

can't drive a bus from home, the UPS driver who can't deliver packages from home, the healthcare aide who can't administer medications to seniors from home, the agriculture worker who can't pick coffee beans from home, and the postal worker who can't deliver the mail from home.

Millions of people are suffering in our country today. They should be able to count on the Senate to step up and take action to help them. At this very moment, negotiators are deciding whom we will help and who will be left behind. Democrats are fighting to protect essential workers and help the unemployed.

Republicans are fighting to protect businesses from their own negligence and allow corporate executives—corporate executives—to write off their business lunches. These very different priorities reflect very different values and point out what is at stake in these negotiations. Protecting and assisting essential workers is a value. It isn't enough to simply tell them “thank you very much” and call them heroes. Actions speak louder than words. It is time for us to act. It is long past time for us to act.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
S. RES. 458

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, thousands of radical Islamists rallied on Friday in Northwestern Pakistan in support of a man who earlier this week walked into a courtroom in the city of Peshawar and gunned down a U.S. citizen on trial for blasphemy. That is how the New York Times started its article on this issue last week. The American, Tahir Naseem, died of his wounds before he could be taken to the hospital while the gunman was taken into custody.

The U.S. State Department said Naseem was standing trial after being lured to Pakistan from his home in Illinois. He was entrapped by the country's controversial blasphemy law, which international rights groups have sought to have repealed. The blasphemy law calls for the death penalty for anyone found guilty of insulting Islam, but, in Pakistan, the mere allegation of blasphemy can cause mobs to riot and vigilantes to kill those who have been accused. Pakistani officials said Naseem was charged with blasphemy after he declared himself to be Islam's prophet. That was the accusation that was laid against him.

At the rally in Peshawar, which was in support of the person who murdered

the American citizen, the demonstrators carried signs that praised the murderer for the killing and called for his immediate release from jail. They said he killed Naseem because the government was too slow in prosecuting blasphemy cases.

Last December—8 months ago—I filed a resolution to speak with a unified voice on what I considered to be a nonpartisan issue—a simple statement from this Congress condemning blasphemy laws across the world wherever they exist. We are a nation that stands for the ability of every individual to choose any faith, to change one's faith, or for one to have no faith at all. That is a basic human right. Yet, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, 84 countries—more than one-third of the world's countries—have a blasphemy law on the books, including in Pakistan, where an American citizen was murdered last week under an accusation of blasphemy.

This resolution that I filed 8 months ago with the Foreign Affairs Committee has already moved in the House. The House Foreign Affairs Committee worked through the process of this resolution in March of this year and passed it unanimously. It was sponsored by Democrat JAMIE RASKIN and had the support of multiple Democrats on the Foreign Affairs Committee. It was overwhelmingly moved while this resolution—a mere eight pages—has sat, unmoved, for 8 months.

The Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, who was appointed by Speaker PELOSI, has said that USCIRF—that is this organization—has noted countless times that Pakistan's blasphemy law inflames interreligious tensions and too often leads to violence. He urges the State Department to enter into a binding agreement with the Pakistani Government that includes the repeal of blasphemy provisions in the Pakistan Penal Code. I could not agree more.

The Trump administration has spoken out on this, and the House of Representatives has spoken out on this. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a nonpartisan group, has spoken out on this. We in the Senate should also speak out on it, and the time to speak out on it is when we have just had an American citizen murdered overseas because of these laws. It is prime time to move this. This is something that, I believe, should be passed by unanimous consent. How could we oppose the movement of something like this?

Now, I have heard that, possibly, we should slow this whole thing down because resolutions like this should have a fulsome committee process. They should be heard and marked up and read and reread, and 8 months is not enough time to review them. The problem with that is that, last week, a Democratic resolution on elections in Belarus was filed. It was never heard by the Committee on Foreign Rela-

tions here in the Senate. Yet it was discharged, placed on the hotline yesterday morning, and cleared last night.

So, for Democratic bills, they don't have to go through the committee process, apparently. They can just move through on their own because the Republicans have not opposed those. The Republicans take the time to read these on their own—to go through the resolutions and make decisions on them. That resolution had a majority of Democratic sponsors, but it also had Republican sponsors.

This resolution is sponsored by CHRIS COONS and me. We also consider it to be a nonpartisan issue. Something that has sat in the committee for 8 months, waiting, surely can move when something that was filed last week and never heard by the Committee on Foreign Relations could move on the hotline in a single day.

