The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Peter C. Wright, of Michigan, to be Assistant Administrator, Office of Solid Waste, Environmental Protection Agency.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Peter C. Wright, of Michigan, to be Assistant Administrator, Office of Solid Waste, Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. McConnell, Steve Daines, John Thune, John Barrasso, James M. Inhofe, Pat Roberts, Mike Crapo, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Barrasso, Joni Ernst, John Barrasso, Roy Blunt, Shelley Moore Capito, John Boozman, Johnny Isakson, Thom Tillis, John Hoeven.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum calls for the cloture motions be waived.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

CONFIRMATION OF ROB WALLACE

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I would just a few words about Rob Wallace, the newly confirmed Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks at the Department of Interior.

I have known Rob for over 35 years. Without question, Rob is the right person for the job. Throughout his long and distinguished career, Rob has struck the proper balance between wildlife management, habitat management, and the use of our public lands.

In terms of wildlife conservation, Rob became a ranger in Grand Teton National Park. Since then, Rob has served in a number of positions. He has been Assistant Director of the National Park Service, chief of staff for Wyoming Senator Malcolm Wallop, staff director for the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee—a committee on which I currently sit. He has been chief of staff for Wyoming Governor Jim Geringer, and manager of U.S. Government Relations for the General Electric Company.

Rob currently serves as the president of the Upper Green River Conservancy. It is the Nation’s first cooperative conservation bank. Rob cofounded the Upper Green River Conservancy. It protects core sage grouse habitat in the ecologically rich and the energy-rich Upper Green River watershed in Southwest Wyoming.

He built an innovative partnership of ranchers, conservation groups, energy companies, investors, and other stakeholders. Rob is also the founding member of the board of the Grand Teton National Park Foundation, a group of people absolutely working together, committed to the Grand Teton National Park. It promotes the park’s cultural, historic, and natural resources. He also served on the boards of many organizations dedicated to conserving wildlife and enhancing our national parks.

Rob’s nomination passed the Environment and Public Works Committee by unanimous vote, and a near-unanimous reported vote in the Committee of Energy and Natural Resources.

Rob Wallace is an outstanding choice for this position of Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks. He is the right person for the job, and I am so pleased the Senate has now confirmed his nomination.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

SIGNING AUTHORITY

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader, the senior Senator from South Carolina, and the junior Senator from Oklahoma, and the junior Senator from North Carolina be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills or joint resolutions from June 27 through the July 8.

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

IRAN

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I am going to try to do this in about 12 minutes, since I am not sure of the time. I heard the people are left to speak tonight and I know the staff worked hard and we will be up early tomorrow voting on the pending Udall amendment. That is what I want to talk about.

I have watched all week the debate on some of these topics. I think it is a really good debate, actually. In some ways, I am very pleased the amendment has been offered because it has given us an opportunity to talk about a topic I don’t think we have talked enough about, which is foreign policy, the security threats before our country, and, in particular, what the role of Congress is in all of this.

There are a couple of things I want to say at the outset. Here is the first. A lot of people who cover this stuff in the news like very simplistic terms. It makes it easier to write the article and makes it easier to describe the circumstances. The terminology people like to use are “hawk,” or “dove,” or “war-like.” I am not in favor of war. I have actually never advocated for a military attack on Iran, in these circumstances especially. There are a lot of reasons for it, but it will take me more than 15 minutes to explain it to you. Suffice it to say, it is certainly not the first or the second.

The policy of the United States in Iran today is the one I support; that is, crippling economic sanctions that deny them the money to do the bad things they do but also a forced posture that we are prepared with enough people there in the military, so if they do attack us, we can defend ourselves.

I want to say at the outset that I am not here today to support a war or to call for war but to speak about reality and the situation as we face it today.

The second thing I want to point to is there is this notion out there that there are some constitutional limitations on the President when it comes to the use of force in virtually every circumstance and that somehow the current President is being enabled by the Members of his party here to do what they want. It is not true. I will explain why in a moment.

I want to begin with why we are even here. It is one of the topics that has been touched on this week, which I think deserves a direct response. I heard a number of Senators who came to the floor. I watched the debate last night, and there will be another one tonight within the Democratic Party. You almost get a sense that what they are arguing is that Iran was under conditions in which we didn’t have a constitutional limitation on the President when it comes to the use of force in virtually every circumstance and that somehow the current President is being enabled by the Members of his party here to do what they want. It is not true. I will explain why in a moment.

The only thing Iran wasn’t doing is enriching uranium beyond a certain threshold. That is not necessarily a bad thing that they weren’t doing it, but that is the only thing that deal covered.

Here is what Iran was still doing. Iran was still sponsors terrorism. You ask, why is it that there is not a term for terrorism? Iran wants to be the dominant power in the Middle East, and one of the ways they seek to achieve it is to find all of these groups—Hezbollah, Shia militias in Iraq and Syria, the Houthis in Yemen—and empower those groups.

