

aggressively its sphere of influence across the greater Middle East.

The regime's belligerent behavior in the Strait of Hormuz was just another reminder of that fact. But it reminds us of something else, too—our need to invest in the naval and seaborne expeditionary capabilities in the Persian Gulf, which will be necessary not just to retain dominance at sea but to contain Iran's military and irregular forces, as well.

Today, though—today—we are focused on one point above all else—that the American people and Congress deserve a say before any congressional sanctions are lifted. At the very least, sanctions should not be lifted before the Iranians fully disclose all aspects of research and development as it relates to the potential military dimensions of their nuclear program. Yet the interim agreement, as it has been explained to Congress, would bestow international recognition to Iran's research and development program, along with an international blessing for Iran to become a nuclear threshold state poised at the edge of developing a nuclear weapon. It is frightening to think what Iran might be able to achieve covertly in that context.

Now, to a lot of Americans this all sounds quite different from what they were led to believe a deal with Iran would actually be about—preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons and dismantling Iran's enrichment capability. But that apparently has already been given away. So the American people deserve a say through their Members of Congress. The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act will ensure Congress gets a vote either to approve or disapprove of the comprehensive agreement.

Just as President Obama's successor will need to modernize our military to deal with the challenges posed by Iran's aggression, so will the President's successor want to consider Congress's view of any comprehensive deal. A failed resolution of approval, as the bill before us would permit, would send an unmistakable signal about congressional opposition to lifting sanctions. Let me say that again. A failed resolution of approval, permitted under this bill, would send an unmistakable signal about congressional opposition to lifting sanctions.

So now is the time for Congress to invest in the capabilities President Obama's successor may need to use to end Iran's nuclear weapons program if the Iranians covertly pursue a weapon or violate the terms of the ultimate agreement. And now is the time for Congress to pass the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

THE BUDGET

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, on a different matter, Mr. President, I was glad to see yesterday's announcement of a budget conference agreement. That means Congress is now one step closer

to passing a balanced budget that supports a healthy economy, funds national defense, strengthens Medicare, and begins to tackle our debt problems without taking more money from hard-working Americans.

It is a balanced budget that could help lead to more than 1 million additional jobs and boost our economy by nearly half a trillion dollars, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. In short, it is a balanced budget that is all about the future. That is also why it provides a tool for the Senate majority to repeal a failed policy of the past—ObamaCare—so we can start over with real patient-centered health reform.

This is a good balanced budget every Senator should want to support, and I look forward to the Senate taking up the budget agreement next week.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIRE-FIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1191, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1191) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1140, in the nature of a substitute.

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1179 (to amendment No. 1140), to require submission of all Persian text included in the agreement.

Blunt amendment No. 1155 (to amendment No. 1140), to extend the requirement for annual Department of Defense reports on the military power of Iran.

Vitter modified amendment No. 1186 (to amendment No. 1179), to require an assessment of inadequacies in the international monitoring and verification system as they relate to a nuclear agreement with Iran.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up my amendment No. 1149 to declare that any agreement reached by the President relating to the nuclear program of Iran is a congressional-executive agreement to be considered under the expedited procedure in both Houses of Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CARDIN. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, we have been proceeding now for about a week. We have had a good debate on issues. Many Members are working with Senator

CORKER and me to clear their amendments so they are consistent with the overall objective that was supported by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee by a 19-to-0 vote, and we are going to continue to work on that process in the orderly consideration of amendments.

For that reason, I must object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Perhaps if the Senator from Maryland will listen to my explanation of what this amendment does, he will withdraw his objection.

During our debate on Tuesday, when I offered an amendment to deem the agreement between Iran and America—well, actually and the world—a treaty subject to the advice and consent of the Senate, the Senator from Maryland spoke about one of the objections to the treaty. He said:

Secondly, I don't know how we are going to explain it to our colleagues in the House of Representatives. The Presiding Officer served in the House. I served in the House. Senator Menendez served in the House. The last time I checked, we imposed these sanctions because the bill passed both the Senate and the House, and now we are saying that the approval process is going to ignore the House of Representatives, solely going to be a matter for the U.S. Senate on a ratification of a treaty? That does not seem like a workable solution.

Now, Mr. President, I appreciate the fact that the Senator from Tennessee and the Senator from Maryland did not object to my raising my first amendment to deem it a treaty. And of course this body then voted on that, and I appreciate that fact. And I accept the verdict of this Chamber that they did not want to deem this agreement a treaty—fair enough.

But I would like to quote, in addition to the Senator from Maryland, the Senator from Tennessee in arguing against deeming this a treaty. The Senator from Tennessee said: "We think the President has the ability to negotiate things."

Well, first off all, I agree with that. Article II, section 2 states: "He [The President] shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur."

So that actually is the constitutional method for making agreements between nations—having the President negotiate that. I completely agree. We can't have 535 negotiators. But we certainly should have this body involved in those agreements. We should have a role. We should have a robust role. And, of course, I believe it is so important, that this has such an effect and that it risks so much for this Nation, that I believe it should be a treaty. But again, fair enough—this body deemed it would not be a treaty. The Senator from Tennessee went on to say:

We had no idea this President would consider suspending these sanctions ad infinitum, forever—no idea. I think even people on the other side of the aisle were shocked.