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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.

God of our forebears, Author of liberty, search our hearts and minds in order that we might better know ourselves. Lord, help us to comprehend what we need to better represent You. Empower us to live exemplary lives that are worthy of Your great love.

Give our lawmakers a renewed loyalty to protecting the freedoms that Americans hold dear. May our Senators use their stewardship of position and influence to ensure that America is a shining city upon a hill. May their highest incentive be not to win over one another but to win with one another by doing Your will for all.

We pray in Your great 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 (Ms. COLLINS). The majority leader is recognized.

NATIONAL SECURITY LEGISLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I wish we had been able to move the cloture and amendment votes we will consider today to yesterday. I made an offer to do so because it is hard to see the point in allowing yet another day to elapse when everyone has already had a chance to say their piece, when the end game appears obvious to all, and when the need to move forward in a thoughtful but expeditious manner seems perfectly clear. But this is the Senate, and Members are entitled to different views and Members have tools to assert those views. It is the nature of the body where we work.

Moreover, it is important to remember that it was not just the denial of consent which brought us to where we are. The kind of short-term extension that would have provided the Senate with the time and space it needed to advance bipartisan compromise legislation through regular order was also blocked in a floor vote.

But what has happened has happened, and we are where we are. Now is the time to put all that in the past and work together to diligently make some discrete and sensible improvements to the House bill.

Before scrapping an effective system that has helped protect us from attack in favor of an untried one, we should at least work toward securing some modest degree of assurance that the new system can, in fact, actually work. The Obama administration also already told us that it would not be able to make any firm guarantees in that regard—that it would work—at least the way the bill currently reads. And the way the bill currently reads, there is also no requirement—no requirement—for the retention and availability of significant data for analysis. These are not small problems.

The legislation we are considering proposes major changes to some of our Nation's most fundamental and necessary counterterrorism tools. That is why the revelations from the administration shocked many Senators, including a lot of supporters of this legislation. It is simply astounding that the very government officials charged with implementing the bill would tell us, both in person and in writing, that if it turns out this new system doesn't work, then they will just come back to us and let us know. If it doesn't work, they will just come back and let us know. This is worrying for many reasons, not the least of which is that we don't want to find out the system doesn't work in a far more tragic way. That is why we need to do what we can today to ensure that this legislation is as strong as it can be under the circumstances.

Here are the kinds of amendments I hope every Senator will join me in supporting today.

One amendment would allow for more time for the construction and testing of a system that does not yet exist. Again, one amendment would allow for more time for the construction and testing of a system that does not yet exist.

Another amendment would ensure that the Director of National Intelligence is charged with at least reviewing and certifying the readiness of the system.

Another amendment would require simple notification if telephone providers—the entities charged with holding data under this bill—elect to change their data-retention policies. Let me remind my colleagues that one provider has already said expressly and in writing that it would not commit to holding the data for any period of time under the House-passed bill unless compelled by law. So this amendment represents the least we can do to ensure we will be able to know, especially in an emergency, whether the dots we need to connect have actually been wiped away.

We will also consider an amendment that would address concerns we have heard from the nonpartisan Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts—in other words, the lifetime Federal judges who actually serve on the FISA Court. In a recent letter, they wrote that the proposed amicus provision ''could impede the FISA Courts' role in

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

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