

the United States already for over a year. So it would not be a magnet for those who would like to come and take advantage of it in the future. It wouldn't apply to them, but it does apply to 1.8 million who would be eligible for citizenship.

I am sorry that there was an objection, but I will continue to work with Members on both sides of the aisle to resolve this. We owe it to Dalia and to many others like her who are waiting for Congress to act.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE).** The Senator from North Carolina.

CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF PASTOR ANDREW BRUNSON

**Mr. TILLIS.** Mr. President, sadly, I have to do a speech that I promised I would do every week until we find justice for someone who has been in a Turkish prison now for a number of days. This is Pastor Brunson. He is a Presbyterian minister from Black Mountain. He has been in Turkey for 20 years, doing missionary work for a small church that I will describe briefly later.

On October 4, 2016, he was swept up in President Erdogan's regime's reaction to an unlawful coup—a coup that I disagree with. I believe in a peaceful transition of power, and I do believe that people who are responsible for it should be subject to Turkish laws. But the roundup of people by President Erdogan—he cast a very wide net—went so far beyond any reasonable expectation of people who could have been involved in the coup attempt. On October 4, 2016, a Presbyterian minister from Black Mountain, NC—the same church that Billy Graham was a part of—found himself arrested on charges for being a potential terrorist and plotting a coup.

He is in a Turkish prison. He has been in that prison now for 593 days—593 days, almost 17 months—without charges. He is held in a prison cell that is designed for 8 people but has 21 people in it. He is not really allowed to speak with his family. In fact, the only family he has seen over the last 593 days has been his wife, because they have been afraid to let his children come into the country for fear that they would not be allowed to leave, nor will his wife Norine leave the country for fear that she will not be able to come back. She is his only connection to his family. It has been 593 days.

I want to go back and tell you what really underlines why they think this Presbyterian minister is a part of the coup attempt or a terrorist organization. It is because they believe that religions in the United States are somehow joined together in this intelligence-gathering network so that, instead of doing missionary work, they can go into these countries and infiltrate their systems and then force coups or support or provide aid to people who would commit a terrorist act against the Turkish homeland—something that I would object to and some-

thing of which I would say that anybody who does that should be subject to Turkish law.

They believe this of Pastor Brunson, a pastor of a church in Izmir, who for many years, when he was doing missionary work, didn't even have a church. They finally were able to get the resources together. They have 50 members. This is a 50-member congregation in a church in Izmir, which is one of the more populous cities in the Turkey.

This is a very small church. On a packed day, on a Sunday, you may be able to fit 120 people in it. They open the doors so that people walking down the street can hear what they are talking about. They open the windows. They invite anybody in it.

Part of the case is that they believe that people who have entered that church are Kurdish, and because they are Kurdish, they must be associated with the PKK, and if they are associated with the PKK, then, clearly, they were involved with terrorist attempts against Turkey.

This church was also used in evidence. You see the picture. There is a small room upstairs in this very small church. There have been over one dozen secret witnesses. In a Turkish court, he doesn't have a trial by jury. He has three judges, and there is a prosecutor who is elevated, effectively, to be another judge, whom he is testifying before. One of the secret witnesses said that he clearly is guilty of nefarious activity because one night he saw a window open in this church for about 4 hours. That was the evidence submitted.

There is a problem with that. No. 1, generally speaking, in our country, having a light on doesn't necessarily go directly to being prosecuted for terrorism or conspiracy to commit terrorism. There is another problem with this allegation. This room doesn't have a window. There is no possible way somebody could have seen the light. Even if you would argue that seeing a light could somehow be linked to terrorist activity, you can't even see it.

To make matters worse, after more than a dozen secret witnesses came on, many of them in Turkish prisons themselves for the prosecution, the defense asked if they had 10 witnesses who would testify on his behalf. The judges said they would not be allowed to testify because they are suspects. They haven't been charged with anything, necessarily. They may not even be incarcerated, but they are suspects. Therefore, he has no opportunity whatsoever to defend himself.

I am about to go back and do a final vote on the National Defense Authorization Act. We have to get President Erdogan's attention. In a bill that we are going to have on this floor in the next couple of weeks, I believe we are going to send a very clear message to the President and to the people of Turkey to treat our people fairly, to treat with respect a nation that is prepared

to send American men and women to Turkey to fight and die for their freedom. If they don't, then we are going to have to continue to up the temperature until justice is done for Pastor Brunson and others in Turkish prisons.

I yield the floor.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The majority leader.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

**Mr. McCONNELL.** Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, all postcloture time on the McWilliams nominations be considered expired at 12 noon on Thursday, May 24; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Evans nomination, the time until 1:45 p.m. be equally divided in the usual form, and at 1:45 p.m., the Senate vote on the nomination; finally, that if any of the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

**Mr. McCONNELL.** Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 603. I ask consent that there be 10 hours of debate equally divided in the usual form and that following the use or yielding back of time, 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.** Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### 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.

##### VA MISSION BILL

**Mr. DURBIN.** Mr. President, the Senate today passed the VA MISSION Act, a long overdue piece legislation of that would finally provide an overhaul of the healthcare system at the Department of Veterans Affairs that is desperately needed. The bill would

streamline and consolidate community care into a single comprehensive program, standardizing eligibility for this program and repealing the Choice program after 1 year.

The MISSION Act also includes a phasing in of an expanded Caregiver program, so that veterans of all eras can access this important benefit. This is an issue I have long worked on, having helped create the original Caregivers program at the VA. This expansion will likely help thousands of family caregivers.