They have an organization called the IRGC, which is the real military and the real power in Iran. Underneath the IRGC, there is an organization called the Quds Force, which is their covert operations unit led by a guy named General Soleimani. He goes around the entire region sponsoring these groups—training them and providing weapons.
Here is what they hope to do. If they ever get into a conflict, they will use these groups to attack people. Why do they use those groups? No. 1, because Iran doesn’t have the ability to station troops all over the region. No. 2, it gives them deniability. They can say: We didn’t attack you. It was the Houthis or Shia militia. It allows them some level of deniability while still inflicting pain.

If you want to know what else Iran has done using that strategy, it has maimed or killed hundreds of American service men and women in Iraq. They didn’t buy all those IEDs that were blowing up on Amazon; they didn’t order them on eBay. They were built and supplied by the Iranians. That is who did it. There is no dispute about that.

President Obama signed this Iran deal. Iran began to get more money into their economy or their education system. Iran took the money they were making from the Iran deal. The Iran deal now allows them to engage in commerce that they weren’t allowed to. They took that extra money, and they used it to sponsor terrorism—to sponsor Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Today Hezbollah not only has more missiles than they had 10 or 15 years ago, but their missiles are better than they once were. They could now, theoretically, overwhelm Israel’s defenses with barrages of attacks. They have guidance systems on those missiles now. In fact, they have gotten so much assistance from Iran, they don’t even need to coordinate. That is what they are in the pattern of doing.

These are the two bidders. That is where even Hezbollah is out there that we know it was Iran? For different reasons. That is what they were banking on. If you say that, you have to pull out of the deal. That is why they wouldn’t acknowledge it.

We have them on video. I heard people ask how we know those were Iran’s. This is ridiculous. The way the mines look identical to the ones Iran makes. So they did that. That was their plan, OK? Their plan was to attack us using other forces but to have some level of deniability. ‘It was not us.’

They also know that there are divisions in American politics and that the President is unpopular in many countries. A lot of people around the world and in the United States would love nothing more than to say: ‘Yes, how do we know it was Iran’? for different reasons. That is what they were banking on, but then they shot down an unmanned U.S. vehicle, and they admitted it because that would have been difficult to deny. That is what really kicked off a lot of this argument that we are now hearing.

I want everybody to remember, if you go back 3 or 4 weeks, that there were people in the building and people on television—I saw them—commentators and others—who were basically implying that this was all not true, that there was no threat emanating from Iran, that it wasn’t doing anything unusual. Now they are admitting that Iran is doing something unusual and dangerous, but 3 or 4 weeks ago, they were basically implying that this was all being made up by people who wanted a war.

Think that through logically. That means there would be dozens and dozens of career service men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces and in the Pentagon who would be, basically, lying to us about this. That is absurd.

So we get to the point of how this really got us here. It wasn’t the deal with Iran or the pulling out of the deal that caused this. This has always been. This is what Iran has always done, and it has been doing it for two decades.
now and longer. To somehow act as if Iran is more belligerent today than it was 6 months ago or 6 years ago is just not true. It is just that the threats have become more imminent directly against us.

When you look at this amendment, the amendment is basically designed to say that the President cannot enter into a war unless Congress approves it, which is an interesting dynamic.

No. 1, when you hear people saying you have got to keep conflicts away from Congress, what they are talking about is the War Powers Resolution. In the aftermath of Vietnam and that era, Congress said, from now on, we are not getting into any more of these undeclared wars. If a President is going to commit service- men and women for an extended period of time, it has to come through Congress.

No President—no administration—has ever accepted that resolution as being in the Constitution. From that point on, every administration, Democrat and Republican—has taken the position that this is an unconstitutional infringement on the power of the Commander in Chief. That has been the official position of every administration, Republican and Demo- crat, since that passed.

Nonetheless, on various occasions, Presidents have come to Congress for authority, which I think is a smart thing to do, especially for an extended engagement, because we are stronger and our policies are more effective when Congress and the American people are behind you. That is why President George W. Bush sought the authorization for Afghanistan and why he sought it for Iraq. It was the right thing to do, and it made sense. Yet no President has ever admitted that it is constitutional, and I share that view.

For a moment, let’s assume that it were. Well, that resolution lays out three things that happen if a President, a Commander in Chief, can commit U.S. forces to a hostility, to a war, to a fight.

The first thing is that there has to be a declaration of war. That is in the Constitution too. Congress can declare war.

The second is that Congress can au- thorize the use of force. That is when you hear all of this talk about the au- thorization for use of military force, the AUMF, what we had in Af- ganistan, and that is what we had in Iraq. That is what a lot of people around here think we need if we are going to do something with Iraq.

There is a third component they like to ignore, and the third component is that a President can instruct U.S. military action if Congress declares war, if Congress authorizes the use of force, or, No. 3, if there is an emer- gency that causes us to respond to an attack against the United States, our territories, our holdings, or our Armed Forces.

