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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, January 25, 2016, at 2 p.m.

Senate

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2016

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

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

Infinite Spirit, Your thoughts are too high for us to comprehend, and Your ways are past finding out. You transform our discordant notes into harmony as Your goodness and mercy pursue us.

Abide with our Senators. Lord, give them the insight to discern truth from falsehood, the high from the low, and the enduring from the transient. Impart to them a perspective that will enable them to find the right path.

God, bless America. May we not forget that without You, no nation can long endure.

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. HOEVEN). The majority leader is recognized.

AMERICAN SAFE ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, it is clear that many Americans are concerned about the administration's ability to properly vet thousands of individuals from Syria and Iraq. Elected officials in both parties have expressed concern, too, as have administration officials. That is why many Americans are asking us to take a step back and press pause on the program so we can ensure that we have the correct policies and security screenings actually in place. The Senate will consider balanced, bipartisan legislation tomorrow to do just that.

Passing the American SAFE Act, which the House has already done with a bipartisan veto-proof margin, would show Americans that their concerns are being heard here in Washington. The aim is to ensure that we have facts first so we can help advance America's tradition of compassion and address the legitimate concerns of her citizens at the same time.

I will have more to say on this legislation tomorrow, but I urge colleagues across the aisle to treat this issue with the seriousness it deserves. This debate should be driven by facts and common sense and not fear mongering about targeting widows and orphans or other straw man arguments the White House has made from time to time. Americans deserve a vetting process they can have confidence in, and frankly the refugees coming to this country deserve one too. Safeguards that weed out ISIL sympathizers can help ensure legitimate refugees to our country are not unfairly stigmatized.

The American people are concerned and looking to us to lead with both safety and compassion. I am calling on colleagues to help us do so tomorrow by advancing this balanced and bipartisan legislation.

MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

Mr. McCONNELL. Also, Mr. President, later this afternoon I will be meeting with Malcolm Turnbull, the Prime Minister of one of our closest allies, Australia. Our alliance with Canberra is an important one, and our countries share many fundamental values. I am looking forward to meeting the Prime Minister.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

NUCLEAR DEAL WITH IRAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will have more to say tomorrow about the legislation about which the Republican leader just spoke. Tomorrow afternoon we will have a vote as to whether we should move to the bill.

Along with the rest of the world, I was pleased to learn this weekend that five political prisoners were finally released from Iran and will soon be home with their families. These Americans were unjustly held, and I am glad they will soon be in the arms of their loved ones once again.

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



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Preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is one of the most pressing security challenges of our generation. A nuclear-armed Iran is a threat to the national security of the United States, the State of Israel, and the world.

Last summer I announced my support for the historic nuclear agreement the United States and the global community made with Iran. This agreement required Iran to take significant steps to ensure that its nuclear infrastructure could not be used to build a nuclear bomb. These steps include, among other things, dismantling thousands and thousands of centrifuges that are used to enrich uranium, removing from Iran its enriched uranium, thus reducing its stockpile and eliminating the core of its plutonium reactor. The end result of these steps is that Iran's breakout time—the time it takes to make enough fissile material to build a bomb—has been extended from a matter of a few months to a year, and some experts would say much, much longer.

Over the weekend, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that Iran successfully implemented these initial requirements, an important next act in the implementation of the nuclear agreement.

I applaud President Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Energy Dr. Ernest Moniz, and Under Secretary of State Wendy Sherman for using America's diplomatic power to make the world a safer place. This diplomatic approach also avoids the significant costs and risks a military option would pose. One need only look at Iraq to find out what military options cost—trillions of dollars—because of the worst foreign policy decision in the history of our country: the invasion of Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of people are dead, millions have been displaced, thousands of Americans are dead, and tens of thousands badly wounded. The diplomatic approach avoids the costs and risks the nuclear option poses.

No one should think all of the components of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action have been completed. They have not been. We are now at the beginning of a critical period where Iran must allow unprecedented inspections designed to allow the international community to know if Iran tries to break out and race toward building a nuclear weapon. We will know about it.

