



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 161

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 2015

No. 63

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Eternal God, enthroned above all other powers, thank You for the masterpiece of another day. Lord, our hearts ache because of the pain in our world. We see the anger, the violence, the death, the tears, and the despair. Forgive us when we forget that You are still in control of our planet and that the hearts of humanity are in Your hands. Lord, help us to remember that Your power is far above any conceivable command, authority or control. As our lawmakers strive to contribute to peace in our time, bless those who support them in their work. Help us all to trust You without wavering.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore 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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PAUL). The majority leader is recognized.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, we were reminded yet again of Iran's determination to use every element of national power to expand its sphere of influence and undermine international law.

What we saw in the Strait of Hormuz simply underlines the danger posed by Iran, along with the pressing need for a clear-eyed understanding of the Iranian threat.

It is appropriate, then, that the Senate will resume consideration of the bipartisan Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act later today. I encourage Members to come to the floor, offer amendments, and work with the floor managers to schedule votes.

We have voted on one amendment to this bipartisan bill. I am sure we will take votes on several more significant amendments before the week is over.

WELCOMING THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, later this morning we will welcome an important friend of the United States to the Capitol, Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan.

I am looking forward to hearing what he has to say. I know many of my colleagues feel the same way because Prime Minister Abe doesn't just lead one of the most important economies and countries in the Asia-Pacific region, he leads one of the most important countries and economies in the entire world. Abe has proposed to tackle some tough structural problems other leaders in his country might not touch, but he knows the Japanese people can be persuaded to reward their leaders for taking risks.

Abe previously served in the Cabinet of a free-market Prime Minister who grabbed hold of economic third rails of Japanese politics and then rolled to a landslide victory when others counted him out. Perhaps that is why Abe feels liberated to pursue new initiatives of his own.

On the domestic side, Abe has proposed structural reforms. On the international front, Abe has worked to enhance the role and influence of democratic nations, such as the two of us, in

the Asia-Pacific. Just this week in Washington, he signed important agreements with the United States on both cyber security and defense.

This all serves to underline the enduring importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance. It also reminds us that the Obama administration must do its part, too, by investing in the platforms and capabilities needed to make its announced pivot to Asia real. That is the only way to both bolster democratic nations such as Japan in the region, while also effectively countering China's aggressive encroachment upon the territorial and navigational rights of its neighbors.

Trade is another way to advance our common values and strengthen our national security and our economy. For years, Japan and the United States had a difficult trading relationship. Today, though, the U.S. and Japanese negotiators actually appear close to reaching an agreement that could significantly lower existing barriers to trade, benefiting both of our economies.

That breakthrough is being negotiated as part of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement between Pacific nations such as Japan, Australia, and the United States. That would help ensure the region and the world play by fair rules, instead of ceding the fields to an increasingly aggressive China.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership could also, according to one estimate, support up to nearly one-quarter of a million new jobs in the United States, including more than 50,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector alone. But American and Kentucky workers and farmers will never be able to reap the rewards of selling more "Made in America" goods to the Pacific until Congress passes a bipartisan trade promotion bill.

Passing that bipartisan legislation is key to enhancing Congress's role in the trade process, while simultaneously ensuring Presidents of either party—because this is a 6-year TPA, it will apply

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S2491

to the next President—have the tools they need to secure a strong and enforceable trade agreement for American workers.

The bill recently passed the Finance Committee on an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, and I intend to take it up after we complete action on the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

But, for now, let me just say that Congress is pleased to have the Prime Minister join us today. We thank Prime Minister Abe and his country for their enduring friendship.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am grateful for the work done yesterday and during the entire process of working toward an agreement on the important Iran legislation.

Senators CORKER and CARDIN have done a magnificent job. They are both good managers. I would suggest everyone who is concerned about amendments should come and talk to the two managers before they lay down their amendments.

There is a process for moving amendments forward. It has been very well articulated by both Senator CARDIN and Senator CORKER, so we know what rules we can move under today.

We know there are difficult issues with this bill—and those are some of the things we do here, work on difficult issues—not always but some of the time.

WASHINGTON NATIONALS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senator MCCONNELL and I love our jobs. We realize how important things are that we work on, but once in a while we take a minute and talk about one of our hobbies and that is watching baseball.

Because we are in Washington and have been for some time, we have been focused recently on the Nationals. They started off in a very bad fashion, losing, now—last night, they were in the process of a six-game losing streak. They brought in a pitcher because their star was injured. He gave up nine runs in two innings. So I think we were both fairly well going to acknowledge they were going to lose their seventh straight, but they won the game 13 to 12.