I want to tell you that if a Shia militia attacks a U.S. base in Iraq, this is a pretty clear attack on the Armed Forces. If it shoots down one of our un- manned, unarmed platforms over inter- national airspace, that is an attack on our Armed Forces. If they try to kid- nap or murder an ambassador or a diplo- mat, by the wording of the Resolution, that is an attack on U.S. territory since embassies are sovereign territories.

If you look at what the administra- tion has done, the only thing the ad- ministration has done when it has had a war that has made a decision is that they assure that we have had enough ships and enough airplanes and enough personnel and enough assets in the Middle East so, if we are attacked, we can respond. That is the only thing it has done.

I don’t know how you read the plain text of the language that they are wrapping themselves around—those who criticize what the administration has done—and not realize that it is fully authorized. If we are attacked, the President has a right to respond—he has an obligation.

Think of the reverse. If the Iranians were to attack a facility in Iraq and murder 100 Americans who were working as diplomats or if they were to kill 200 soldiers, the first questions that every one of the President’s critics would be asking on TV would be: Why didn’t we have enough forces in the region to protect those people? Why didn’t we have a plan to save them? There would be congress- sional hearings, and there would be Members of Congress who would scream at the administration: Why didn’t you have people there to save them?

In anticipating that this could hap- pen, our military leaders, in their look- ing at the threats and understanding the environment, asked the administra- tion to send additional forces so they may be in a posi- tion of having enough people and assets to respond in case of an attack.

I will go further than that. Imagine there is given verifiable information that an attack is imminent by Iran or one of its prox- ies and that the only way to save American lives is to wipe out the place from which it is going to launch the att- ack. Even if you acted first, that is self-defense. You are getting ahead of preventing an attack, not to mention the fact that the best way to respond to an attack is to prevent it from hap- pening in the first place, and having a force posture in the region is one of the best ways to do that.

This amendment is just not nec- essary because, in assuming they are arguing that the War Powers Resolu- tion is not working, what Congress’s power and role are in all of this, in the very text of that resolu- tion, it makes clear that a President has a right to introduce military forces and to use military force to defend Americans, to defend America, and to defend our Armed Forces.

So why do we need language that says that a second time? Some would say: Well, it is redundant, and it is al- ready the law. Why not just vote for it again?

That is the final and, perhaps, the most important point in all of this—that the timing couldn’t really be more unimportant. It is not necessary, but the redundancy here is actually quite damaging, and here is why.

I think sometimes we make a terrible mistake in American politics. We as- cribe our attributes to those of the Supreme Court, a Supreme Leader, a cleric. That is where the power really resides.

No. 2, we make a terrible mistake of believing that they truly understand us, our systems, and our debates when they don’t, even if they are Harvard, MIT, Ph.D. He is not a world traveler nor a con- stitutional expert nor a consumer of a varied amount of news and information from around the world nor a nuanced person who understands that this is a moment, for example, is never going to become law.

Here is what they do believe, and I encour- age all Members here to go out and inform themselves as to this. As a Senator, one has the opportunity to do that. They do believe the President cannot respond. They believe that this President cannot and would not not respond. They believe that there is a threshold—that there are x numbers of Americans they can kill and that there are certain types of attacks they can get away with without getting a re- sponse back. That is what they believe. Why do they believe it?

No. 1, it is that our President has talked on various occasions about being in the region and the region. So they begin by believing, by and large, that we don’t even want to be there.

No. 2, they believe it because they look at our domestic politics, and they say: I have heard the debates, and I watched 5 minutes of CNN or some other network the other night, and I heard people on there who were from Congress or wherever who told the President he can’t do this and can’t do that. There is no support in America for responding, so the President is con- strained in what he is able to do.

Why is that a problem?

It is because that is where you mis- calculate. That is where they think would trigger a response and what will actually trigger a response are two very different things.

If this thing were to pass—and I know there are still a couple of people who are thinking about voting for it—this would not be reported as an event that had passed on a bill but that was never going to become law because it was never going to get signed with that in there. That is not
Mr. M. CONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that not with standing the upcoming adjournment of the Senate, the President of the Senate, the President pro tempore, and the majority and minority leaders be authorized to make appointments to Commissions, Committees, Boards, Conferences, or Interparliamentary Conferences authorized by law, by concurrent action of the two houses, or by order of the Senate.

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

EXTENDING THE PROGRAM OF BLOCK GRANTS TO STATES FOR TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEE DY FAMILIES AND RELATED PROGRAMS THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

Mr. M. CONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. R. 2940.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H. R. 2940) to extend the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families and related programs through September 30, 2019.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. M. CONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time.

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

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

Mr. M. CONNELL. I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

Hearing none, the bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H. R. 2940) was passed.

Mr. M. CONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

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

PROVIDING FOR A 2-WEEK EXTENSION OF THE MEDICAID COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

Mr. M. CONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2307, submitted today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2307) to provide for a 2-week extension of the Medicaid community mental health services demonstration program, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. M. CONNELL. I further ask that the bill be read a second time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.