



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 116th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 166

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

No. 158

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.

Mighty God, teach us to trust You more fully, to wait quietly for the unfolding of Your providence, to pray fervently, and to worship more humbly. Reassure us with Your wisdom, power, and love that Your providence will prevail.

Lord, You are our shelter for every storm. Remind our lawmakers to remember how Your purposes have prevailed in our Nation's history so they need not fear for the future.

Lord, provide them with a firm faith that will enable them to meet the daunting challenges of these times. Lengthen their moments of prayer until their lives become a continual aspiration after You.

We pray in Your matchless 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.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HAWLEY). The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 1 minute in morning business.

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

RUSSIA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, which happened last month, was a very disgusting thing to

hear about. Such action in Russia or by Russia is not unprecedented. In 2015, the leading democracy advocate in Russia, Boris Nemtsov, was gunned down within the sight of the Kremlin. The square in front of the Russian Embassy in Washington is now named in his honor, echoing the effort that I led to name the street in front of the old Russian Embassy after the dissident Andrei Sakharov.

Nemtsov's protege in the Russian opposition, Vladimir Kara-Murza, was then poisoned—poisoned twice but miraculously survived and continues to work for Russian democracy. The good news is that Mr. Navalny is reportedly conscious.

Now, a silver lining may also be that Putin's latest attempted assassination is bringing our allies toward a consensus to treat Putin as a pariah.

There are reports of senior German politicians reconsidering their support for Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which divides our European allies. This pipeline is opposed by countries like Poland and the Baltics that truly understand that Putin will use it as a strategic influence tool, as well as by the Trump administration and bipartisan majorities in Congress.

I hope all of these happenings are a start of a new era of cooperation with our Russian allies to counter Russian influence.

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.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ISRAEL

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, when I address the situation in the Middle East, it is often to discuss instability, terror, or other threats to the United States and its partners, like Israel. Those threats still exist, but I am very glad to be speaking today about peace breaking out, and it is breaking out more quickly than we can even stage the official ceremonies to memorialize the diplomatic achievements.

A few weeks ago, with major help from the United States and the Trump administration, Israel and the United Arab Emirates reached the first Arab-Israeli peace deal in 26 years. The Abraham Accord is named for the shared religious roots that Christians, Jews, and Muslims all hold in common. It will make the UAE just the third Arab nation, and the very first in the gulf, to normalize relations with Israel. In the words of Prime Minister Netanyahu, "full and official peace, full diplomatic agreement, with embassies, investment, commerce, tourism, and direct flights between Tel Aviv and Dubai and Abu Dhabi."

We have come a long way—a long way indeed. What a moment.

Farsighted leaders in both countries made sacrifices to make this deal possible. Prime Minister Netanyahu and Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayid understand that both Arabs and Israelis will benefit from the peace and prosperity that tearing down barriers can bring. America will also benefit from these two regional friends working more closely together and reducing tensions across the challenging region.

Now, to be sure, work is not finished, and no single step like this should be confused for an overnight miracle. In this case, we in Congress have an obligation to review any U.S. arms sales package linked to the deal. As we help our Arab partners defend against growing threats, we must continue ensuring that Israel's qualitative military edge

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S5563

remains unchallenged. But the winds of change are blowing, and they are bringing good news for peace all across the region.

Of course, a few extreme voices, perhaps correctly sensing that their moment is slipping away, are not at all happy. A predictable cast of characters wasted no time condemning the agreement and branding the UAE as traitors to the Arab or Muslim world.

Unlike Iranian clerics or al-Qaida terrorists, everyone who is actually living in the 21st century is celebrating this major progress. This major step forward is being documented in a signing ceremony at the White House tomorrow. But in just the couple of weeks that have elapsed between the announcement of the Abraham Accord and the official ceremony tomorrow, another Arab state has joined the parade toward peace. On Friday, September 11, Israel and Bahrain announced their agreement to open formal diplomatic relations. After Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE, this makes the fourth historic step toward normalization by Israel's Arab neighbors.

Along with President Trump, Prime Minister Netanyahu and King Hamad of Bahrain called the agreement "a historic breakthrough to further peace in the Middle East." Indeed, reports suggest that still more Arab states may not be far behind. This is a new course with the potential to fundamentally—fundamentally—change the Middle East.

