

well. Let's get something done and send it to the President for his signature so we can ensure that these treasures, our national parks, are there for generations to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). The Senator from New Jersey.

EBOLA ERADICATION ACT OF 2019

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to draw attention to the growing risks of an Ebola epidemic in Central Africa and to urge the Senate to take up and pass S. 1340, my bipartisan bill authorizing USAID to combat the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This legislation passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June, and it is time for the full Senate to act.

On July 17, the World Health Organization declared this Ebola outbreak a "public health emergency of international concern," with experts predicting the outbreak will last well into 2020.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, or the DRC, as it is known, has been battling an Ebola outbreak for exactly 1 year as of today. Despite the best efforts of the Congolese, the World Health Organization, and international partners, this outbreak is now the second worst in history. More than 1,800 people are dead and more than 2,600 confirmed and probable cases have been identified.

It took just over 7 months to reach 1,000 cases of Ebola, but only 2 months to reach 2,000. According to the World Health Organization, up to 25 percent of all infections may be going unreported.

The scope of the outbreak continues to grow. Just today, press reports indicate that there is a third case in the city of Goma, home to over 1 million people.

Imagine the consequences of an unrestrained outbreak in a city of over 1 million people. Under the best of circumstances, it would be difficult, but not impossible, to control the outbreak. However, we are not dealing with ideal circumstances. Today's Ebola outbreak is unfolding amid a noxious mix of political mistrust and overall insecurity.

Consider that eastern Congo has been plagued for years by armed opposition groups and militias. Dozens of armed groups opposed to the government operate in the areas most affected by Ebola, periodically preventing health officials from reaching communities in need of treatment and prevention. Likewise, criminal gangs operating with near impunity have made it dangerous for healthcare workers to travel to Ebola-affected villages without security.

To complicate things further, we have witnessed community resistance specifically to the Ebola response. Long marginalized by the capital of the DRC, Kinshasa, communities in east-

ern Congo remain skeptical that the crisis is real. They fear the government is using the disease as another tool of disenfranchising them, especially after the former government canceled elections. Some actors even oppose medical interventions and promote disinformation and conspiracy theories questioning the existence of the Ebola outbreak.

To date, there have been more than 100 attacks on health facilities, severely hampering the response of the DRC and the international community. Misinformation, mistrust of the government, and fear of violence at health centers has resulted in between 25 and 50 percent of new Ebola deaths taking place outside treatment facilities. This means infectious patients are less likely to receive lifesaving treatment and more likely to infect others.

We no longer have the luxury of half-hearted international engagement. We need a multifaceted, multisectoral, international response to get this under control. We know all too well that infectious diseases have no borders. It is one airplane flight away from coming to our own country. That has happened in the past.

It is in our national and international interest to ensure the United States uses every resource available to get this outbreak under control. To date, however, the White House response has not only been inadequate but downright counterproductive.

In early May, USAID developed a new strategy focusing on basic assistance for disenfranchised communities to help build trust and improve access for healthcare workers. This strategy would, for example, support health interventions for anyone who comes to a healthcare center in need of care, even if not totally related to Ebola.

USAID also proposed new programs to increase education, provide clean water and sanitation in communities, and improve conditions in Ebola-affected communities. These programs were designed to build trust and promote resilience in at-risk communities so that health workers can better stop the spread of the disease.

These were good ideas. Instead of embracing them, the administration has effectively tied its own hands in promoting a sensible, sustainable response to the Ebola crisis.

As we all know, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which I have been a champion of on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, having worked with the former chairman, Bob Corker, who felt passionately about these issues, railed against the administration when they didn't put countries in tier 3, the most significant consequence under our law, because they were playing politics with that country for other reasons and not observing the essence of the law, and made sure that the TIP Report was transparent and honest in its assessments. So I am supportive of the harsh sanctions for countries that fail to adequately combat human trafficking.

As a tier 3 country under the law, the DRC is therefore severely restricted from receiving U.S. aid. But let's use some common sense here. This legislation was never, never intended to hurt the most vulnerable in society or to be used as an excuse to ignore a deadly epidemic with international implications. In fact, Congress foresaw the need for exceptions to these sanctions in extraordinary cases in 22 USC, chapter 78, section 4 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. This language that I just cited allows the United States to waive sanctions and provide assistance when it is in our national interest to do so. Indeed, the law specifically says: "The President shall exercise the authority"—shall exercise the authority—"under section (4) when necessary to avoid significant adverse effects on vulnerable populations, including women and children."

