

of the two Vice Presidents, although Daw Suu herself is prohibited from these positions. The prohibition itself reflects one of the many challenges that lie ahead. Others include addressing the problem of the military's quota of seats in the Parliament, promoting reconciliation among ethnic groups, and healing the divide among those of differing religious faiths.

For now, it is worth acknowledging the good news last week in Burma. The road to bring the bilateral relationship to where it stands today has been a long one indeed. The transition of power has the potential to be a watershed in Burma history. It provides an opportunity to reinvigorate the reform effort in that country.

HONORING SENATOR BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, President Obama recently announced the list of individuals he plans to honor with a Presidential Medal of Freedom. One of them is our colleague from Maryland. I know she was honored by it. I know that someone she mentioned on the floor yesterday—her great-grandmother—would feel a similar sense of honor too. This is a woman who played an important role in our colleague's life, one the Senator speaks of often. She emigrated from Poland when she was 16 years old with little more than a few pennies in her pocket. She couldn't even vote when she arrived. "She never thought," our colleague said, "that her own great-granddaughter would one day be a United States Senator. But then, it is only in America where my story would have been possible."

That is something all of us can appreciate, and we recognize our colleague from Maryland, the longest serving woman in Congress, for the President's choice to honor her in this way.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

CLEAN POWER PLAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the Clean Power Plan that has been promulgated by the President will avoid 3,600 premature deaths, 1,700 heart attacks, 90,000 asthma attacks, and 300,000 missed work and school days in just the next 15 years. It will also lower power bills by reducing wasted energy. It is the right thing to do, and the President will protect this because it is the right thing for the health of America.

HONORING SENATOR BARBARA MIKULSKI

Mr. REID. Mr. President, President Obama has announced to our gratifi-

cation that our own Senator BARBARA MIKULSKI will receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She is an inspiring figure. She and I came to the Senate together and we will leave the Senate together. She has been a friend, an ally, and one of the most articulate people I have ever served with. She has a way with words that are just BARBARA MIKULSKI's way of speaking. I so admire her for that and all the other things I mentioned.

She has spent decades as a leader in Congress, what will be 30 years in the Senate, and during that period of time she has done social work, which is what she did by profession, and has focused on the poor, the middle class, and the disadvantaged. She has inspired a generation of women and has been a mentor to both sides of the aisle.

We are all happy to see this great woman—and she is a great woman—receive the recognition she so rightly deserves from the President of the United States and a grateful country. We should all congratulate Senator MIKULSKI on receiving this great honor.

EXPRESSING OUR CONDOLENCES TO THE PEOPLE OF FRANCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, at 11 a.m.—a few minutes from now—a number of us will be down in S-117, which is the Foreign Relations Room. At that time, we will receive Ambassador Gerard Araud, who is the Ambassador from France to the United States. We are going to be there to express our condolences to the people of France by doing what has been done for a long time when these tragedies occur. We will sign a book of condolences. I look forward to doing that, and I hope my colleagues will join in doing that at some time during the day.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, for the first 6 years of Barack Obama's Presidency, Republicans have tried to block nearly every nomination that has come to the Senate.

From a record backlog of judicial nominees to the first-ever filibuster of a Secretary of Defense, Republicans abdicated their constitutional responsibility to provide their advice and consent regarding these nominations. In fact, the Republicans have blocked President Obama's nominees more than all the other Presidential nominees in history combined. Think about that. They have blocked more of this President's nominations than all the preceding Presidents in the history of our country. Seventy-one percent of all cloture motions filed on nominees during the history of the country were for President Obama's nominees. Seventy-three percent of cloture motions on judicial nominees were for Obama nominees. Ninety-seven percent of cloture motions on district court judges were for Obama nominees.

When Republicans assumed power of the Senate in January, some may have expected that their obligation to govern would bring an end to their obstruction, but it didn't. We all know what happened last year. We all know they were holding up all nominations they didn't like—not all of them but all of those they didn't like, and that is most all of them.

Something that has been traditional in this country, the National Labor Relations Board—they refused to allow us to have a vote. They filibustered every one of them, which meant that the National Labor Relations Board, which is so important to working men and women in this country, could not go forward. They didn't even have a quorum. The second highest court—some say the most important court in the land—is the DC Court of Appeals. They refused to allow any votes on nominees. They filibustered every one of them. We have five vacancies.

Well, something had to be done, and it was done. It was done for the right reason, and it was good for the country. Those people have now been confirmed. We have a better country as a result of that.

When the Republicans assumed power, they kept talking about how they wanted to get the Senate back to work. Sadly, we all know that has been an absolute joke. We have had more re-votes than in the history of the country during the time they have been in power here. We have done less than any Senate in the history of the country. So getting the Senate back to work is not very honest.

Sadly, those who were hoping that the Republicans would get serious about governing have been terribly disappointed. Republicans are still doing everything they can to block even the most qualified nominees.

Many of these nominations are vitally important to our national security. I will list the people who have been blocked from having a vote in the Senate—and they have even gone one step further; they are not even holding hearings to allow them to come to the floor. Here are some who we could vote on and we should vote on: The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security, Under Secretary of the Air Force, Secretary of the Army, Under Secretary of the Army, Under Secretary of Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Crimes. Those positions are unfilled.

Think about the Secretary of Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Crimes. They are not even bringing it to a vote. As the United States continues to fight ISIS and its terrorism, shouldn't we confirm the person in Treasury who is responsible for terrorism and financial crimes?

How about the Secretary of the Army—do you think that is important? Being disappointed doesn't go very far if all my Republican colleagues say is a resounding no. But this is all part of