

Azita Raji, who has been nominated to represent America in Sweden, is an accomplished businesswoman who has lived and worked in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. There has been more than 300 Swedish citizens who have left Sweden to fight with ISIS in either Syria or Iraq, making this nation the second largest country of origin per capita for foreign fighters coming from Europe to the Middle East. We need to get this done. It is not right for America to not be able to deal, on a daily basis, with the authority to help Sweden with their issues. The Swedish Government is on heightened alert for an attack. Yet we don't have a Senate-confirmed ambassador to represent us in Stockholm. She was first nominated to be Ambassador in October 2014. We are now in 2016. We don't have an ambassador to Sweden.

We don't have an ambassador to Norway, and it has been that way for more than 2 years. President Obama nominated a person by the name of Samuel Heins, an accomplished lawyer and humanitarian from Minnesota. His nomination is not controversial. It is only controversial, I guess, to the Koch brothers, the tea party, and Heritage Action. He should be confirmed without delay, but it has been 2 years.

Other State Department nominations have been blocked for partisan reasons by the junior Senator from Texas. Tom Shannon has been nominated to be Under Secretary of State. We don't have an ambassador to Mexico. Tom Shannon has been nominated to the fourth highest ranking position in the State Department. He would like to be serving. He would serve as the day-to-day manager of overall regional and bilateral policy issues and oversee State Department bureaus around the world. He is a career Foreign Service officer, having served under Presidents of both parties. If he is confirmed, he would be the highest ranking career diplomat in the State Department.

John Kerry called me saying: How can I continue this job I have? I don't have people to do the work. He doesn't even have a lawyer. The State Department doesn't have a lawyer. We have tried to confirm Brian Egan starting back in September 2014, but he has been held up for months and months.

Do you know what this is about? Clinton's emails—Secretary Clinton's emails. If the senior Senator from Iowa is interested in getting answers to his countless letters to the State Department, wouldn't a Senate-confirmed legal advisor be of some help?

Eric Fanning, the President's nominee to be the next Secretary of the Army, is being blocked by the senior Senator from Kansas, even though the senior Senator from Kansas, Mr. ROBERTS, said: "I think [Fanning's] a pretty good nominee." In spite of that, there is no vote on his nomination. The Army needs Mr. Fanning's leadership and responsibility for over a \$200 billion budget for more than 1 million servicemembers. Right now they are

making due at the Pentagon, but we should have a Secretary of the Army.

Unless Republicans change course, these important vacancies will go unfilled for the rest of the Obama administration, and our diplomacy and relationships around the world will continue to suffer because of what is going on here. I do not understand what my Republican colleagues are doing. If Republicans had their way, they would stop confirming officials at just about every key agency.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Senate has confirmed an average of 351 nominations during the first session of the Congress. Last year the Senate didn't even get to half of what it normally does. The Republicans should get to work and schedule votes on the President's nominees.

Valid concerns about the qualifications of these nominees should be brought forth. We haven't heard any, but denying a vote for partisan gain does nothing to strengthen America at home or around the world. The American people deserve better.

This Senator says America is less safe because of what is going on with the Republicans in the Senate. We are not as secure as we should be. We have vacancies for Ambassadors all over the world that are not being filled. People within the State Department, the Treasury Department whose job is to deal with terrorism are being blocked. For the first time in 50 years we don't have anyone reported out of the banking committee. America is less safe because of what Republicans are doing to our country.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROUNDS). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

ENERGY POLICY MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 2012, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2012) to provide for the modernization of the energy policy of the United States, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Murkowski amendment No. 2953, in the nature of a substitute.

Murkowski (for Cassidy/Markey) amendment No. 2954 (to amendment No. 2953), to provide for certain increases in, and limitations on, the drawdown and sales of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

Murkowski (for Shaheen) amendment No. 2968 (to amendment No. 2953), to clarify the definition of the term "smart manufacturing."

Murkowski amendment No. 2963 (to amendment No. 2953), to modify a provision relating to bulk-power system reliability impact statements.

Murkowski (for Barrasso/Schatz) amendment No. 3017 (to amendment No. 2953), to

expand the authority for awarding technology prizes by the Secretary of Energy to include a financial award for separation of carbon dioxide from dilute sources.

Murkowski (for Markey) amendment No. 2982 (to amendment No. 2953), to require the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a review and submit a report on energy production in the United States and the effects of crude oil exports.

Murkowski (for Crapo) amendment No. 3021 (to amendment No. 2953), to enable civilian research and development of advanced nuclear energy technologies by private and public institutions, to expand theoretical and practical knowledge of nuclear physics, chemistry, and materials science.

Murkowski (for Schatz) amendment No. 2965 (to amendment No. 2953), to modify the funding provided for the Advanced Research Projects Agency—Energy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided between the managers or their designees.

The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, good morning. This morning we are on day 2 of the Energy Policy Modernization Act. Yesterday, we took up this broad, bipartisan energy bill, the first of its kind in more than 8 years. Taking this up was a good moment for the Senate. It was an important step. It is the beginning of a series of steps that we will take to modernizing our Nation's energy as well as our mineral policies. I am hopeful we are going to have a good day of debate today.

As we begin this morning, I would like to summarize very briefly where we are in this process and what Members might expect over the course of the day. As of this morning, we have a total of 89 amendments that have now been filed to the underlying bill. We are already starting to process those amendments. We recognize that some will go by voice vote, some will of course need rollcall votes, and others simply will not be voted at all.

Right now we do have six amendments pending before the body. We have amendment No. 2963 that I have offered, which improves a provision in the underlying bill related to reliability impact statements. We have amendment No. 2968 from Senator SHAHEEN to clarify a definition for the term "smart manufacturing" that is contained within the underlying bill. We have an amendment from Senator MARKEY, amendment No. 2982, to require the Government Accountability Office to study the economic aspects of crude oil exports annually for 3 years. We have an amendment from Senator BARRASSO, amendment No. 3017, to establish a prize for technologies that can separate carbon dioxide molecules from dilute sources such as ambient air.

At noon we are scheduled to proceed to a rollcall vote on amendment No. 3021 to promote research into nuclear energy. There is a strong list of Members who are supporting this amendment: Senators CRAPO and RISCH from Idaho, along with Senator WHITEHOUSE of Rhode Island, Senator BOOKER of