According to the World Health Organization, the Ebola virus disease has a 50-percent mortality rate. No one can deny its effects on vulnerable populations. If the people of eastern Congo, including women and children, are not vulnerable, then I don't know who is.

Yet the White House has refused to exercise the waiver. That is why we need the Ebola Eradication Act. This simple legislation directs the USAID Administrator to immediately provide assistance, including multisectoral, nonhumanitarian, and nontrade related foreign assistance, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other vulnerable countries to effectively combat the Ebola outbreak, notwithstanding the sanctions required by the Trafficking and Victims Protection Act.

Make no mistake, President Trump could have done this himself months ago. But as a Bloomberg editorial published today points out, President Trump has failed to respond with urgency. As a result, needless delays and inaction have hampered our response.

In mid-June, the administration had granted exceptions for all Ebola-related activities proposed under USAID's new plan, but they have yet to be launched. To make matters worse, those exceptions were granted only for fiscal year 2018 money.

Finally, the exception is not a country waiver, creating loads of redtape for future activities related to combating Ebola. In other words, we are shooting ourselves in the foot with unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles that serve no purpose and slow down our response even as the disease continues to kill more and more people.

Fortunately, the DRC and bordering countries, together with the World Health Organization, have lessened the overall impact by successfully vaccinating more than 120,000 people. They have also administered experimental treatment regimens to over 300 people, which, if caught in time, can save more lives. But this is a case where, in fact, America can and must do more.

While there is no magic wand we can wave to change the security situation,

we can certainly step up the U.S. response and our support for local and international efforts. We have a moral obligation to help contain and combat this outbreak before it becomes an epidemic. Likewise, we have an obligation to protect the safety and security of the American public. Our goal must be to save lives and prevent the spread of Ebola before it stands a chance of reaching America's shores. Ultimately, we ignore the tragedy unfolding in the Congo at our own peril. It is time for this body to act.

USAID Administrator Mark Green testified in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee earlier this year and expressed strong support for this legislation as it is currently written.

I urge my colleagues to work with me in passing S. 1340, the Ebola Eradication Act of 2019, as it is currently drafted and as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed it in June.

This is an opportunity to ultimately save lives. It is an opportunity—something we don't always get in this Chamber—for us to actually save lives. It is an opportunity to stop an epidemic. It is an opportunity to preserve our own interests by making sure Ebola doesn't come to the shores of the United States. It should be a no-brainer.

I hope we can work through the one objection I understand that exists with our colleague from Utah so that we can actually control the epidemic, save lives, and ultimately ensure our own interests.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previous order of July 31 with respect to district judges be modified to allow for confirmation votes notwithstanding rule XXII.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 421.

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

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that 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 statement related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of the following named officer for appointment as Chief of Naval Operations and appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 601 and 8033 to be Admiral: Vice Adm. Michael M. Gilday?

The nomination was confirmed.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 57 and 58.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of M. Miller Baker, of Louisiana, to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade; Timothy M. Reif, of the District of Columbia, to be a Judge of the United States Court of International Trade.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; 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 nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Baker and Reif nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 296 and 297.

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

The clerk will report the nominations en bloc.

The legislative clerk read the nominations of Randolph J. Stayin, of Virginia, to be a Member of the United

States International Trade Commission for a term expiring June 16, 2026; Amy Karpel, of Washington, to be a Member of the United States International Trade Commission for a term expiring June 16, 2023.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; 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 nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Stayin and Karpel nominations en bloc?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: PN892, PN492, PN154, PN159, PN160, PN161, PN163, PN164, PN165, and PN167.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc with no intervening action or debate; that if confirmed, the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table en bloc; 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 nominations be printed in the RECORD.

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

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nominations of Matthew Keenan, of Kansas, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2020; Julie Reiskin, of Colorado, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2019 (Reappointment); Robert J. Grey, Jr., of Virginia, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2020 (Reappointment); Abigail L. Kuzma, of Indiana, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2019; Abigail L. Kuzma, of Indiana, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2022 (Reappointment); John G. Levi, of Illinois, to be a Member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2020 (Reappointment); John