

We actually were prepared to do this in July. I remember saying: Why don't we bring up all the appropriations bills? The Republicans have the majority. They can vote them down if they don't like them, but let's bring them up and have a vote on them, one way or the other. No, we couldn't do it.

Now Senator MCCONNELL says he wants to do this process piecemeal: Pass a little bit now, a little bit later. Trust me, we can do that.

Well, as Ronald Reagan would say, "Trust, but verify." Let's have a real vote. Let's vote on all of it because we know that the majority leader will adjourn the Senate later this month to go home and campaign. It appears all he wants is a show vote on a woefully inadequate bill that he knows can never become law and then to get out of here.

That is not a plan for action. That is not a real plan to pass a bill for the American people. It is unacceptable.

Why don't we admit that the most important thing before us is what is happening with COVID and how we address it? Now, I know a lot of Republicans who have some very good ideas, and I know a lot of Democrats who have some very good ideas to address it. Let's bring them up. Let's vote on them—vote for them or vote against them.

Don't say we are not going to allow a vote because we don't have time. We have plenty of time. We have plenty of time. Let's just stay here every day, go through weekends if need be, and just vote, vote up or down.

We are running out of time. Right now, the majority leader intends to adjourn the Senate in just a few weeks. Well, the American people don't have that luxury. They can't just go home for a few weeks knowing their bills are being paid, their salary is being paid. They need our help. Why don't we do our job and vote these things up or down?

Have the courage to say what you stand for. We could have, easily, 40 to 50 amendments—realistic amendments from both Republicans and Democrats—vote them up or down, and then have a bill that can go to conference. Every one of us knows we should have done that in July. We didn't. We could have done that in August. We didn't.

It is September. Let's at least now do our job, uphold our oath of office, and pass the bill. Let's not be afraid of how we vote. I know, in my own votes, those 16,000-plus, somebody can find votes they disagree with. So what. I have the courage to vote.

I call on my fellow Senators: Have the courage to vote. We are supposed to be the conscience of the Nation. Let's try to be. I see other Senators on the floor, eagerly awaiting their chance to give us their news.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

Mr. WICKER. Madam President, I take to the floor of the Senate this

afternoon to call Senators' attention to the worsening crisis in intercountry adoptions. I must say, it saddens me to have to do this because much of the crisis in foreign adoptions—or intercountry adoptions—is happening as a result of policies of our own Federal Government.

I am fortunate to have had two loving parents and a loving family. My dad is 96 years old. I visited with him yesterday. My mom, sadly, passed away several years ago. But I was fortunate. I was among the fortunate people on the face of this planet to have two loving parents and a loving family. That is not the case all around the world.

Internationally, in particular, there are countless children who have no mom, no dad, no family, no extended family to care for them. They reside in the most deplorable conditions, in orphanages, and as wards of the state.

Americans have always been compassionate for these children without a forever family, and that compassion extends to children not only orphaned in the United States but also outside of our borders. For decades, Americans have led the world in welcoming children from around the globe to come to the United States and be part of a forever family. As a result, more than 150,000 children adopted from foreign countries are now growing up in the United States—150,000. These children and their adoptive families are examples of America at its best.

I am here to say to my colleagues today that intercountry adoption is in real trouble, and much of the reason that intercountry adoption is in trouble is coming from our own Federal policies, from unelected bureaucrats, particularly at our own Department of State.

The number of international children finding an American home has plummeted in recent years. Listen to this statistic. In the year 2004, Americans adopted 23,000 children from foreign countries—23,000. Last year, 2019, that number had fallen below 3,000, an 87-percent drop from 23,000 only 15 years before to 3,000 in 15 short years.

Now, people who have been looking into this issue are well aware of what is causing the decline, and one of the reasons is Russia. Because of foreign policy disagreements, Russia has shut its doors to intercountry adoption. We have pleaded with the Russian Government about this, and we have not made much progress. That is one of the factors—not the only factor and not even the principal factor, but that is on the Russian Government. It saddens me that they have done that.

The biggest reason for the decline in intercountry adoptions by Americans comes within our own government, our own State Department. For years, the State Department and its adoption accrediting entity have demonstrated a clear and consistent bias against intercountry adoption. It saddens me to say this. It is unbelievable that I have to

say this, but career bureaucrats in the State Department have deliberately obstructed the adoption process with new fees, new requirements that amount to redtape, and unrealistic standards on foreign governments. These bureaucrats have placed burdensome regulations on adoption provider agencies. These regulations make it nearly impossible for adoption-providing agencies to maintain accreditation.

This has been done by design, and the results are devastating. In the last year and a half, more than 30 adoption-providing agencies have left the intercountry adoption space, and we are losing more agencies every month. The bias of our Federal Government's State Department against intercountry adoptions is unmistakable.

In 2018, for example, the Department directly intervened to prevent three well-respected adoption agencies from being reaccredited. A Federal judge dismissed the Department's reasoning as "quite unconvincing" and "simply illogical." That is what a Federal judge had to say about the reasoning of this little part of the State Department that seems determined to end foreign adoptions.

During that same year, 2018, a journalist quoted a State Department insider who confirmed that the Office of Children's Issues, the OCI, in the State Department is biased against intercountry adoption. Why they would take this position is beyond me. Adoption advocates followed up by requesting Freedom of Information Act documents about this claim by the journalist who quoted the State Department insider, but the Department of State has resisted this Freedom of Information Act request and has still yet to produce any documents 2 years after the statutory FOIA deadline has passed.

