

will, of course, keep an open mind. It doesn't mean Congress is going to agree with him. It is going to be a very tough sell because it is hard to understand why indefinite detention for terrorists on U.S. soil is preferable to detaining terrorists who cannot be released in Guantanamo. This is especially true when one considers the fact that bringing terrorists here presents serious risks that simply do not exist if we keep the terrorists in the secure facility down there in Guantanamo Bay.

This much is crystal clear though: If the President wants to be able to import Guantanamo terrorists into Americans' backyards, he is going to have to persuade a majority in Congress to change the law. The law prevents that.

Just last week, big bipartisan majorities in Congress voted twice to underscore the point. We overwhelmingly passed a defense authorization bill with a clear bipartisan prohibition on the President moving Guantanamo terrorists into our country. We overwhelmingly passed a veterans funding bill with a clear bipartisan prohibition on the President improving military facilities for the detention of Guantanamo terrorists in our country.

The Senate has voted many times in recent years to enact these bipartisan protections. We enacted them in Congresses with split party control. We enacted them in Congresses with massive Democratic majorities. The President signed them all into law. So if the President wants to bring Guantanamo terrorists into the United States, he has to change the law. That is the opinion of the President's own Attorney General. She was asked directly this week if the President should ignore legislation passed by Congress that prohibits him from transferring Guantanamo detainees to American soil. This is what Attorney General Loretta Lynch said: "The law currently does not allow for that." Let me repeat that. "The law currently does not allow for that." That is Attorney General Lynch of this administration. That is what the Nation's chief law enforcement officer, a woman appointed by President Obama himself, had to say on his ability to import Guantanamo terrorists into our country.

This isn't exactly a revelation to anybody. The fact that the President is now contemplating flouting the law in pursuit of a campaign promise from years ago means that it is apparently necessary for his own Attorney General to remind everybody that the law is the law, even for President Obama.

There are a multitude of other reasons not to bring these individuals into our country. I plan to continue reminding my colleagues of them here on the floor from time to time.

If the President ever presents some kind of plan we can actually debate, I am sure there will be several different views on it. I am sure we will each have a lot to say. I am sure the President will make his pitch to convince Congress that moving terrorists into

American communities is a good idea. As I said, it will be a hard sell. But the President should make his case if he feels passionately about it. For now, though, we should at least be able to agree with what one of our Democratic colleagues recently said of the President: "He is going to have to comply with the legal restrictions."

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 3762

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due for a second reading.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3762) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 2002 of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2016.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

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

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we all know that the Federal Government has many obligations, but chief among them is to protect the American people from harm. That responsibility is now at the forefront of talk here in our Nation's Capital, and rightfully so. ISIS continues to spread its campaign of terror across the entire world.

The United States is committed to combating terrorism. Our government will do all that is possible to protect the people of this Nation. In this fight against evil ISIS, it is absolutely critical that we as Americans do not lose sight of our Nation's core principles. Those principles are eloquently etched into the base of the Statue of Liberty.

I can remember taking my family there for the first time. I didn't have all my children yet—we had more that had to be born—but my older children still remember that. I remember it.

Here is what it says:

Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The rretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me.

That, of course, is directed to the United States. All across Europe and the Middle East, there are huddled masses of Syrian families desperate to find refuge someplace from Syria's civil war and the ISIS reign of terror. Millions of Syrians fled their country. About 300,000 of them have been killed since the civil war started—300,000. They fled to neighboring nations such as Turkey, Lebanon, and tiny little Jordan.

But the crisis in Syria continues to worsen and people are forced to seek refuge. What else can they do? On a daily basis, Europe's borders are being flooded by people in search of safety and a better life—mothers cradling infants and fathers carrying children in their arms. The nations of Europe have helped. Greece, Germany, and others have accommodated the enormous influx of people as safely as possible.

They are overwhelmed. The United States must do its part. We have a rigorous screening process for when we accept these refugees. The refugees we are accepting are women and children and old and older men with families. Only 2 percent of the refugees are men of military age—2 percent. We accepted a little under 2,000 last year. Two percent of those were of military age.

The United States has a long and proud history of providing refuge to the world's most vulnerable. That history includes my father-in-law, Israel Goldfarb. He and his family came from Russia. They were refugees escaping the programs of a czar. I have been disgusted in recent days to see some of my Republican colleagues shun the American tradition of displaying compassion for those in need, of sheltering those fleeing torture, rape and oppression. Frankly, I have been disappointed by Republican fear-mongering and bigotry.

Apparently they have learned nothing from history. We cannot repeat the dark days of the 1930s when many Americans resolved to turn away helpless refugees fleeing Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler or imprisoned innocent Japanese Americans during World War II, like our late colleague Dan Inouye and his family.

Those mistakes were based on misguided fears of people we did not know. How many people died because of unfounded apprehension? I don't know but far too many. Yet it seems many Republicans are destined to go down that same path again. Some in the Republican Party have suggested that we categorically block all Syrian refugees. One Republican candidate for President suggested we turn away even 5-year-old refugee children. Two other Republican candidates for President implied that the United States of America should have some sort of religious test for refugees. They are saying only Christians.

