

A bill (H.R. 636) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend increased expensing limitations, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 644) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to permanently extend and expand the charitable deduction for contributions of food inventory.

A bill (H.R. 1295) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to improve the process for making determinations with respect to whether organizations are exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of such Code.

A bill (H.R. 1314) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide for a right to an administrative appeal relating to adverse determinations of tax-exempt status of certain organizations.

A bill (S. 984) to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide Medicare beneficiary access to eye tracking accessories for speech generating devices and to remove the rental cap for durable medical equipment under the Medicare Program with respect to speech generating devices.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I now ask for a second reading, and I object to my own request, all en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The measures will receive their second reading on the next legislative day.

ORDERS FOR MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2015

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 2 p.m., Monday, April 20; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day; and that following leader remarks, the Senate then resume consideration of S. 178.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senators SULLIVAN and LEE for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. McCONNELL. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NUCLEAR AGREEMENT WITH IRAN

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words on the nuclear agreement that is being negotiated with Iran. I will start by commending

the members of the Foreign Relations Committee, particularly Senator CORKER, the chairman of that committee. They moved the Corker-Menendez bill through the committee a few days ago with a unanimous vote. It was very important work. It is a good start to a critically important topic for the American people. I know it was a struggle. We read about what happened in the press. But it is important to recognize that it was a struggle that should not have been.

The Obama administration put tremendous pressure on Members of this body—Democratic Members of this body—not to allow the U.S. Senate to have any say on this issue, one of the most important foreign policy issues facing the country right now. They did not want the American people to have a voice. In fact, last month when the bill was released, the President vowed to veto it. He backed off only when it was clear that members of the committee, Republicans and Democrats, stood firm against the President and with the American people. Then the President knew he would fail and his veto threat would likely be overridden.

So the President, under pressure, dispatched Secretary of State John Kerry, a former Member of this body, to give me and my colleagues here in the Senate a closed-door preview of these negotiations in this framework agreement. I sat through the meeting and had some discussions with the Secretary. It was useful, but think about it—it was a closed-door briefing. Why not involve the American people?

This is not an issue which is about the Senate or the Congress per se, as we often read in the paper. This is an issue about the American people, who have a voice through us, their representatives in Congress, and should have a say on one of the most critical foreign policy issues facing the United States right now. And, remember, we know this. We were sent here. The people are wise. The citizens of this country are wise. They understand national security. Many of them are in the military. Many of them have sons and daughters in the military. Many of them are veterans. They know what sacrifice is. They know what national security is. They sent us here so their voices could be heard, particularly on issues of national security and on issues of the security of the country they love.

Make no mistake, Americans are overwhelmingly interested in making sure that they, through their representatives in Congress, have a say in this important deal. A recent USA TODAY-Suffolk University poll showed that a whopping 72 percent of Americans think Congress should have a role in approving the nuclear negotiations with Iran.

What is very interesting about this is that once upon a time, even President Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, and former Senator Clinton all believed this body should have a role in

such important agreements. They said Congress should approve any sweeping deals. In 2007 and 2008, they cosponsored a bill that required congressional approval of any long-term security commitment President Bush made to Iraq.

Vice President BIDEN—then-Senator BIDEN—put it then:

The president cannot make such a sweeping commitment on his own authority. Congress must grant approval.

Those were wise words then, and I believe they are wise words today. Why is that? One reason is that when the executive branch and the Congress work together, we are stronger on issues of foreign policy and national security. Think about all of the different times in which this body, through treaties and other agreements, worked with Presidents of both parties—bipartisan—to make sure we were speaking strongly together on critical issues of national security. I served under Condoleezza Rice as an Assistant Secretary of State and worked on these kinds of issues—sanctions on Iran and terrorist finance issues—and I saw that when the executive branch worked with the Congress, we were stronger.

As I mentioned, when then-Senator BIDEN mentioned these words about congressional approval, they were wise words. Yet, now the Vice President, Secretary Kerry, and President Obama—all former Members of this body—are ignoring their own previous advice and previous wisdom, and they are ignoring the American people in the process through their representatives in Congress.

Where does that leave us today? My own view is that the President should have reached out to the Congress from the very beginning and said that he wanted to work with us and have our approval on this important agreement so we could be stronger as a country, the executive branch and the Congress working together, unified, to enhance America's national security.

The President should have looked to the Congress and the Constitution when considering this potential agreement—whether the biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world should get a nuclear weapon and when—and realized this was an important enough national security issue and said: I am going to submit this as a treaty. He should have been willing to make the case to the American people and convince two-thirds of the Senate to vote for this agreement, as required by the Constitution. But he chose another path. He chose the “go it alone” path where even just a few weeks ago the administration signaled that it was not going to show the agreement—the key annexes of this agreement—to the Congress and that any attempts to force him to do so would be vetoed. That was a mistake. That is a mistake, and we are starting to change that.

In these kinds of matters, the U.S. State Department urges any administration—Republican or Democratic—to