There are plenty more examples. Last year, the State Department hosted an adoption symposium that may as well have been called the international anti-adoption symposium. This is funded at our State Department by our own taxpayer dollars. Our own tax funds funded a conference that featured radically anti-adoption speakers who openly denounced the practice of international adoptions. It is hard to believe, and it is hard to imagine a worse use of taxpayer dollars.

The adoption community has voiced concerns about the State Department's anti-adoption bias, but it seems that government has not listened. I will say that this has been a problem in State Departments headed by Republican Secretaries and by Democratic Secretaries. When adoption providers privately shared their concerns about the accrediting agency, the Department responded by issuing a public letter threatening the future of intercountry adoption.

The Office of Children's Issues, OCI, is slamming the door in the faces of thousands of orphans who need a family, and they are saying no to willing

American couples who are pleading to give these international children a forever family here in our great country.

It seems that OCI's priorities are out of step with their statutory mandate. Also, they are out of step with the values of this country and basic morality. We need to change the policy of the State Department in this regard, I say to my colleagues.

I call on my colleagues on the Foreign Relations Committee to hold an oversight hearing to review the State Department's role in intercountry adoption, to examine the allegations of bias against intercountry adoption, and to hear from accrediting agencies and other stakeholders about their experiences in working with the Department of State and its accrediting entity. I think such a hearing would be revealing, and I think the results would be troubling to Members of the Congress.

I also call on the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations to investigate allegations raised against the U.S. accrediting entity in the State Department's Office of Children's Issues.

It is time, actually, to transition the U.S. central authority from the Department of State to a more receptive, more compassionate, and more understanding home, such as the Department of Health and Human Services. This would allow experienced child welfare professionals to oversee intercountry adoptions.

We have a great Secretary of State. I have known Mike Pompeo for years. I think he has got all he can preside over, and I don't for a minute think that the Secretary of State understands what this small entity in his State Department is doing. I think he must have no idea that this is going on, but I think the solution is to move this function from the State Department.

I would call on the Secretary of State to put a hold on planned changes down in this little agency populated by unelected bureaucrats who are hostile to adoption. I think we should put a hold on planned changes in the accreditation compliance system until there has been a full review of OCI's bias against adoption. The competence of their staff needs to be investigated, and we need to look, we need to give an open assessment, shining the light of day on the impact that this small group of bureaucrats is having on something that I think most Americans support.

The American people believe in adoption. They believe in giving orphans anywhere in the world an opportunity to have a forever family. They believe in giving couples here in the United States the opportunity to provide a home for these children who are less fortunate than most of us have been, most of us within the sound of my voice have been. I think the American people believe in a change in this inexplicably anti-American and anti-family policy.

Today, I am on the floor of the U.S. Senate to shine a light on this tragedy,

on this outrage. I ask my colleagues to remember the teaching of the Psalmist: "Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute."

I think Americans believe in the sentiments of the Psalmist in that regard. I think we are ready to heed the plight of the fatherless. Let's not neglect our duty in correcting the situation we find ourselves in and, once again, becoming the country that provides welcoming, loving outreach to children to be part of a forever American family.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

UIGHUR INTERVENTION AND GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN UNIFIED RESPONSE ACT OF 2019

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, 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. What is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the pending business. The bill clerk read the following:

House message to accompany S. 178, a bill to condemn gross human rights violations of ethnic Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang, and calling for an end to arbitrary detention, torture, and harassment of these communities inside and outside China.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the amendment of the House to the bill, with McConnell Amendment No. 2499, in the nature of a substitute.

AMENDMENT NO. 2499 WITHDRAWN

Mr. MCCONNELL. I withdraw the motion to concur in the House amendment with amendment No. 2499.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

The amendment is withdrawn.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 2652

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to concur in the House amendment with amendment No. 2652.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McConnell] moves to concur in the House amendment to the bill, S. 178, with an amendment numbered 2652.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask that the reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows: (Purpose: In the nature of a substitute) (The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for the motion to concur with amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill 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 motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 178, a bill to condemn gross human rights violations of ethnic Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang, and calling for an end to arbitrary detention, torture, and harassment of these communities inside and outside China, with a further amendment No. 2652.

Mitch McConnell, John Barrasso, Shelley Moore Capito, Marco Rubio, Lamar Alexander, Mike Crapo, Roy Blunt, James M. Inhofe, Kevin Cramer, Richard C. Shelby, Martha McSally, Pat Roberts, Tim Scott, James Lankford, Dan Sullivan, Todd Young, John Cornyn.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory call be waived.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

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

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

The Senate resumed consideration of the nomination of Brett H. Ludwig, of Wisconsin, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Wisconsin.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, each year, during the month of August, I look forward to traveling across my State—my very big State—to spend time with my constituents. It is the best way to learn firsthand how the laws and programs we enact here are working and to receive the feedback on legislation being considered by the Congress in the future and what I can do to better help the folks back home.

A typical State work period involves dozens of face-to-face events from every corner of my State, covering all ages, professions, and walks of life. Last August, I spent time talking with my constituents about everything from the Debbie Smith Act and GI benefits for student veterans to Project Safe Neighborhoods grants and the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement.

As we all know, 2020 has been anything but typical, and this August was no exception. These big, in-person events have been replaced with virtual ones, with face-to-face meetings, which now involve wearing masks, social distancing, and a heavy dose of hand sanitizer. Instead of the broad range of policies we might normally discuss, almost every one of them centered on the impact of COVID-19. No big surprise there.

I have heard from mayors, teachers, food bank employees, healthcare workers, restaurant owners, energy workers,