

We get silly, shameful attacks on private citizens. So in one sense it is fitting that the majority leader announced today he wants to rewrite the Constitution. I mean, at least you have to give them marks for consistency.

They are already muzzling our constituents by blocking amendments, and now they want to muzzle them even more by changing the Bill of Rights. This is completely out of control.

Even if the Democratic majority doesn't like our ideas or those of our constituents, the answer isn't to take away their constitutionally guaranteed right to speak their minds. The answer isn't to shut down their representatives' ability to influence legislation through amendments. The answer, my friends, is to come up with better arguments. The answer is to actually convince people in a free and open marketplace of ideas that you are right.

Why are Washington Democrats so afraid of a free and open exchange of ideas? What are they afraid of? Do they have that little faith in the judgment of the people we represent? Over the past few weeks we have seen just how scared our friends on the other side are of a free and open debate.

A big majority wants to repeal President Obama's medical device tax; 79 people in this body voted for it. They won't allow a vote on it.

The American people want to see a vote on the Keystone Pipeline. Most Senators say they want to vote on it too, but we are not allowed to vote on it.

We have a tax bill that Members on both sides want to improve and Members on both sides want to support. Yet we don't get a chance to amend it.

We should have certainty in our Tax Code instead of these endless expirations that only make it harder for people to prepare and for businesses to plan and to compete. They don't want to do that either. They are completely allergic—completely and totally allergic—to anything that is constructive.

What they are doing is muzzling the people of this country, a gag order on the people we were sent to the Senate to represent—all presumably to protect their power. This is really quite scandalous. The American people need to know what is happening in their Senate because this is bigger than any one bill. It is about protecting the right of the American people to have a say in what goes on in Washington.

We represent millions of people on this side of the aisle. They represent many of the people on their side of the aisle. I think there are something like 40 or so Democratic amendments pending to this bill—Democratic Senators who offered amendments to this bill who will not be heard.

This is all about protecting the one opportunity they have to shut us out. It is about a party that has become so afraid of losing its hold on power that they are willing to do just about anything to hold onto it—even if it means, as I said earlier, to try to amend the Bill of Rights.

We have a lot of smart people on the Democratic side, but I expect none of them are smarter than James Madison. Yet apparently they decided—after a couple of hundred years—Madison's work is not sufficient. They want to recommend we amend the Bill of Rights. What is before us today is not that; it is a tax extender bill.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that if cloture is invoked on Senate amendment No. 3060, the Wyden substitute, the amendment be considered original text for the purpose of amendment; and notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXII, it be in order for the Republican leader or his designee to offer the Toomey amendment related to the medical device tax, and that amendments then be offered in alternating fashion between the majority and the minority, with all amendments being related to tax policy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Everyone listen. The selfpronounced guardian of gridlock just gave us his presentation. That is what the Republican leader calls himself, and that is a good name that he got for himself—the guardian of gridlock. That is what we have in the Senate. That is what we have had here for 5½ years. We have struggled through parts of it, but it has been difficult.

It is no surprise to me or to us that, of course, when something is said about the Koch brothers, there are people who run down to the floor to defend them. This time we have the Republican leader defending the Koch brothers.

What I talked about today is something so radical—listen to what it is—that we should have restrictions on how much money people can spend in political campaigns and not have the government purchased by the two richest people in America—the Koch brothers. So it is no surprise we have someone running to their rescue.

I would also suggest this. My friend, the Republican leader, wants a vote on Keystone. They had a vote. They wouldn't take it. As one of my Democratic Senators said, my friend the Republican leader is more interested in an issue than getting the pipeline done.

So here is where we are. The Republican leader has asked for alternating amendments. That is a buzzword for “we are going to continue our filibusters.”

The chairman of the Finance Committee, RON WYDEN, as the new chair—and we all have great expectations from RON WYDEN. He is an experienced legislator. He spent many years in the House, and now he is a veteran here in the Senate. He made a reasonable proposal—it was done before the world—saying: OK, you want amendments, let's do them in relation to this bill; that is, the tax extenders bill.

But I will go even a step further than that. First of all, everyone should understand that this is a bill which was done by the Finance Committee on a bipartisan basis. But if they are interested in more amendments, why don't we have Senator WYDEN and Senator HATCH see what they can come up with? And if that is good enough for me, it is good enough for my caucus.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

NOMINATION OF GREGG JEFFREY COSTA TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The assistant bill clerk read the nomination of Gregg Jeffrey Costa, of Texas, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Fifth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table.

The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

There is now 2 minutes of debate.

The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I said before that I am willing to debate and have votes on amendments related to tax extenders, and we heard Senator REID essentially extend the olive branch once more. That is exactly what Senator HATCH and I did on a bipartisan basis in the Finance Committee, and I am ready and willing to do that again in the full Senate. But the Senate can't do that if action on the tax extenders bill is blocked today.

So now the Senate has the opportunity to vote against a big tax increase—actually, a bunch of big tax increases—that would slam our fragile economy hard and would punish innovators, punish our small businesses, punish homeowners who are underwater on their mortgages, punish returning veterans looking for jobs, and punish students and classroom teachers.

Colleagues, who here thinks it makes sense to tax innovation? That is what is going to happen if the tax extenders bill fails to pass today. Who here thinks it makes sense—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, I urge that we not let students, veterans, homeowners, and innovators be hurt today. Let's vote for cloture this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.