So I bring this resolution because I think we should speak out on this as the House has already spoken out on it, as the State Department has already spoken out on it, as the Trump administration has already spoken out on it, and as USCIRF has already spoken out on it. Why wouldn't 100 Senators speak out on this blasphemy resolution today?

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Foreign Relations be discharged from further consideration and that the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 458. I further ask the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, in reserving the right to object, first of all, I note that the customary path for bills and resolutions is for them to be considered by their committees of jurisdiction, marked up through regular process, and reported out to the Senate floor.

I understand that many Members of this body have noble causes and good ideas that fall under the jurisdiction of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Unfortunately, the chairman has only held one real legislative markup this entire year—in May. That one meeting, which included multiple pieces of substantive, bipartisan efforts, was ended prematurely before many pieces of vital legislation could be acted upon and without having a vote on even a single amendment. While the minority was strongly supportive of more legislative activity, the chairman pulled down another legislative markup, without any explanation, in the first week of July and yet another one, just this week, without any explanation.

Regardless of those facts, I can tell you that I don't believe the majority, which has the convening power—and, lately, when it does list a committee

hearing or a markup unilaterally decides to do so—has ever sought committee activity for Senator LANKFORD's resolution. This is the first time—and I would assume for others—that many are seeing it.

He mentions the 8 months. I am sure that he could speak to the chairman of the committee by virtue of his being of the majority party, the Republican Party, but the chairman hasn't brought his resolution forward. If he is chagrined that for 8 months it has been languishing in the committee, it is because Chairman RISCH has neither asked for it to be included when there was a business markup nor asked for it now.

It is true that, on occasion, a resolution gets released. I did one for ROB PORTMAN regarding Otto Warmbier—it was the anniversary of the tragic moment—and it was released to the Senate floor. Yet there are many other critically important legislative items that have been marked up and are ready for action on the floor.

Last December, the Defending American Security from Kremlin Aggression Act, or what we know as DASKA, passed out of the Committee on Foreign Relations, through regular order, with a strong bipartisan vote. It has been pending on the floor for nearly 8 months. Over the course of that time, Russian aggression has manifested itself in Syria, Libya, and on the streets of Europe, where opponents of the Putin regime have been assassinated.

This past week, all Senators were briefed on the broader question of foreign interference in our elections, and we know it is a threat and that it is real and growing. If the Senate should dedicate any time to a foreign policy issue, it seems to me that this should be it. Our election is in 88 days. Yet the Senate trudges along, blind to the threat before our very eyes.

DASKA should be the business of the Senate floor, and it should be passed. Similarly, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations passed a Saudi Arabia bill more than a year ago, and it has been waiting for floor action. I could go on and on.

Now, I don't want to undermine the importance of the issue that Senator LANKFORD is trying to address. Around the world, we see autocratic rulers imposing blasphemy laws as a way of targeting the freedom of religion and speech of those who enjoy that or should enjoy that freedom of religion and speech. His resolution rightly condemns blasphemy laws for violating international human rights standards, and it raises serious concerns.

Yet I would just say that we need to have a moment of self-reflection. This resolution doesn't say anything about this administration's disparaging attitudes and comments about certain religions and ethnicities. How can we have this conversation without addressing President Trump's reported expression of approval of concentration camps for Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang?

Under the leadership of the President and Secretary Pompeo, the administration has downplayed human rights abuses in countries from North Korea to the Persian Gulf; has coddled a dictator who ordered the horrific murder of journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi; verbally attacked the principle of freedom of the press; instituted the Muslim ban that sent chills around the world about the U.S. commitment to freedom of religion; and slashed the admission of refugees, many of whom were persecuted religious minorities. Certainly, the Committee on Foreign Relations in the Senate should be saying something about that record as well.

As a matter of fact, between fiscal year 2017 and 2018, the administration reduced the admission to the United States of Christian refugees by 36 percent and of Muslim refugees by 85 percent. We should also be discussing how the U.S. Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has been left vacant for over 3 years.

In closing, I believe addressing blasphemy laws and standing up for the freedom of religion and the protection of religious minorities is urgent and warrants much further attention from both the Committee on Foreign Relations and of this body as a whole.

I urge Senator LANKFORD to work with Chairman RISCH to schedule a legislative markup so that this resolution, as well as other important initiatives, can be considered under regular order because, when his resolution or others are before it, there is an opportunity to amend them, to augment them, and to include other issues, even within the context of the issue of religious freedom.

