

joint combined planning cell, an operation center, to conduct military intelligence activities in partnership with Saudi Arabia.

Here is why this matters so much: It has a huge impact on the lives of the people in Yemen. It is very possible the planes we refueled are responsible for conducting a series of three airstrikes in Saada last month, killing 5 civilians and wounding 14 more, including 4 children, as well as paramedics trying to pull survivors out of the rubble after that first strike, or that the planes we refueled played a role in striking a hotel last August that turned the building's ceiling black with the charred blood of 50 farmers who were staying in that building. We know that the bombs we have sold to the Saudis are killing many civilians. It is time for us here to reckon with that fact.

A lot of Americans may not even know we are involved in this war. It has not been widely discussed. There are so many things going on across the planet at this time—so much going on in Syria, for example, that perhaps Americans in general are not paying attention. But we should be paying attention because of the carnage that is occurring: 10,000 civilians have been killed since this conflict began. The great, vast bulk of those civilians are dying from air strikes conducted by Saudi Arabia that we are supporting through intelligence and target assistance and refueling. Then there are the consequences of that bombardment. The result is just a tremendous humanitarian crisis.

The Saudis have been involved in blockading the ability to get humanitarian supplies into Yemen—food and medicine and fuel. This has resulted in what the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, has warned could become “the largest famine the world has seen for many decades.” Seven million Yemenis are on the verge of starvation because of this war that we are involved in and the related Saudi blockade of food and medicine.

About every day, 130 Yemeni children die from extreme hunger and disease—130 a day. One of the factors that is killing people is cholera. Since October of 2016—so roughly a little less than a year and a half ago—1 million Yemenis have contracted cholera. More than 2,000 have died from it. It is the largest cholera outbreak in recorded history. Let me say that again: 1 million Yemenis have contracted cholera, and it is the largest cholera outbreak in recorded history. So 7 million Yemenis are on the verge of starvation, 1 million have contracted cholera, and so many are dying because of this war we are involved in.

The death and destruction in Yemen is unimaginable, and the United States needs to take a hard look at the role we are playing—a role we are playing in violation of our Constitution and in violation of the War Powers Act of

1973. That is the issue we are going to be discussing here on the floor.

I know there is some popularity in saying: Let's not look at that humanitarian crisis and our role in it; let's just look at the relationship we have with Saudi Arabia and know that they have helped us in other cases—for example, the war on ISIS. Let's know that they are a good customer for many of our products and for many of our military products. But I say to my colleagues: This issue is bigger than simply a good marketplace or a good relationship with Saudi Arabia. This goes to our involvement, our culpability in the deaths of thousands of Yemenis and 130 children a day through bombs falling on them, through hunger, starvation, through cholera.

It is hard for me to think about this young child in this picture, this young Yemeni, who clearly is the victim either of cholera or starvation or some other consequence of this conflict. But imagine 130 of these children dying every day.

It is our responsibility to honor the Constitution, and it is our responsibility as humans on this planet to wrestle with the fact that our involvement is contributing to this vast humanitarian disaster. Let us not abdicate our responsibility on the basis of friendship with another nation based on the fact that they are a good market for our products or that we think they may be future partners in some other agenda. We have a direct responsibility in war and peace that we have not fulfilled, and this week, with this coming resolution tomorrow, is a point that we must wrestle with this. Let us wrestle with it and honor the Constitution and give some integrity to the 1973 War Powers Resolution.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 1865 be vitiated, and that at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader, on Wednesday, March 21, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1865; further, that the only amendments in order be Wyden amendments Nos. 2212 and 2213; finally, that there be up to 4 hours of debate concurrently on the amendments, and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote in relation to the amendments in the order listed, with a 60-vote affirmative threshold required for adoption of each amendment, the bill be read a third time, and the Senate vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with no further intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S.J. RES. 54

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following

the resumption of the motion to proceed to H.R. 1865, on Tuesday, March 20, Senator SANDERS, or his designee, be recognized to offer a motion to discharge S.J. Res. 54; further, that there be up to 4 hours of debate, equally divided between the opponents and the proponents of the resolution, and that following the use or yielding back of that time the Senate vote in relation to the motion to discharge.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 471.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Nazakhtar Nikakhtar, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Nikakhtar nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for 50 years, the Vermont State Housing Authority, VSHA, has helped make available secure, safe, and affordable housing in my home State of Vermont.

Founded in 1968, the Vermont State Housing Authority provides thousands of Vermonters with the resources they need to find housing that works for them. As the first statewide housing authority in the Nation, VSHA was a pioneer in the field, as they built a successful program from the ground up without existing State models or best practices to replicate.

Not only does VSHA help Vermonters of all ages and backgrounds find a home through Federal or State programs, they also provide critical support to those who need it most. The VSHA offers a variety of assistance and resources to the refugee population that has settled in Vermont, including free interpreter services and the promise of a friendly face ready to help navigate a new beginning in an unfamiliar culture. Further, VSHA staff make what can be a frightening transition more tailored, personal, and comfortable—helping new citizens acclimate and assimilate into their new communities.

From connecting families in need with resources from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to developing innovative programs that inspire self-sufficiency and long-term independence, to promoting affordable housing for veterans, VSHA is involved in every community in Vermont. VSHA, through the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, helps families achieve economic stability and independence. As of the fall of last year, the program has graduated 194 people and has assisted a total of 153 Vermonters in becoming first-time homeowners through the homeownership program. While homeownership is a critical piece of building wealth and a hallmark of the American dream, it is often a far off dream for many families who struggle just to find a stable and affordable place to call home.

