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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, our help in ages past and our hope for years to come, as Baltimore, MD, descends into chaos and the death toll in Nepal rises, we come to You today in the assurance not of our feeble hold on You but of Your mighty grasp on us. Thank You for the beckoning glory and the fresh vigor of a new day.

Sustain our Senators in their work. May they trust in Your power as they strive to solve the vexing problems of our time. Lord, use them to ensure that justice will roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. Strengthen them with Your might and fill them with the Spirit of Your love.

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. PERDUE). The majority leader is recognized.

IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT REVIEW ACT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, every Republican and every Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee voted to approve the Iran

Nuclear Agreement Review Act. That 19-to-0 vote cleared the way for its consideration on the floor today.

This is an important debate in our country. At its heart, it turns on a central proposition: Do the American people, through the Members of Congress they elect, deserve a say in one of the most important issues of our time? For a long time, the answer from the White House seemed to be no. We have since seen a softening of that hard line, but that doesn't mean the fight for this bipartisan legislation has been won. I still expect to see a vigorous debate this week. I still expect to see a robust amendment process. And then, at the end of the day, the American people are right to expect their Senators—regardless of party—to stand for them by supporting a bill that is as sensible as it is bipartisan.

Preventing the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism from getting access to nuclear weapons should be the goal of our Senators no matter what party they belong to. The price of a bad agreement with Iran could be catastrophic.

Iran's nuclear program is only one aspect of its efforts to confront the West across the full spectrum of warfare: through public diplomacy, through its support for terrorism and proxies, through its missile capabilities, and through a modernization of its conventional forces. Iran is on the move in all of those areas. Any sanctions relief from a nuclear agreement would give Iran, actually, more funds to conduct these and other activities, so Congress needs to have a say.

Let's not forget that the American people were led to believe that the point of the White House negotiations with Iran were to end Iran's nuclear program and to prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons. Congress and the American people were not told that this would be an exercise in granting Iran international permission to become a nuclear threshold state—just steps away from a nuclear weapon.

If that truly is how things have developed since, then the Members of this body and the people we represent need to be heard. The American people, through the representatives they elected, have a right to review, analyze, and pass their judgment on any agreement reached to ensure Americans are getting the kind of agreement they actually deserve.

Giving the American people a real voice on a topic of such vital importance should not be a partisan issue, and by passing the bipartisan Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, we can help ensure that it isn't.

Among other things, this bipartisan bill would require that any agreement reached with Iran be submitted for congressional review and for public examination. It would also provide the Congress elected by the people with the ability to approve or disapprove of any Iran deal before congressional sanctions are removed.

In short, the point of this bill is to give the elected representatives of the American people the tools to assess any agreement reached by the administration before congressional sanctions are lifted. Those crippling sanctions—which include bipartisan sanctions authored by Senator KIRK that passed 100 to 0, over the White House's objections—are one of the most important reasons we even got Iran to the table in the first place. So the United States should not give up that leverage now if it means bringing home an agreement that does not meet American national security interests or one that simply passes on dealing with the Iranian nuclear program to the next administration.

The point of these negotiations should be to secure an agreement strong enough on its own merits to pass muster with Congress and with the American people.

Congress had the correct judgment to impose bipartisan sanctions over White House objections a few years back.

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



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