

the United States already for over a year. So it would not be a magnet for those who would like to come and take advantage of it in the future. It wouldn't apply to them, but it does apply to 1.8 million who would be eligible for citizenship.

I am sorry that there was an objection, but I will continue to work with Members on both sides of the aisle to resolve this. We owe it to Dalia and to many others like her who are waiting for Congress to act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The Senator from North Carolina.

CALLING FOR THE RELEASE OF PASTOR ANDREW BRUNSON

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, sadly, I have to do a speech that I promised I would do every week until we find justice for someone who has been in a Turkish prison now for a number of days. This is Pastor Brunson. He is a Presbyterian minister from Black Mountain. He has been in Turkey for 20 years, doing missionary work for a small church that I will describe briefly later.

On October 4, 2016, he was swept up in President Erdogan's regime's reaction to an unlawful coup—a coup that I disagree with. I believe in a peaceful transition of power, and I do believe that people who are responsible for it should be subject to Turkish laws. But the roundup of people by President Erdogan—he cast a very wide net—went so far beyond any reasonable expectation of people who could have been involved in the coup attempt. On October 4, 2016, a Presbyterian minister from Black Mountain, NC—the same church that Billy Graham was a part of—found himself arrested on charges for being a potential terrorist and plotting a coup.

He is in a Turkish prison. He has been in that prison now for 593 days—593 days, almost 17 months—without charges. He is held in a prison cell that is designed for 8 people but has 21 people in it. He is not really allowed to speak with his family. In fact, the only family he has seen over the last 593 days has been his wife, because they have been afraid to let his children come into the country for fear that they would not be allowed to leave, nor will his wife Norine leave the country for fear that she will not be able to come back. She is his only connection to his family. It has been 593 days.

I want to go back and tell you what really underlines why they think this Presbyterian minister is a part of the coup attempt or a terrorist organization. It is because they believe that religions in the United States are somehow joined together in this intelligence-gathering network so that, instead of doing missionary work, they can go into these countries and infiltrate their systems and then force coups or support or provide aid to people who would commit a terrorist act against the Turkish homeland—something that I would object to and some-

thing of which I would say that anybody who does that should be subject to Turkish law.

They believe this of Pastor Brunson, a pastor of a church in Izmir, who for many years, when he was doing missionary work, didn't even have a church. They finally were able to get the resources together. They have 50 members. This is a 50-member congregation in a church in Izmir, which is one of the more populous cities in the Turkey.

This is a very small church. On a packed day, on a Sunday, you may be able to fit 120 people in it. They open the doors so that people walking down the street can hear what they are talking about. They open the windows. They invite anybody in it.

Part of the case is that they believe that people who have entered that church are Kurdish, and because they are Kurdish, they must be associated with the PKK, and if they are associated with the PKK, then, clearly, they were involved with terrorist attempts against Turkey.

This church was also used in evidence. You see the picture. There is a small room upstairs in this very small church. There have been over one dozen secret witnesses. In a Turkish court, he doesn't have a trial by jury. He has three judges, and there is a prosecutor who is elevated, effectively, to be another judge, whom he is testifying before. One of the secret witnesses said that he clearly is guilty of nefarious activity because one night he saw a window open in this church for about 4 hours. That was the evidence submitted.

There is a problem with that. No. 1, generally speaking, in our country, having a light on doesn't necessarily go directly to being prosecuted for terrorism or conspiracy to commit terrorism. There is another problem with this allegation. This room doesn't have a window. There is no possible way somebody could have seen the light. Even if you would argue that seeing a light could somehow be linked to terrorist activity, you can't even see it.

To make matters worse, after more than a dozen secret witnesses came on, many of them in Turkish prisons themselves for the prosecution, the defense asked if they had 10 witnesses who would testify on his behalf. The judges said they would not be allowed to testify because they are suspects. They haven't been charged with anything, necessarily. They may not even be incarcerated, but they are suspects. Therefore, he has no opportunity whatsoever to defend himself.

I am about to go back and do a final vote on the National Defense Authorization Act. We have to get President Erdogan's attention. In a bill that we are going to have on this floor in the next couple of weeks, I believe we are going to send a very clear message to the President and to the people of Turkey to treat our people fairly, to treat with respect a nation that is prepared

to send American men and women to Turkey to fight and die for their freedom. If they don't, then we are going to have to continue to up the temperature until justice is done for Pastor Brunson and others in Turkish prisons.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, all postcloture time on the McWilliams nominations be considered expired at 12 noon on Thursday, May 24; further, that if cloture is invoked on the Evans nomination, the time until 1:45 p.m. be equally divided in the usual form, and at 1:45 p.m., the Senate vote on the nomination; finally, that if any of the nominations are confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to executive session for the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 603. I ask consent that there be 10 hours of debate equally divided in the usual form and that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote on the nomination with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; that no further motions be in order; and that any statements relating to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

VA MISSION BILL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the Senate today passed the VA MISSION Act, a long overdue piece of legislation of that would finally provide an overhaul of the healthcare system at the Department of Veterans Affairs that is desperately needed. The bill would