In addition, the MISSION Act will help the VA better recruit quality healthcare professionals with academic and financial incentives, as well as help ensure access to care in rural and underserved areas.

I understand that there are some concerns about this legislation.

The asset and infrastructure review provision, which has been compared to the BRAC review of DOD facilities, is contentious. I joined Senator MANCHIN in efforts to pass a version of this without the AIR provision. I am disappointed that effort was blocked by our Republican colleagues, but I also appreciate the efforts of my Democratic colleagues in helping ensure safeguards in the bill around the AIR provision, so that any process includes coordination with and review by Congress, veterans service organizations, the public, and other stakeholders every step of the way.

I also recognize that there is a serious concern about privatization at the VA, a concern that is especially acute under this administration and given the fact that the VA lacks senior leadership.

Congress will need to ensure continued strong funding for the VA so that we are not sacrificing investments in VA infrastructure, direct patient care, medical research, and more in exchange for community care—which will be costly—under the MISSION Act.

We will need to continue to provide oversight during the process of selecting a VA Secretary, one who will balance the need of some veterans to access authorized private care with protecting the VA system. I look forward to meeting with the VA Secretary nominee to assess his qualifications on this and other matters soon.

It is easy for us Members of Congress to speak about this bill on the floor—to thank our veterans and their families for their service—but it is more meaningful, more important to do what we can through action.

Some of my proudest moments in Congress have included efforts to recognize, honor, and thank our veterans, but the very least we can do for our veterans is to ensure they get the care they need.

I have been working with my colleague, Senator DUCKWORTH, to help ensure that veterans and their spouses at the Illinois Veterans Home at Quincy receive high quality care, because, for the past 3 years, IVH Quincy has

been dealing with several Legionnaires' outbreaks, outbreaks that have sickened more than 65 and, sadly, killed 13.

It is unacceptable that 13 veterans died from contracting the Legionella bacteria before this Governor finally produced a comprehensive plan of action.

I have worked with and will continue to work with State and Federal officials to ensure that IVH Quincy has the technical and financial support it needs.

Let me close with this: The VA MISSION Act reflects this sentiment as well—too often, our servicemembers return home only to find themselves facing challenge after challenge, suffering from the physical and mental wounds of war. This bill will help ensure that we uphold the promise we have made, to provide the care, support, and respect our veterans have earned and deserve.

I want to thank my colleagues Senators ISAKSON and TESTER for their good-faith efforts on this bill. I am pleased to join them and others in the Senate in supporting this legislation.

(At the request of Mr. DURBIN, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 106 on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 2372, the VA MISSION Act of 2018. On vote No. 106, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 2372, the VA MISSION Act of 2018.●

#### REMOVAL OF NOMINATION OBJECTION

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, on May 10, I announced my intention to object to a unanimous consent request for the Senate to take up the nomination of Christopher C. Krebs who has been nominated by President Trump to serve as Under secretary of the National Protection and Programs Directorate at the Department of Homeland Security, DHS. I did so because DHS had yet to clear for public release important information about vulnerabilities in U.S. telephone networks that are being exploited, potentially by foreign governments, to target Americans.

Last week, I discussed with Mr. Krebs our shared interest in protecting Americans from sophisticated cyber security threats, particularly those that exploit flaws in U.S. communications networks. I am pleased to say that DHS subsequently provided me with a letter that included much of the information that I had previously requested. I intend to make this letter public in the coming days and believe that it will further much needed debate about the security of U.S. telephone

networks and the Federal Communications Commission's lax approach to regulating the privacy and cyber security practices of wireless carriers.

In light of this action, I will no longer object to any unanimous consent request for the Senate to take up Mr. Krebs's nomination.

#### HONORING PRIVATE MARTIN A. TREPTOW

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, today I wish to honor Martin A. Treptow who bravely served as a private in the U.S. Army during the First World War.

Martin enlisted in the Iowa National Guard in 1917 while working as a barber in Cherokee, IA, and was soon stationed in France as part of the 168th Infantry of the 42nd Division, the famed Rainbow Division. During the assault on Hill 212 on La Croix Rouge Farm, Martin courageously volunteered to deliver an important message to another platoon, despite heavy enemy fire. Martin successfully completed his mission but paid the ultimate sacrifice in doing so.

As his belongings were being prepared to send home to his family and friends, Martin's diary was found. His diary included an entry entitled "My Pledge," and Martin had written: "America must win this war. Therefore, I will work, I will save, I will ensure, I will fight cheerfully and do my utmost, as if the issue of the whole struggle depended on me alone."

I ask my colleagues to join me as I proudly recognize Martin A. Treptow, whose heroic actions and inspiring words epitomize the duty and sacrifice of all the brave men and women who serve and have served the United States in defense of our freedom.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### CENTENNIAL OF GRENVILLE, SOUTH DAKOTA

• Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I recognize Grenville, SD. The town of Grenville will be celebrating its centennial on June 8 through June 10, 2018. Grenville will host centennial events which include a parade, street dances, a softball tournament, raffles, a pig roast, children events, and much more.

Grenville, located in Day County, was given the christened name of Zielona Gora, meaning "green hills," which is an accurate description of the area's beautiful sloping hills and majestic landscape. Since its founding 100 years ago, the community of Grenville remains resilient in upholding South Dakota values. Today the robust traditions passed down by determined settlers continue to endure throughout the Grenville community.

I offer my congratulations to the citizens of Grenville on their centennial celebration and wish them continued prosperity in the years to come.●