

are refusing even to meet with Judge Garland. Let me suggest they are refusing to do their duty.

Their approach is inconsistent with the expectations of our Founding Fathers and a disservice to the American people, to the Court, to American justice, and to the American people, and their justification has no basis in fact.

Justice Anthony Kennedy, who sits now on the Court, was confirmed during the final years of President Reagan's second term. In fact, he is one of the 14 Justices in our history who have been confirmed during a Presidential election year, including Louis Brandeis and Benjamin Cardozo.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is hardly precedent that a lame duck President must allow a Supreme Court vacancy to sit unfilled for months. We do not allow that for the House of Representatives and, for the most part, we don't allow it for the United States Senate. There is a timeframe, indeed, in every State to fill seats in the House of Representatives so that the American people will be represented. To politicize this process is irresponsible and jeopardizes the proper functioning of our Supreme Court.

In 1988, during the Kennedy confirmation process, President Reagan said, "The Federal judiciary is too important to be made a political football." I agree, and I hope Senate Republicans would, too, because we all know that their decision has nothing to do with Judge Garland's qualifications.

Senator HATCH, a Republican from Utah, in 1997, called Judge Garland "highly qualified" and said, "his intelligence and his scholarship cannot be questioned." When put forward for the D.C. Circuit Court, Judge Garland was cited by Senator HATCH as "a fine nominee." He ultimately voted to confirm Judge Garland to the D.C. Circuit Court.

While Chairman CHUCK GRASSLEY, who chairs the Judiciary Committee on the Senate—also a Republican—opposed Judge Garland's nomination to the Circuit Court, it ought to be noted that it was only because he thought there were already too many judges on that bench, not because Judge Garland lacked qualifications. In fact, Senator GRASSLEY made this clear by saying, "I have nothing against the nominee. Mr. Garland seems to be well qualified and would probably make a good judge on some other court."

Senator JEFF SESSIONS, a conservative Republican from Alabama, agreed with Senator GRASSLEY about too many judges on the Circuit Court, and said of Judge Garland: "I would feel comfortable supporting him for another judgeship." Although he didn't say it, but another judgeship would be a Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. Now, Senator GRASSLEY and Senator SESSIONS have an opportunity to put Judge Garland on another court—one that has a vacancy needing to be filled.

Our Founding Fathers set up a Court of nine Justices, cognizant of the problem that would occur if there were a 4-4 tie. That is the situation that exists today, and it can be remedied by the United States Senate now.

Let's not play political games. If Republicans don't want Judge Garland on the Court, schedule a vote and cast their votes accordingly.

Senate Majority Leader MITCH MCCONNELL said just yesterday on ABC's This Week: "Under the Constitution, we have a shared responsibility. This is not something he"—referring to the President—"does alone. He nominates; we confirm."

That, of course, is absolutely accurate. I would say to Senator MCCONNELL that the President has met his responsibilities. Now it is time for the Senate to do so as well.

Some Senate Republicans, Mr. Speaker, agree. Senator MARK KIRK of Illinois said on Friday: "Cast a vote. The tough thing about these senatorial jobs is you get 'yes' or 'no' votes. Your whole job," Senator KIRK observed, "is to either say 'yes' or 'no' and explain why." That is democracy. That is responsibility.

Furthermore, in February, Senator SUSAN COLLINS, Republican of Maine, said: "I think the obligation of the Senate is to carefully consider any nominee whom the President submits. The best way to do that, in my judgment, is public hearings." Senator COLLINS was absolutely right.

Under pressure from within their own ranks, Senate Republican leaders can only stall for so long before they must face up to their responsibility to give Judge Garland the fair hearing he deserves and that the American people expect.

I believe Judge Garland will make a fine Supreme Court Justice, Mr. Speaker, and I thank President Obama for selecting someone so "highly qualified," intelligent, and whose "scholarship cannot be questioned," "a fine nominee." All of those, of course, are Senator HATCH's words.

I hope that Judge Garland will be swiftly confirmed. Leaving the Supreme Court with the possibility of gridlock, as we have seen the Congress at gridlock, is not good for our country, not good for the American people, and does not serve our democracy well.

Senator MCCONNELL, hold hearings. Reflect upon Judge Garland's competency, intellect, and suitability to serve on the Supreme Court. Do your duty.

SUNY POTSDAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. STEFANIK) for 5 minutes.

Ms. STEFANIK. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to celebrate a tremendous milestone for a school in my district, the State University of New York at Potsdam.

