



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2016

No. 26

Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable MIKE ROUNDS, a Senator from the State of South Dakota.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Spirit, instruct us in the way we should go. Direct the steps of our lawmakers, leading them beside still waters as You restore their souls. As they put their trust in You, be for them a shield of defense. Lord, preserve them, keeping them from stumbling or slipping. Enable them to rejoice because Your goodness and mercies endure forever. May our Senators remember that You love righteousness and justice. May this knowledge motivate them to follow Your precepts, earnestly striving to glorify Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer 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.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,

Washington, DC, February 12, 2016.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MIKE ROUNDS, a Sen-

ator from the State of South Dakota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ROUNDS thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

RECOGNIZING MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, more than 100 years ago, Albert Einstein proposed the theory of relativity. He predicted that violent events in the early universe shocked the cosmos, sending gravity waves rippling through the fabric of space time. By the time these waves reached Earth, they would be "vanishingly small," and, with the technology available in Einstein's day, impossible to detect. But after 100 more years of science and innovation, scientists announced yesterday that, with their new cosmic hearing aid, they have heard the first ripples from space.

I congratulate the men and women of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration, an international project of over 900 scientists led by MIT and Caltech, for

their hard work and dedication. Using cutting-edge facilities in Louisiana and Washington State, scientists detected a vibration in the space-time continuum, opening our ears, not just our eyes, to space.

A billion years ago in a distant galaxy, two black holes spiraled inward on each other. Their eventual collapse released the energy of a billion trillion suns in a fraction of a second and sent gravity waves rippling through space and time. Gravity waves compress space in one direction and stretch it in the other. Since this push and pull weakens with distance, scientists have long thought gravity waves would be too faint to measure on Earth. But yesterday scientists proved such skepticism wrong. With their latest detector at the ready, scientists were waiting and listening for any faint sign of these waves. And on September 14, 2015, scientists heard a short chirp on their instruments that turned out to be the billion-year echo of a faraway past.

For the first time, we can hear the *Musica Universalis* because of our investment in basic science research. Throughout the 40-year, \$1.1 billion project, the National Science Foundation withstood harsh criticism about their funding to support the detection of gravitational waves that were thought to be undetectable on Earth. But it was NSF's commitment to basic science research and the dedication of Dr. Rainer Weiss of MIT, Dr. Kip Thorne of Caltech, Dr. Ronald Drever of the University of Glasgow, and an international team of scientists that has made yesterday's announcement possible.

This discovery is a triumph for science and a testament to the payoff of long-term public investment in basic science research. It further illuminates our understanding of the universe and opens the door for a whole new way of peering into the cosmos. I congratulate all those involved in turning on the sound to the stars.

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



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S885

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. MCCONNELL:

S. Con. Res. 31. A concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment or recess of the Senate and an adjournment of the House of Representatives; considered and agreed to.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 579

At the request of Mr. GRASSLEY, the name of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. MANCHIN) was added as a cosponsor of S. 579, a bill to amend the Inspector General Act of 1978 to strengthen the independence of the Inspectors General, and for other purposes.

S. 2426

At the request of Mr. GARDNER, the name of the Senator from Illinois (Mr. KIRK) was added as a cosponsor of S. 2426, a bill to direct the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to obtain observer status for Taiwan in the International Criminal Police Organization, and for other purposes.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 31—PROVIDING FOR A CONDITIONAL ADJOURNMENT OR RECESS OF THE SENATE AND AN ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. MCCONNELL submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. CON. RES. 31

Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), That when the Senate recesses or adjourns on any day from Thursday, February 11, 2016, through Saturday, February 20, 2016, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand recessed or adjourned until 12:00 noon on Monday, February 22, 2016, or such other time on that day as may be specified by its Majority Leader or his designee in the motion to recess or adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first; and that when the House adjourns on any legislative day from Friday, February 12, 2016, through Tuesday, February 16, 2016, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned until 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 23, 2016, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 3 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first.

SEC. 2. (a) The Majority Leader of the Senate or his designee, after concurrence with the Minority Leader of the Senate, shall notify the Members of the Senate to reassemble at such place and time as he may designate if, in his opinion, the public interest shall warrant it.

(b) After reassembling pursuant to subsection (a), when the Senate adjourns on a motion offered pursuant to this subsection

by its Majority Leader or his designee, the Senate shall again stand adjourned pursuant to the first section of this concurrent resolution.

SEC. 3. (a) The Speaker or his designee, after consultation with the Minority Leader of the House, shall notify the Members of the House to reassemble at such place and time as he may designate if, in his opinion, the public interest shall warrant it.

(b) After reassembling pursuant to subsection (a), when the House adjourns on a motion offered pursuant to this subsection by its Majority Leader or his designee, the House shall again stand adjourned pursuant to the first section of this concurrent resolution.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 153, 148, 204, 263, 329, 375, and 421.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Sunil Sabharwal, of California, to be United States Alternate Executive Director of the International Monetary Fund for a term of two years; Azita Raji, of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Sweden; Brian James Egan, of Maryland, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State; Samuel D. Heins, of Minnesota, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Norway; John L. Estrada, of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; Thomas A. Shannon, Jr., of Virginia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Ambassador, to be an Under Secretary of State (Political Affairs); and David McKean, of Massachusetts, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Luxembourg.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the nominations.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. If there is no further debate, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Sabharwal, Raji, Egan, Heins, Estrada, Shannon, and McKean nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc, the President be immediately notified of

the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

DESIGNATING "LIU XIAOBO PLAZA"

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 2451 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2451) to designate the area between the intersections of International Drive, Northwest and Van Ness Street, Northwest and International Drive, Northwest and International Place, Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, as "Liu Xiaobo Plaza," and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and that the Senate vote on passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading and was read the third time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there further debate on the bill?

Hearing none, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (S. 2451) was passed, as follows:

S. 2451

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION OF LIU XIAOBO PLAZA.

(a) DESIGNATION OF PLAZA.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The area between the intersections of International Drive, Northwest and Van Ness Street, Northwest and International Drive, Northwest and International Place, Northwest in Washington, District of Columbia, shall be known and designated as "Liu Xiaobo Plaza".

(2) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the area referred to in paragraph (1) shall be deemed to be a reference to Liu Xiaobo Plaza.

(b) DESIGNATION OF ADDRESS.—

(1) DESIGNATION.—The address of 3505 International Place, Northwest, Washington, District of Columbia, shall be redesignated as 1 Liu Xiaobo Plaza.

(2) REFERENCES.—Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other