

used—to fund a procedure that many Americans—in fact a majority, according to a number of polls—consider to be murder.

The responsible way for each of us to approach this bill, regardless of our view on abortion, is to embrace this long-standing, commonsense compromise on abortion funding and focus on passing the underlying measure—a bill that is so critical to our efforts to fight human trafficking and help alleviate the suffering of victims.

To hold up the passage of this bill to pick a fight over the Hyde amendment represents an unambiguous dereliction of Senators' individual duties to responsibly legislate.

Unfortunately, that is exactly what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have done. They are now threatening a filibuster unless we agree to their extreme pro-abortion position on this issue. There ought to be six of them who will stand up and vote with us and get this bill passed.

In response, the majority leader offered an eminently reasonable compromise—an up-or-down vote on an amendment to strip out the language to which they are suddenly objecting. But the minority leader objected, demanding a guarantee that the provision be removed. By doing so, the minority leader is once again resorting to outrageous “my way or the highway” tactics that are the antithesis of how the Senate should work. It is a move out of the same playbook that he used to give us a calendar full of messaging votes last year meant to produce political theater rather than meaningful legislation.

This ploy plainly demonstrates the desire of the minority leadership to muck up the majority's efforts to exercise reliable leadership, no matter the cost to the victims of human trafficking. By resorting to this sort of obstruction, they have demonstrated how desperately they want to derail our efforts to legislate responsibly and instead resort to their tired and discredited war-on-women rhetoric to win cheap political points.

Let me repeat a point I have repeatedly made about this impasse—words that the minority leader has tried to manipulate to support his shameful gambit. For all of my colleagues who are tempted by this irresponsible strategy: It would be pathetic to hold up this bill. This bill is absolutely critical to our families and our children.

I cannot believe the Senate has become so political that my colleagues would raise this issue—this tangential, long-settled issue at this time—after the same transparently clear language passed unanimously out of the Judiciary Committee.

For my colleagues to hold up this bill in an effort to impose their extreme policy, to overturn the law of the land that has long enjoyed bipartisan support, to pick a false fight over abortion, or to try to embarrass the majority is itself embarrassing.

I urge my colleagues in the minority in the strongest possible terms to reconsider their position and allow the Senate, once again, to do the people's business.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

A NUCLEAR IRAN

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I rise to discuss what many believe is the most dangerous threat to our national security, and that is a nuclear Iran.

Over the past few weeks, there have been a lot of discussions about the Obama administration's ongoing negotiations with Iran and what the role of Congress should be. I believe the debate this past week in Congress over how to best address this issue has distracted us from what I believe are the two key objectives in our effort to prevent Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability. First, Iran must be prevented from getting the bomb, and second, we in the Senate must decide the best way to guarantee that result.

For the past 10 years, I have been working hard to find the most acceptable and best way to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons capability. Note that word “capability.”

For me, it has long been not enough to just announce that we must not allow Iran to get a nuclear weapon. I am determined that Iran must not get the technical capability to manufacture such a weapon because a nuclear weapons-capable Iran is as dangerous as a nuclear-armed Iran because it throws up a cloud of ambiguity about its formal intentions.

There are many in the policy communities who find some mistaken sense of comfort from the intelligence agencies' current view that Iran has not yet made a formal decision to develop a nuclear weapon. This is a delusion. Iran's industrial-strength uranium enrichment enterprise has gone from 600 centrifuges 6 years ago when the international community first expressed alarm to 19,000 today. We know the Ayatollah is on a quest for 190,000 centrifuges as soon as international constraints are removed.

Let's state the obvious: The Iranian pursuit of uranium enrichment is not being created to manufacture medical isotopes and reactor fuel for producing electricity; its purpose is to produce nuclear bombs.

Throughout my many years of involvement on this issue—as cochair of the task force at the Bipartisan Policy Center along with former Senator Chuck Robb and a distinguished panel of experts and in the last 4 years here

in the Senate—I have called for using the full range of tools to prevent Iran from reaching its nuclear goal. These include negotiations coupled with ever-increasing sanctions pressure and a credible threat of the use of military force if the negotiations and sanctions fail to lead to Iran's commitment to cease its pursuit of nuclear weapons capability. This continues to be my view.

