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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God, our Redeemer, thank You for Your abundant mercy and grace. You continue to do for us more than we can ask or imagine.

Guide the steps of our Senators. May they look to You to bring them to Your desired destination, as You surround them with the shield of Your divine favor.

Eternal King, help us all to never forget how Your sustaining grace has kept us in the past. May the memories of Your loving providence in our history infuse us with the spirit of optimism for all of our tomorrows.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAWLEY). The majority leader is recognized.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as recently as a few days ago, our government funding discussions seemed to be in a pretty good place. Bipartisan, bicameral negotiations on finishing out the year's appropriations process seemed to be right on track. We ap-

peared headed toward a compromise result that would have provided much needed investments in border security and completed our remaining appropriations bill to fully fund the government.

Last week, the Democratic leader seemed confident that "we worked out a plan to refund the government, deal with border security in a way that would be acceptable to all sides. That's working pretty well." Just this past Friday, the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, Senator LEAHY, suggested that "we're 95 to 98 percent done."

But then over the weekend, we heard that the talks had suddenly hit a snag. The bipartisan momentum had stalled. What went wrong? Here is what happened. The House Democrats decided to add a poison pill demand into the conversations at the eleventh hour. It is a new demand. It is really extreme—a hard, statutory cap on the number of illegal immigrants who could be detained by the Federal Government. This would result in the release of thousands of criminal aliens and our inability to detain thousands more criminal aliens whom our Federal and State law enforcement authorities will apprehend.

This is a poison pill that no administration—not this one, not the previous one—would or should ever accept. Imagine the absurdity of this. House Democrats want to set a limit on how many criminal aliens our government can detain. This is a limit that is not based on any aspect of reality, such as how many criminal aliens there actually are or what crimes they have committed; it is just an arbitrary number a couple of lawmakers have pulled out of thin air. The consequence of such an arbitrary limit is obvious: Thousands of criminal aliens would simply be released into the interior of our country, both immediately and then on a rolling basis into the future.

The National Sheriffs' Association explained this in a letter to Chairman

SHELBY and Senator LEAHY. Here is what the sheriffs had to say:

Capping the number of detention beds . . . not only jeopardizes the integrity of the immigration system, but would cripple ICE's ability to detain criminal aliens and other aliens who pose a risk to public safety or are a flight risk. . . . In order to meet the cap tentatively proposed by Congress, ICE would be compelled to release thousands of aliens from custody.

That is what the National Sheriffs' Association had to say about it—released, just like that, right out into the United States of America. It is hard to believe this is where some Democrats are—a get-out-of-jail-free card for criminals because the radical left doesn't like U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement. Let me say that again. It is a get-out-of-jail-free card for criminals because the radical left doesn't like U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.

It is hard to believe the "Abolish ICE" fringe among House Democrats actually thinks enforcing our laws is wrong. It is hard to believe a group of House Democrats see kneecapping American law enforcement as a higher priority than keeping the government open. But it would be even harder to believe that leading Democrats would be open to this craziness and would let this last-minute poison pill scuttle the entire appropriations process.

Just last year, when the Democratic leader was highlighting productive, bipartisan work on this appropriations process, he said: "Both sides have worked to avoid poison pill riders. That has meant steady progress." Ranking Member LEAHY celebrated that through last year's committee process, "We avoided new poison pill riders." So I hope my Democratic colleagues are able to talk some sense into their side.

Some House Democrats are risking a second partial government shutdown by calling for this absurd, last-minute poison pill. No administration of any party would sign a bill that forced them to release criminal aliens into

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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