Iran poses a threat to our Nation's most supportive ally in the Middle East, the State of Israel. Over my four decades in Congress, the safety and security of the Israeli people have been of the utmost importance to me and to this Congress generally, as you can see with the results of the last four decades. We must do everything and we must strive to protect the Israeli people, and that is why Iran must be held accountable for any action it takes that poses a threat to that small, little democracy.

Iran must never obtain a missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.

I am pleased the administration announced it would impose sanctions on individuals and companies for providing support to Iran's ballistic missile program. These tests were in clear violation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions. One thing is clear: Iran must continue to be monitored with intense scrutiny.

I remain concerned about Iran's ongoing human rights abuses and political oppression. Iran also remains a state sponsor of terrorism, using its proxies against Israel and against our interests throughout the Middle East.

Congress must accept the critical role we play in providing vigorous oversight of the Iran agreement and Iran's compliance with the agreement, addressing Iran's ballistic missile program and monitoring Iran's actions in the region. This past weekend marked a key step forward to ensuring Iran never gains access to a nuclear weapon. We should always remember that the Iran deal, as it has been called, was to stop Iran from having nuclear weapon capability, and that has been accomplished.

I look forward to working with my colleagues to keep Iran accountable and preserving the national security of both this Nation and our ally, the State of Israel.

SUPREME COURT REVIEW OF IMMIGRATION RULING

Mr. REID. On another subject, Mr. President, this morning the Supreme Court announced its decision to review the Fifth Circuit Court's illogical ruling on President Obama's Executive actions on immigration. It was only a question of time as to when it would come up because the action of the appellate court was so out of line and unprecedented.

I am pleased with the Supreme Court's decision to take a look at this case. The President's Executive actions rely on well-established constitutional authority, and I have full confidence the Constitution will rule that these programs can be implemented.

While I was home recently, I met with undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents. Instead of having the peace of mind that comes with deferred action, these law-abiding men and women, young and old, continue to live in constant fear of being separated from their families. They must be allowed to vacate the shadows and fully contribute to the country they love and call home.

Mr. President, what is the schedule of the Senate this afternoon?

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be

in a period of morning business until 5 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I see no one else on the floor, so 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. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DRONES

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, have you ever flown a drone? It used to be that you had to fly helicopters or it used to be that you would fly what we call unmanned aerial vehicles, the ones that have been so helpful to us in the war against terror. That would usually be an Air Force pilot. But now people can go to Best Buy or to Walgreens or to the hobby shop and buy a drone this big. If it is an older model, it would cost \$100. If it is a newer model, it would cost \$500. People can have a lot of fun. As a matter of fact, I can't wait until they finish development of the drones they are testing right now that I can sit on, and then I can go from point A to point B and avoid the red lights and the traffic jams and so forth.

Along with this new technology comes some, certainly, new challenges. So as our commerce committee is approaching work on the FAA bill, the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization—otherwise, in a couple of months that authorization law expires—we are going to have to address the issue of drones because we have had now a number of near misses of drones.

A study in December came out: 241 near misses. As a matter of fact, the New York area airports clearly had the most with, in this study period, 86, but my State of Florida had both Miami and Orlando with a substantial number. At most of the major metropolitan area airports across the entire country—Los Angeles, 39 near misses, and Chicago and Boston; we can go over the entire country—there is a substantial number.

Another report that came out just at the end of last year pointed out that just in September there were 122 incidents and just in October there were 137 incidents. If a seagull sucked into the jet engines of US Airways could cause the complete loss of power so that Captain Sully Sullenberger—since he couldn't get to an emergency landing in a field—had to put it down in the Hudson River, and if a seagull with flesh and blood and seagull bones and webbed feet sucked into the engines can stall out a jet engine, we can imagine what a drone that you buy at Best Buy this big made of plastic, but with metal parts such as the camera, what that would do, and it is just a matter of time, unless we take action.