Dennis Ross, former senior diplomatic adviser to President Obama and a longtime practitioner of the peace process, wrote just yesterday that these agreements are bona fide "breakthroughs" that are changing "the political landscape of the Middle East" and the Israel-Palestine stalemate for the better. That is Dennis Ross, from the Obama administration. That is how former Obama administration officials are praising the Trump administration's successes.

I am grateful for this administration's work to encourage peace. I am proud of this historic opportunity that American leadership and diplomacy has made possible.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, Mr. President, on a totally different message, I had hoped, Republicans had hoped, and the American people had hoped that the Senate would be spending this week finishing up another bipartisan agreement on coronavirus relief. We want to get hundreds of billions more dollars into the pipeline for kids, for jobs, for healthcare.

Unfortunately, Senate Democrats chose to block it all. Our Democratic colleagues voted against hundreds of billions of dollars to help Americans fight the virus. This wasn't even a vote on final passage, just a procedural vote to break the Democratic leader's filibuster and move forward with some-

thing. Senate Democrats, nevertheless, filibustered the aid.

Then, just a few short days later, they went right back to signaling that a Democratic Senate majority paired with a President Joe Biden would abolish the filibuster and permanently vandalize this institution to more easily force radical change on the country. This threat to permanently disfigure the Senate has been the latest growing drumbeat in the modern Democratic Party's war against our governing institutions.

There was former Senator Reid starting the "nuclear" exchange back in 2013. There have been years of unprecedented tactics to try and deny President Trump the government the people elected. There has been the least fair, least thorough, and most rushed impeachment inquiry in modern history.

Now, the most shameless—the most shameless—hypocrisy: Senate Democrats happily use the filibuster to block coronavirus relief and Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill at the very same time they are conspiring to destroy that very tool so they can ram through their radical agenda if they ever win power. Grade A hypocrisy and nothing more.

We have had former President Obama call for "eliminating the filibuster, another Jim Crow relic," about 1 month after his own party used it to kill Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill. We have some of former Vice President Biden's allies in the Senate daydreaming about ending the filibuster even as they themselves use the filibuster to kill pandemic relief for working families.

Democrats want completely different sets of rules depending on whether they hold power—different sets of rules depending upon whether they hold power. They want to assert minority rights when they have the minority and steamroll them if they get a majority.

Here is NBC News:

Democratic insiders are assembling a coalition behind the scenes to wage an all-out war on the Senate filibuster. . . . Veteran party operatives, activist groups and supportive Senators are coordinating message and strategy.

This takes measuring the drapes to a new level. The Democratic leader and his colleagues aren't just measuring the drapes; they are calculating how much kerosene it would take to burn the drapes down.

They aren't just threatening to pass radical policies like Medicare for none or the Green New Deal—no, no, no. The far left wants to hot-wire democracy itself—things like packing the Supreme Court with new seats or packing the Senate by handing out new statehood to one individual city.

I said it a few months ago. Today's Democrats have lost patience with playing by the rules and want to wage war on the rule book itself. They are saying as much out loud.

Perhaps our colleagues think promising a shameless power grab is the

only way to energize their radical, far-left base, but the real effect—the real effect—is to make the stakes in these issues completely and totally clear to the American people.

The Framers designed the Senate to be the country's firewall against ill-considered and radical change. That is what the Senate was all about in the beginning. If our Democratic friends have concluded their worst ideas could never clear the high bar—if they think their ideas could never clear the high bar, it is their bad ideas that need to be scrapped, not the core checks and balances of our government.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Mark C. Scarsi, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

RACISM

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, the events of the last few months—what we have been seeing in the streets and the protests and all the issues that surround that—I think, have forced the country to grapple with our history on the issue of race and, in particular, what we teach young Americans about what that means and how it fits in the broader story of America.

Is America, in fact, a nation founded on racism, one that makes our very founding and its principles almost irredeemable? It is an important question. You can't ask Americans or any generation to sacrifice or defend a nation they believe is so deeply flawed, so it is one that I think we have to talk about.

This country was founded in the year 1776, and it was founded by this declaration that all men are created equal; that your rights come from God, from your Creator. Now, we take those words for granted today. They were extraordinarily radical ideas 244 years ago. Up until that time, every person on Earth was told that your rights are whatever the sovereign allowed you to have, whatever the King allowed you to have. You didn't have any rights that were natural to you. So the very principle itself was pretty radical.