That is not provided here, and for those reasons I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I want to ask my colleague if there is a difference between this resolution and the resolution on elections in Belarus that was filed last week, was discharged, and then passed on the hotline yesterday.

Obviously there are lots of other issues about elections. There has been a lot of conversation that we have had about elections worldwide and about security of elections, but that particular resolution wasn't held up to go through the Foreign Relations Committee to discuss international elections more. It was discharged, and it was sent to the floor on a hotline, and Republicans and Democrats alike agreed on that resolution and passed it through.

Is there a substantive difference between this resolution and that one?

Mr. MENENDEZ. The issues that were expressed in Senator DURBIN's resolution had been issues before the committee on the issue of Belarus. As a matter of fact, even today, the nominee to be the U.S. Ambassador has been

discussed. So that issue has been discussed.

Unfortunately, although I think it has merit, the issue of religious freedom, as you have defined in your resolution, has not. So at least the substance of the issue has been the possibility of the debate.

I would simply say that I know you are highlighting that one resolution. Yes, our colleague from Ohio, Senator PORTMAN, brought to my attention the anniversary of Otto Warmbier, and it was happening before—and he said: I did not ask for it to come before the committee. I thought that it should, and it fell between the cracks. So we agreed. But that doesn't mean that everybody is going to come to the floor and not give the committee members the chance to work on resolutions and to have their views cast on that resolution for the full body to consider.

Mr. LANKFORD. Reclaiming my time, it is a lesson learned because the challenge of the Foreign Relations Committee is that almost nothing has been able to get through—no Ambassadors, no resolutions. Everything is not good enough. Everything is not big enough. Quite frankly, everything doesn't attack the Trump Presidency and the Trump State Department, which really becomes the issue.

So even things that are nonpartisan, that we all have wide agreement on—that the House of Representatives was 100 percent in agreement on—can't even get a hearing here, can't even move through. And when an American citizen is killed over a blasphemy law issue, we still can't speak as the Senate. It is unfortunate.

There are things that we disagree on strongly as a body, but protecting the lives of American citizens who are being murdered because of a blasphemy law in Pakistan should not be an area of disagreement for us.

Standing up for religious liberty, speaking out with this one bill—if there are other issues, do 10 more. It is a basic American freedom. We should do multiple resolutions on freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom for people to live their faith worldwide. That is who we are as Americans. So do a bunch of them. Speak out on them, but don't stop us from speaking at all on issues where we should speak with a common, unified voice.

We can do better, and we should do better, and we will in time. But right now, we are still not speaking with a clear voice on blasphemy and the death of Americans worldwide, and that is something we should all look at and say is one more example of our not getting the job done in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I take offense at the suggestion that nothing is good enough for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that nothing gets done. There are 160 ambassadorial employees—and of that

rank—who have passed through the Senate Foreign Relations Committee overwhelmingly with bipartisan support.

Every year, we get the State Department's budget. Every year, we have a budget that is decimated, including for the issues that my colleague cares about. It is because those of us on the committee who believe in the power of diplomacy in the State Department work feverishly to restore and enhance the budget of the State Department that it has been able to carry out its mission. But the budget that the Secretary of State comes before the committee to defend and advocate for is a huge, huge consequence.

Look, we are constantly doing things to protect the lives of American citizens in the committee. I could enumerate a number both of resolutions as well as legislative language that would have far-reaching—I mean, I am in favor of resolutions. They are an expression of sentiment. But legislation that puts into action within our laws the ability of countries that conduct blasphemy and other types of crimes against people who simply want to pursue their religious views—that would be far more consequential.

So there is a lot that goes on in the committee, and a lot of it has actually been bipartisan. By the same token, if our colleague is chagrined that not enough is moving through the committee, talk to the chairman because you can't move anything through the committee if you don't have committee business markups, and we haven't had one—I think except for one—and we are in August.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BRAUN). The Senator from Ohio.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I think we are all a little frustrated right now because the negotiations on the next COVID-19 package seem to be at a standstill. If you talk to the negotiators and you even read the press accounts, which are pretty open, what they say is that they are deadlocked. One of the main reasons they are deadlocked is over this issue of unemployment insurance.

Now, recall, back in the CARES Act, there was an extension of a Federal supplement to unemployment insurance. So we put in place a \$600 Federal benefit on top of the State benefits.