I admire the tenacity of the Republican leader because he watched the end of the game. I couldn't do that. I tried, but at the beginning of the ninth inning—they had given up more runs earlier—they were behind with one out, and I said: I am going to go to bed. I was surprised when I got up this morning and they had won. So we had a good

laugh talking about the game today that they had won. As I indicated, I am sorry I didn't get to watch the last of the game. I decided I didn't have enough faith in the team, and I went to bed.

THE BUDGET

Mr. REID. Mr. President, budgets should be about reality, not ideology. The reality of the budget today is that our middle class is being pushed to the edge of extinction, and that is the truth, while there is an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor. As I have said—I will continue to say—the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting much poorer. But perhaps the most brutal reality is that Congress is not doing its job, and the real brutal reality is that congressional Republicans don't even seem to care.

In the very near future, the Senate is expected to consider a conference report on the Republican budget resolution. It is a budget that is as irresponsible as it is immoral.

It is a budget based on the failed ideology of a political party out of touch with America's middle class, a political party that is out of touch with reality. It amounts to an all-out attack on working families, an attack designed to protect only the interests of millionaires, billionaires, and many special interests.

The Republican budget would deprive more than 16 million Americans of their health insurance. It allows big insurance companies to, once again, discriminate against women. It would cause people who have disabilities to be unable to get insurance—as it used to be before ObamaCare came into being. It threatens the coverage of hard-working Americans who lose their jobs or suffer from, as I have indicated, preexisting medical conditions.

The budget that is proposed by my Republican friends would also make deep cuts to Medicare at the expense of our Nation's seniors. It would raise taxes on working Americans by allowing the expansion of the earned-income tax credit and allows the child tax credit to simply expire, go out of existence.

It would end key supports that help young Americans afford college. At a time when student debt is higher than credit card debt—we have tried to resolve it on the Senate floor, but the Republicans vote unanimously no. They are not going to cut parents—these young men and women who have debt—any slack.

The budget they propose would undermine job training—and certainly at a time when we need it with the changing technology that creates jobs—for Americans who are simply trying to better themselves and get a good job or a better job.

Meanwhile, Republicans refuse to close a single tax loophole to reduce the deficit—not one. They will not end tax breaks for companies that send

jobs overseas. They will not close loopholes for wealthy hedge fund managers. They will not do away with wasteful tax breaks for the oil and gas industry.

Once again, Republicans are attacking the middle class, and they are attacking it forcefully, while protecting the superwealthy.

The budget is just wrong. It is also dishonest.

It claims to be balanced. There is no balance in this budget. That is a word. The budget is no more balanced than the earthquakes they have had in Nepal. It claims to reach balance, but the claim is laughable, based on gimmicks and massive cuts that are left unspecified.

When you have editorials from magazines such as Forbes, a conservative magazine, denigrating the Republican budget, you know it is wrong. One of the worst aspects of this budget is it uses sequestration to undermine America's middle class, to underfund the investments needed for our security and our future.

Let's talk about sequestration for a minute, these automatic cuts. The example is the National Institutes of Health. It becomes very personal when you see these issues that face Americans—diabetes, the flu. The Presiding Officer is a physician who specializes in eyes. But the flu kills tens of thousands of people in America every year, and the NIH was on the verge of a universal vaccine for flu, any type of flu. As we know, what they do now, they try to find out what the flu is going to be, the variety of flu in a given year, and then they try to mix and match. Last year, that was effective at less than 50 percent. So if you got the flu shot—60 percent of people who got the flu shot got the flu anyway. But because of sequestration, they had to drop that. They have never gotten that money back—\$1.6 billion.

I mentioned eyes. I have become very concerned about eyes in the last couple of months, and there are all kinds of programs at the NIH that could be funded much better dealing with problems such as I have.

So it is simply wrong that they are going to go forward with this sequestration. It is wrong.

Sequestration was never intended to be implemented. It was designed with cuts so deep and so stupid that Congress would never let them happen. But my Republican colleagues let them happen. Republicans recognize that sequestration poses a threat to our national security, and their budget uses a gimmick.

I am not calling it a gimmick—or at least I am not alone. We have Republicans—the junior Senator from Tennessee is talking about how he won't support the budget because he thinks there are some gimmicks in it, and many editorials have been written using that term over and over again. Their budget is not balanced, and it uses gimmicks to pretend.

They do everything in this budget to protect the Pentagon, but it doesn't