I do believe in diplomacy. I would very much like to see effective negotiations take place, led by insightful diplomats, focused on the right results. I would like to see that lead to a settlement that brings security and confidence. But we have every reason to fear this is not now happening.

I don't want to destroy the negotiations track, but I do want to refocus it with the firm backing it requires to achieve the goal we need to reach. I don't want to demand everything from the Iranians, but I do want to require enough to guarantee they give up on their nuclear weapons ambitions. I don't want to torpedo the administration's diplomatic efforts, but I do want to require that Congress have the final say on whether the results of negotiations are acceptable and achieve the goals of preventing Iran's nuclear weapons capability.

For me and I trust for the Senate, this is our most important task of the moment—to force the President to accept a congressional role. He has said repeatedly that he will deny us that role when it comes to approving any agreement. We must not let that happen.

The reason I did not sign the open letter to Iran is not because I disagreed with the goals of the letter. All Senate Republicans and, I believe, many Senate Democrats, are in agreement on the overall objective of avoiding a bad deal with Iran. But the strategy we need to accomplish this essential goal is now in question, and we are divided now in a way that makes this goal harder to achieve.

There are two bills pending that would require the President to present any Iran deal to us for review and action, and this is the course I believe we should take. One, which I cosponsored, has been introduced by both Senators KIRK and MENENDEZ—a bipartisan effort. The other, coauthored by Senators CORKER and MENENDEZ—also bipartisan—I also support. The latter bill, which would require Congress to approve any deal with Iran, is very close to achieving the support of 67 or more Senators needed to overturn President Obama's promised veto of any legislation on this topic.

Lack of bipartisan consensus at this moment on this issue is likely to lead to a fatally flawed deal that destroys more than a decade of effort to bring Iran to cease its goal of nuclear weapons capability.

We all know now that the Obama administration abandoned the core objectives at the very outset, even before these talks began. Four U.N. Security

Council resolutions; frequent and constant demands coming from this Chamber; four Presidents—two Republicans and two Democrats—saying a nuclear-capable Iran is unacceptable; the firm position of AIPAC and other friends of Israel—all stated the necessity that Iran give up and shut down all its uranium-enriching centrifuges. Yet this goal was jettisoned before the talks even started. The Obama administration spokesmen, including Secretary Kerry himself, have explained repeatedly that it was just too hard to achieve. We must be more realistic, we are told. The Iranians, we are told, can never be expected to agree to the demands laid down years ago by the Security Council. That was then, they said. This is now. Everything has changed. We have to set that goal aside, and we have to reach some reasonable agreement with a reasonable process with a reasonable country. The word we need to question there is “reasonable.”

Madam President, it appears my time is running out, but I notice that no other Member is here to speak, so I ask unanimous consent to speak for just 3 more minutes.

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

Mr. COATS. Madam President, I thank the Chair.

But even leaving that shocking capitulation aside, we can never expect that the Iranians would negotiate under those conditions. We can now focus on the key fatal flaw of this agreement. It has been simmering for months, but it is now boiling over onto the front pages of our national attention thanks to the presentation by the Prime Minister of Israel, and that is the sunset clause.

We now see that even if Iran is constrained by this agreement and even if in the most unlikely of worlds Iran fully complies with the agreement, at the end of a decade or so, Iran will be fully liberated to pursue nuclear capabilities with no limitations or constraints whatsoever—a free hand, a blank check to go forward, an Iran that will have wealth, the technical expertise, industrial infrastructure, the will, and, if given a sunset provision, the international acquiescence to do whatever they like to pursue their goal without any ability of us to stop it. They can do whatever they like.

Ten years—oh, that is a long time out. Ten years is tomorrow afternoon. It is a blink of the eye.

Such a sunset clause makes this entire enterprise unacceptable. Any agreement that contains a sunset clause must be rejected, and any agreement with Iran that does not impose permanent restraints on their nuclear ambitions is no agreement at all. We in the Senate have it within our ability and mandate to guarantee that happens, but to do so, we need to reach consensus across the aisle. We need to work together as Republicans and Democrats for the future security of

our Nation, and for that matter, all nations.