At the time, there were concerns about whether that would lead to people on unemployment insurance getting more money than they would at work, and there was actually an amendment here on the Senate floor regarding that. Although it did not pass, I think pretty much every Republican supported it with that concern.

In fact, that is what has happened. If you look at what has happened over the past couple of months, as the \$600 has been put in place, it clearly has often led to people making more on un-

employment insurance than they can make at work.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office, which is a nonpartisan group here in the U.S. Congress that analyzes some of these economic issues, has said that if someone is on unemployment insurance today, they are likely to be making substantially more than someone who is not on unemployment insurance. In other words, people are making more not to work than to work.

CBO says: "Roughly five of every six recipients would receive benefits that exceeded the weekly amounts they could expect to earn from work during those months" if you were to extend this until the end of the year.

In other words, they are saying that 80 percent of UI recipients would make more on unemployment insurance than they would have at their old jobs—meaning that if you followed where the Democratic negotiators are in keeping \$600 in place until the end of the year, there would be an unprecedented disincentive to go to work in this country.

I think that is widely acknowledged. The University of Chicago has a study that isn't quite 80 percent; it says 68 percent, though. I don't think anybody disputes the fact that most people on unemployment insurance are making more than they would if they were at work.

When I talk to my Democratic colleagues about that, they are hearing the same thing I am hearing from small business owners—by the way, from nonprofits, from employers of all sizes and all stripes—saying that it is tough to get people to come back to work when they can make more on unemployment insurance by not working.

I think a lot of my Democratic colleagues agree. It is good to get people back to work—get back to work safely, yes, and we ought to be sure that the employers are following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and others. But it is good to get people back to work because then they are reconnected with their healthcare, if they have it, with their retirement savings, and with training. That connection to work is a positive thing, providing people with dignity and self-respect. It comes with work, so we should all be for that.

Yet when you see what is happening in this negotiation, this is being stalled because Democrats are being intransigent. They are saying stubbornly: We are going to stick to \$600.

Today, there was a press conference with Speaker PELOSI and Democratic Leader SCHUMER, and that is exactly what they said. Here is the quote: "We have said that we are going to have \$600." This is necessary.

I know that that is not where the rank and file are here in this Chamber because I have talked to a number of my Democratic colleagues about this. They realize that the \$600—even those who thought it might have been necessary at the time, and I voted for the

package at a time when we had unemployment that was such a shock and so high, and people were in such need of immediate cash. But also I have heard, again, from so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, that the \$600 is something they are hearing about more and more back home from the employers who say: We can't get people back to work.

So the \$600 is something that there needs to be some flexibility on to come up with a smarter way to ensure that people can continue to get a Federal supplement because we do continue to have relatively high unemployment in this country. In my own State of Ohio, there is almost 11 percent unemployment. But let's not have it be so much that people are incentivized not to work. That doesn't help anybody.

There are "Help Wanted" signs all over my State. I was at a Ford plant recently, where they have 25 percent absenteeism, which they attribute to this issue. I have been at a lot of small businesses, which is where probably most of my colleagues are hearing a lot of concerns about the fact that they can't get people who used to work for them to come back, and they certainly can't hire the new people they need, even though they are reopening safely and doing everything they are supposed to do in terms of the guidelines. They are having a tough time getting back to work.

There is an auto plant in Ohio where the white-collar workers are now working on the assembly line because they can't get enough workers who would normally have those jobs to work on the assembly line.

So this is a problem right now, and I think everybody acknowledges it except the Democratic negotiators in this negotiation.

Now, I don't think we are actually as far apart as the media accounts would suggest because there are lots of ideas out there. One idea, by the way, makes a lot of sense to me, and I am going to offer this in a moment as a resolution for the Senate to take up. I think this is the ultimate common sense—let's keep \$600 in place for now while we negotiate something. Let's have an extension for another week on the unemployment insurance at 600 bucks just so we can negotiate something. What you don't want is people to fall off the cliff, and that is starting to happen now.

The \$600 expired last Friday. So 6 days ago it expired, and 6 days ago, 7 days ago, MARTHA MCSALLY, a Senator from Arizona, came to this floor and offered this same unanimous consent request, saying: Let's just have 600 for another week. CHUCK SCHUMER, the Democratic leader, objected—instead, offering the \$3.5 trillion package from the House. But he didn't respond to why we wouldn't at least give the negotiators a week to come up with something.

So I am going to offer that same thing today because I do think it is not