for the commercial sector and that would be their property.

This whole commercial space business today, including launching and some of the other activities, unbelievably, is a \$330 billion industry. The commercial launch industry started out on American rockets. Over the course of the last three decades, our launchers were more expensive, and so international competitors came into this—the Russians, in some cases using old Soviet rockets, and the European Space Agency launched the Ariane rocket, which they developed. Other nations also have rockets that offer fierce competition to the American rockets.

The need for this legislation to be passed at this time—by updating the Commercial Space Act—is because we are now seeing commercial enterprises that are set on a road in the NASA authorization bill of 2010 and are becoming so efficient and effective that they are bringing down the cost of launching payloads into orbit. That is also benefitting the U.S. Government, which is buying these launch services in order to get government payloads into orbit. Because of that, we are now seeing some of that international business which went to other countries starting to come back to us. Orbital Sciences has a commercial rocket, and SpaceX has a very successful program. Amazon founder, Jeff Bezos, has a rocket company called Blue Origin and is likewise getting into the commercial space business. There are many others as well.

This is an exciting time for us to be bringing a lot of this activity back to America. Therefore, at the end of the day, what does that mean? More industry, more high-tech, more research and development, more exploration, and more jobs.

So we are seeing increasingly the U.S. Air Force cooperate on their installation, the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, using government property but leased through State or local

space authorities, which are then, in turn, leasing to these commercial operators. A good example that has been tremendously successful for the past several years is an Elon Musk company called SpaceX. They contracted with Space Florida, which had worked out an arrangement with the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station for launch complex 40, for that to be the SpaceX launchpad. They have been enormously successful. They have not only launched government payloads—the NASA cargo to and from the space station—but they have also launched other commercial payloads, government payloads of foreign countries, as well as government payloads of the U.S. Government.

Eventually, that commercial space company, along with the Boeing Company, will be the ones that, in just 2 years, will launch American astronauts on American rockets for the first time since the shutdown of the space shuttle back in 2011—American astronauts on American rockets to and from our international space station. Those two companies are competing for it, but it doesn't mean that just one of the two necessarily wins the competition. Both could be the providers for NASA of ways for us to get Americans on American rockets to our own international space station instead of having to rely on the Russian—very proven and very dependable—Soyuz rocket, which is the only way to get our astronauts there at the moment, until we start flying these other new rockets.

So I wanted to alert the Senate that this is happening as we speak. I hope we get all of the clearances in the Senate later tonight—if not, early in the morning—so that we can get this amended, onto the House bill. It would basically be this: “Strike all after the enacting clause,” put the Senate bill on, which we have already negotiated with the House, get it to the House, let them pass it, and get it to the President for signature. I wanted to bring the Senate up to date on what is happening.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant 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.

TRADE ACT OF 2015

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the body the message to accompany H.R. 1314.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 1314) entitled “An Act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for a right to

an administrative appeal relating to adverse determinations of tax-exempt status of certain organizations,” with an amendment.

MOTION TO CONCUR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 1314.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. McCONNELL. I send a cloture motion to the desk on the motion to concur.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to accompany H.R. 1314, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for a right to an administrative appeal relating to adverse determinations of tax-exempt status of certain organizations.

Mitch McConnell, John Cornyn, Lisa Murkowski, John Thune, Lamar Alexander, John Barrasso, Roger F. Wicker, Orrin G. Hatch, John McCain, Thad Cochran, Thom Tillis, Michael B. Enzi, Mike Rounds, Roy Blunt, Susan M. Collins, Shelley Moore Capito.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 2750

Mr. McCONNELL. I move to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 1314, with a further amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] moves to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 1314, with an amendment numbered 2750.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the end add the following:

“This Act shall take effect 1 day after the date of enactment.”

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays on my motion to concur with amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2751 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2750

Mr. McCONNELL. I have a second-degree amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] proposes an amendment numbered 2751 to amendment No. 2750.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.