As more and more families struggle to make ends meet, especially when affordable units are few and far in between and housing prices continue to rise, the team at VSHA, led by their executive director of more than 30 years, Richard Williams, has worked hard to ensure that we work to meet the needs of our community. Though support for our most vulnerable populations is first and foremost in the minds of the VSHA team, it is clear that civic engagement and involvement plays a large role as well. The VSHA is involved in partnerships with dozens of Vermont nonprofit organizations, State and Federal agencies, and private sector businesses. Through their work rehabilitating and managing buildings, VSHA has revitalized our communities and downtowns one by one.

The Vermont State Housing Authority has made a lasting difference in the lives of Vermonters across our great State. For that, I thank them. On behalf of all Vermonters, congratulations on 50 years of hard work, dedication, and outstanding commitment to those you serve.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WAYSIDE RESTAURANT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, my wife, Marcelle, and I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the Wayside's 100th anniversary.

I remember when my sister, Mary, brother, John, and I would go with my parents, Howard and Alba Leahy, for a special treat: Sunday after church, we would go to the Wayside for lunch.

I remember my mother speaking Italian with some of the people there, but it was particularly special because of the fact that we would see everybody we knew from Montpelier and Barre, where my father was born.

Even today, I hold those memories from when I was a child, and I have thought of them every time Marcelle and I have brought our children, and now our grandchildren, for lunch at the Wayside. This is one of the institutions that makes Vermont the most special place in our country.

I ask unanimous consent that a press release commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Wayside Restaurant be printed in the RECORD.

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

[Feb. 16, 2018]

2018 MARKS VERMONT'S WAYSIDE RESTAURANT'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY

MONTPELIER.—In 1918, the Allies declared victory in World War 1, Babe Ruth pitched 29½ scoreless innings for the Red Sox in the World Series, Woodrow Wilson was President, color movies were invented, and Effie Ballou opened the Wayside on the Barre-Montpelier Road.

Originally just a roadside eatery, the Wayside Restaurant has withstood the test of time and is ready to celebrate its 100th Anniversary this year! In an industry where 70 percent of all restaurants fail after 10 years, the Wayside has defied the odds.

Throughout the year, there will be meal and dessert specials. In July, the actual month the Wayside opened; there will be a Customer Appreciation Party on July 29th from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The Wayside Creamery will host a free Ice Cream Social and at sundown all guests will be treated to a special fireworks display! Be sure to save the date.

For those who want to learn more about the Wayside and its long history go to www.WaysideRestaurant.com. There is also a new book on sale at the restaurant commemorating their 100th Anniversary titled, *It's Worth The Ride To The Wayside: Celebrating 100 Years with Anniversary Ale, Yankee Cooking and Ice Cream*. And yes, the book includes several of the Wayside's delicious comfort food recipes!

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. HEINRICH. Mr. President, I was unavoidably absent due to a death in my family for rollcall votes Nos. 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, and 55. Had I been present I would have voted nay on all the rollcall votes in relation to S. 2155, the Economic Growth, Regulatory Relief, and Consumer Protection Act. I would have also voted nay on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Kevin McAleenan to be Commissioner

of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, rollcall vote No. 55; PNI373.

HOUSING OPPORTUNITY MORTGAGE EXPANSION ACT

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, as chairman of the Senate Banking Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development, today I wish to engage in a colloquy to discuss legislation that I introduced, the Housing Opportunity Mortgage Expansion, HOME, Act, with several of my colleagues to address an issue involving the Federal Home Loan Bank, FHLB, system. The FHLB system is a cooperative organization of 11 banks that support a mission of "helping American families realize the dream of home ownership, stimulate the creation of affordable housing, and improve the local business environment." FHLBs are privately capitalized by their 7,300 members and are subject to strict oversight by the Federal Housing Finance Agency, FHFA. The HOME Act is designed to correct the FHFA's perceived statutory limitation in the FHL Bank Act that does not permit captive insurers to be considered a class of the eligible insurance companies for membership in FHLBs.

In 2016, the FHFA determined that captive insurance firms were not insurance firms for purposes of the FHLB Act. In making this determination, the FHFA abruptly terminated the membership of approximately four dozen captive insurance entities, including mortgage real estate investment trusts, REITs, that were active and responsible members of the FHLB system. These insurance captives greatly contributed to the affordable housing mission of FHLBs through the use of private capital versus taxpayer dollars, something that we should always encourage. I thank Senators DUCKWORTH, JOHNSON, and BALDWIN for their support of this legislation, which I am hopeful will receive favorable consideration by this body in the future.

I yield to my friend from Illinois.

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, thank you. I thank the chairman and my colleagues from Wisconsin for their support of this bipartisan legislation, which I introduced in January and filed as an amendment to S. 2155. As the chairman stated, as a result of the 2016 regulation, many of the FHLB system's captive insurance members have had or will soon have their membership terminated. Our legislation seeks to ensure that captive insurer affiliates of institutions that are active providers of private capital in the mortgage market are eligible to restore or continue their membership.

Their membership is crucial to reliable access to low-cost funding for home mortgages and affordable housing initiatives in Illinois. For the Federal Home Loan Bank of Chicago, these members serve as an important source of private capital in the mortgage market. Their membership broadens access