

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

The Senator from South Dakota.

 IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT
 REVIEW ACT

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, on April 2, President Obama announced that a framework had been reached for a nuclear agreement with Iran. If all goes according to plan—which hasn't happened often during these repeatedly prolonged negotiations—it means the White House would finish negotiating an agreement sometime in June. But the question remains as to what type of agreement the negotiations will finally produce.

Any deal with Iran needs to achieve one thing—one thing—and that is to prevent permanently Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. But the framework the President has unveiled seems unlikely to achieve that goal.

Far from eliminating Iran's nuclear capabilities, the framework does not shut down a single nuclear facility in the country. It doesn't destroy a single centrifuge. It doesn't stop research and development on existing centrifuges. It doesn't eliminate Iran's missile development programs. And it allows Iran to keep a substantial part of its existing stockpile of enriched uranium. It is no surprise that Members of both parties are deeply concerned the final agreement will not be effective in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

I don't need to tell anyone why Iran's possessing a nuclear weapon is such a dangerous prospect. First of all, Iran, as we all know, is a state sponsor of terrorism. Practically speaking, that means Iran provides support and funding to organizations that consider the slaughter of innocent civilians to be an acceptable negotiating tactic, which has kept millions of ordinary men, women, and children in the Middle East from living in stability and peace.

Iran's plan for the Middle East includes its stated goal of wiping our ally Israel off the map, which should tell us all we need to know about that country's commitment to peace in the region. Meanwhile, at home, Iran embraces the same violence and oppression it spreads abroad. Iran's Government is hostile to freedom of any kind. Thousands of Iran's citizens have been tortured, imprisoned, and executed for daring to stand up for their human rights. This is not a regime that can be trusted with a nuclear weapon.

In addition to the danger inherent in a regime such as Iran having nuclear weapons at its disposal, Iran's acquiring such a weapon could likely start a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Right now, we are witnessing a quasi-proxy war in Yemen, with Iran supporting the Houthis and a Saudi Arabia-led coalition bombing the Houthis

and supporting the ousted government. Imagine this scenario if both major powers had nuclear weapons at their disposal?

There is also the other great danger in Iran's acquiring nuclear weapons—a chance it could give a nuclear weapon to a terrorist organization. Imagine a situation in which a nuclear weapon fell into the hands of such organizations. The consequences of that would be unthinkable.

This week the Senate is considering the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act negotiated by Senators CORKER and CARDIN. The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act would ensure that the American people's concerns about a nuclear deal are heard by providing for congressional review of any agreement the President reaches with Iran.

Specifically, the bill would require the President to submit the agreement to Congress and prevent him from waiving any congressional sanctions on Iran until Congress reviews the deal.

Congress passed sanctions that eventually brought the Iranian economy to its knees and drove the Iranian Government to the negotiating table. The only reason—the only reason—Iran is cooperating at all on a nuclear agreement is because it wants to see those sanctions lifted. This bill would ensure the sanctions could only be lifted after congressional review.

The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act would also make sure any agreement with Iran is verified and enforced. Under the terms of this legislation, every 90 days the President would be required to provide Congress with confirmation that Iran is complying with the agreement.

The bill also includes reporting requirements on Iran's record on human rights and support for terrorism and any ballistic missile testing it is conducting.

I plan to offer an amendment to this legislation to require the Secretary of State to investigate whether the International Atomic Energy Agency, which would be in charge of inspections under any agreement, would have access to military bases if they were deemed to be suspicious sites.

Recent reports have indicated that the Iranian military is hostile to any inspection of military bases. General Hussein Salami, deputy head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, told Iranian media, "They [the inspectors] will not even be permitted to inspect the most normal military site in their dreams." Well, given that attitude, are we really supposed to trust Iran to fully comply with a nuclear agreement?

While I remain concerned about the framework the President has unveiled, one bright spot in this debate has been seeing Democrats and Republicans working together to ensure that any deal with Iran is verifiable, enforceable, and accountable and promotes security and stability in the region and around the globe.

This kind of bipartisanship has been more the norm in the Senate lately.

When Republicans were elected last November, we promised we would get Washington working again for American families. That was not a campaign slogan. That was a commitment, and we have been delivering on our promise.

Since Republicans took control of the Senate in January, we have passed 13 bipartisan bills: legislation to approve the Keystone Pipeline, a bill to prevent suicides among veterans, reauthorization of the Terrorism Risk Insurance Program, legislation to give law enforcement new tools to fight human trafficking and provide support for trafficking victims, and the first significant bipartisan reform of Medicare in years.

Even the media is paying attention. On April 26, CBS published an article entitled "Some Good News Out of Washington, For a Change." On April 24, an NPR headline asked: "Has the Senate Found It's More Fun to be Functional?" And a USA TODAY headline from April 20 noted: "New Study Suggests a 'Healthier' Congress." It argues that we are getting things done again and working again and functioning here in the Senate.

The best way to solve the challenges facing our Nation is for Democrats and Republicans to come together and to develop solutions. We have been doing that for the past 4 months here in the Senate, and that is what we are doing on this crucial Iran legislation.

A nuclear-armed Iran is a threat to the safety, security, and stability of the globe, and I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

 PROTECTING VOLUNTEER FIRE-
 FIGHTERS AND EMERGENCY RE-
 SPONDERS ACT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1191, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1191) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to ensure that emergency services volunteers are not taken into account as employees under the shared responsibility requirements contained in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

Pending:

Corker/Cardin amendment No. 1140, in the nature of a substitute.

AMENDMENT NO. 1179 TO AMENDMENT NO. 1140

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I call up the Corker-Cardin amendment, which is at the desk.