There are a number of issues on which we don't agree. There are a number of things on which we have different thoughts about how to proceed. But this is an issue of such historic consequence and such potential harm that we must find a way to work together to ensure our ability to undo what looks like is coming our way. So I plead with and I urge my colleagues—all my colleagues, Republicans and Democrats—to rise above any political considerations and work together to ensure that this Senate can prevent Iran from getting the bomb. History and future generations and our children and our grandchildren will judge what we do here now, and may that judgment be the right judgment for not just the future of our Nation but for the future of the world.

Madam President, with that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

LYNCH NOMINATION

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, last week the majority leader announced that he would finally schedule a vote for this week on the nomination of Loretta Lynch to be our next Attorney General. But as of today no date has been set. The Senate majority leader is now threatening to further delay a vote on this highly qualified nominee until after the Senate has concluded its debate on the human trafficking bill.

Now, there is really no good reason for Senate Republicans to continue dragging their feet on scheduling a vote on Ms. Lynch's nomination. I have been here long enough to know we can debate legislation and vote on nominations at the same time, and to say otherwise is a hollow excuse. In fact, last Thursday we voted on four other executive nominations while we were on the human trafficking bill. We are actually going to vote on two more executive nominations this evening while we are on the human trafficking bill.

All Senators who agree on the importance of ending human trafficking also know it is important to confirm Loretta Lynch as our Nation's top law enforcement officer. She has a proven track record of prosecuting human trafficking and child rape crimes. This is not just somebody who just talks about it and says how much they are opposed to human trafficking, as though anybody were in favor of human trafficking.

This not just someone who says she is opposed to child rape cases, as though anybody here were going to say

they are in favor of it. She has actually prosecuted them. Over the course of the last decade, the U.S. attorney's office that Ms. Lynch leads has indicted over 55 defendants in sex trafficking cases and rescued over 110 victims of sex trafficking. We stand here on the floor talking about these issues. She actually does it.

So I think she and the American people have waited long enough. President Obama announced the nomination of Ms. Lynch 4 months ago. The Judiciary Committee reported her nomination with bipartisan support 18 days ago. By tomorrow—we talk about whether we move fast or not. By tomorrow, her nomination will have been pending on the Senate floor longer than all of the past five attorneys general combined.

Take a look at this. Here is Loretta Lynch. She has been pending on the floor now for 18 days. This is, of course, with the months she had to wait before that. Now, Attorneys General Holder, Mukasey, Gonzales, Ashcroft, and Reno had to wait a total of 18 days pending after their nominations came out—so five of them, one of her. She has had to wait as long as five of them had to wait.

We also pointed out the amount of time—I look at the amount of time it took—for the four men who preceded her. All four of those men went through so much faster than she has. We happened to have a vote out of committee. Janet Reno took 1 day. John Ashcroft, who I helped get through the committee, although I did not support him, took 2 days. Alberto Gonzales took 8 days; Michael Mukasey, 2 days, and Eric Holder, 5 days.

This delay is an embarrassment to the Senate. Her qualifications are beyond reproach. But the Senate Republican leadership continues to delay a vote on her confirmation despite her impeccable credentials. Now, when she is confirmed, we know that Loretta Lynch will be the first African-American woman to serve our country as Attorney General. But instead of moving forward with this historic nomination, Senate Republicans appear intent on making history for all of the wrong reasons.

As David Hawkings wrote in a Roll Call article dated March 12:

Lynch is on a course to be confirmed this month after the longest wait ever for a nominee to be attorney general—and very likely by the closest vote ever to put a new person in charge of the Justice Department.

We want to send the signal that we are tough on crime. We want to send the signal that we want to get these traffickers. We want to send a signal that people who commit crimes, whether they are Republicans or Democrats, should go to jail. Yet we refuse to confirm the person who has actually done all of those things. It appears that some want to simply refuse to allow a vote on her nomination, effectively shirking the constitutional duty of the Senate to provide advice and consent.

One Republican Senator even tweeted on the weekend about the need to