This is the latest in what has become a disturbing pattern of Republican hatred and intolerance toward Muslims. Remember, Syria is mostly Muslim, but there are Jews, there are Christians—lots of them. During the course of the current Presidential cycle, we have heard from the leading lights of the Republican Party the following: that we are at war with Islam, that we should be shutting down Muslim houses of worship in America, close the mosques, that we should ban Muslims from government service. We have two of my friends who serve in the House of Representatives who are Muslim. They are proud. That religion has made them better people.

Now they are even suggesting that we should reject refugees fleeing persecution on the grounds that they are Muslim. That is not America. That is hate emanating from some Republicans. That anti-Muslim venom from Republicans is a propaganda bonanza for ISIS. Christian groups have responded to those Republican attacks. We have heard what the Pope said: to kill in the name of religion is blasphemous.

World Relief, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service are all dismayed at the anti-refugee fervor pushed forward by Republicans and are urging supporters to contact elected officials on behalf of these victims of the Syrian conflict.

We must pause and think about what they have been through—poison gas, cluster bombs. Let's think about who these refugees are. They are not our enemies. They are expelled from their homeland by the same evil rulers we are fighting. All they want is to find safety, to restart their lives. These people have been persecuted—that is an understatement—by President Assad and ISIS. The Syrian regime, I repeat, has barrel-bombed their own citizens, has unleashed chemical weapons against their own citizens, rapes, justifying the rapes of these hundreds and hundreds of women in the name of their religion—murdering women and children. Those refugees hate Assad. They hate ISIS. That is why they are trying to get out of that horrible situation they find themselves.

The Department of Homeland Security has verified that not one of 1,800 refugees already admitted in the United States has a single confirmed tie to terrorism—not one. To deny our moral obligation to these struggling people would be to abandon the principles of this great country. That is how France feels about it also. On the heels of last week's appalling attacks, the President of France is refusing to neglect France's duty to humanity. Here is what this good man said yesterday:

30,000 refugees will be welcomed over the next two years. Our country has the duty to respect this commitment.

After what they have been through, this is what the President of France

said: Accepting Syrian refugees is the moral thing to do and it is sound policy. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice agrees that the United States must open its arms to those fleeing persecution. Here is what she said:

What the United States has done is to be open to people who are fleeing tyranny, who are fleeing danger, but we have done it in a very careful way.

Secretary Madeleine Albright authored an op-ed this week for Time magazine. Now, remember, she herself was a refugee. That is how she came to this country during World War II. She said Americans must respond with compassion if we are going to defeat ISIS. We can do all we want with refugees. This is no way to win the war, attacking the refugees. Here is what she said, Madeleine Albright:

Our enemies have a plan. They want to divide the world between Muslims and non-Muslims, and between the defenders and attackers of Islam. By making Syrian refugees the enemy, we are playing into their hands. Instead, we need to clarify that the real choice is between those who think it is okay to murder innocent people and those who think it is wrong. By showing that we value every human life, we can make clear to the world where we stand.

What Secretary Albright said and what Secretary Rice said is absolutely right. We process Syrian refugees in a very careful way. It has worked. We are not the nations of Europe. Has anyone stopped for a minute and thought that we have an ocean between us and them, an ocean, the Atlantic Ocean.

The U.S. refugee screening takes place well before any individual comes to our borders. To enter the U.S. refugee program as an applicant, the U.N. Refugee Agency must first select and refer all potential refugees to our program. We accept refugees solely on a referral basis from the United Nation's agency. We do not go out and solicit any of these people. After being referred, all refugees, including those from Syria, are subjected to extremely rigorous screening and security checks. This is not some easy procedure where refugees fly right through the application process and are sent here in a matter of days. No. It takes an average of 18 to 24 months for a refugee to make it through the process to come to the United States.

Remember, the vast majority of these people are checked and rechecked, taking 24 months; they are women and children and old men. I repeat. It takes 18 to 24 months for a refugee to make it through the process of coming to the United States. That is why only 1,800 refugees have been admitted since the start of the conflict out of the millions who are fleeing Syria. Our government accepts only the most vulnerable of the Syrians, survivors of violence and torture, those with severe medical conditions, women and children, but security precautions are not taking a backseat in the process. These Syrian refugees are real people. Images of their plight should be so

visually apparent in our minds. Think of that little boy whom we saw and everyone saw around the world, a picture of this little dead boy washed up on a beach, a drowned Syrian boy whose body was washed up on this Turkish beach, pictures on the front page of newspapers, all the TV programs for several days.

At that time, Democrats and Republicans together responded with calls for compassion and action. I urge Republicans to remember that little boy. We must help where we can. That is who we are. We are America. We come to the defense of the defenseless. We come to the aid of those in need. Right now we are needed. We are a nation—a nation of freedom. We should not forsake our duty and obligation to these struggling people.

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

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 11 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Texas.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after I promulgate two unanimous consent requests, the remaining time between now and 11 a.m. be equally divided between myself and the assistant Democratic leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Texas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 247

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 247 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; I further ask that the bill be read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on behalf of the Democratic ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator PAT LEAHY, and myself, I do object.