On March 25, 1816, the document that would establish what is now known as SUNY Potsdam was signed, making it one of our Nation's first 50 colleges and the oldest institution in the SUNY system. Since that time, this school has developed a well-deserved reputation for providing a topflight education, especially in the liberal arts and science fields, and is the proud home of the world-renowned Crane School of Music, which I toured last year.

As the cochair of the Congressional STEAM Caucus, I am proud that SUNY Potsdam is leading the way in incorporating the arts into the traditional science, technology, engineering, and math curriculum.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to stand on the House floor today to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of SUNY Potsdam.

□ 1215

AMERICANS BEING UNJUSTLY HELD IN IRAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ISSA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, these faces are not household names, faces; no one knows who these unknown Americans are. And that is because they have been held in Iran for so long.

September 18, 2015, and also detained in 2015.

Of course they were not detained the 444 days that Iran, a totalitarian dictatorship and theocracy, held 52 American diplomats, and the world is not watching the same as they did then. That is how this President could make a deal with Iran and not include these victims of this dictatorship.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor to remind people that in the years, the decades, since I was a young lieutenant in 1979, when the Ayatollah Khomeini blamed students for somehow doing something—not his government—and continued to blame them and blames them in many ways until today, the Iranian Government, today, would still hold our Embassy hostage. It still is a shell waiting for a return, a return that I fear this President wants to do by executive order. He has already thrown aside so much of what was working to stop this regime from spreading terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, as we speak today, these people are held hostage, and the American people are being held hostage by a President who chooses to use the pen and the phone over the democratic means at his side.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue coming to the floor and pointing out that Iran continues to be a dictatorship spreading violence throughout the region; continues to fund Hamas and Hezbollah; continues to, in fact, destabilize countries in the region, and now does so with 140 billion more dollars.

Mr. Speaker, it is extremely important that we stand firm in this House

that this cannot be tolerated; that, ultimately, this body must stand and do what it is obligated to do, which is, in fact, to demand freedom for Americans held involuntarily and illegally around the world, and particularly in Iran.

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S SUPREME COURT
NOMINATION

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I will close by commenting on the Democratic Whip's statements. He is demanding that the Senate do its job.

At a time in which the political season is well underway and politicians are campaigning around America for President, at a time in which two sides have two different visions of the Constitution—one is that the original intent of the Constitution be adhered to and changed only by the will of the people, as it has been 27 times; or, that it be simply cast aside the way the current nominee for the Supreme Court would do with the Second Amendment and others—I respect the minority leader's right to an opinion; but, of course, we all, on this floor, have a right to be wrong from time to time. Mr. Speaker, he clearly was when he went on for more than 10 minutes, telling us that we have to confirm a Supreme Court Justice in the middle of a political season.

I wish he had joined me in saying that this President should not make agreements that circumvent the Constitution, that circumvent this body and leave Americans stranded abroad.

LADIES IN WHITE AND PRESIDENT
OBAMA'S TRIP TO CUBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, when President Obama announced his efforts to normalize relations with Cuba in December 2014, many of us believed that his decision would only embolden the regime and end up hurting the Cuban people. Well, almost a year and a half later, we can say, unfortunately, as expected, that our suspicions have been warranted. This is indeed what has happened.

President Obama is only worried about legacy shopping and is willing to ignore the plight of the Cuban people who continue to suffer under Castro, and this normalization effort has been an abject failure for freedom and democracy on the island.

The lives of the Cuban people have not improved. A record number of them are fleeing the island to escape Castro's tyranny; and freedom and liberty, unfortunately, no longer seem to be the goals of this administration for the people of Cuba.

In December 2015, President Obama said in an interview that he would go to Cuba only when the human rights situation on the island had improved. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is what human rights looks like on the island, the valiant Ladies in White, who walk peace-

fully in Cuba to their church—and you see one being dragged away in the lower corner. This is what happens to them every week in Castro's Cuba. They are harassed. They are beaten. This is not what an improved human rights situation looks like at all, Mr. President.

Hours before the President arrived in Cuba, hundreds of pro-democracy advocates were arrested. Listen to that, ladies and gentlemen. Hundreds of pro-democracy advocates were arrested just hours before the President's Air Force One touched down. Many of them were members of the Ladies in White, Las Damas de Blanco.

The Ladies in White are mothers, wives, daughters, sisters of current or former political prisoners. These brave women continue to speak out for justice and freedom against the regime that oppresses them daily and arrests them every Sunday when they walk peacefully to church.

Two weeks ago, the Ladies in White leader, Berta Soler—and we saw her in one of the posters—asked President Obama very pointedly—and there they are getting arrested, harassed, as they do all the time. She said: Please visit Gandhi Park, where we meet. Meet with the victims of Castro's repression.

Well, President Obama responded by stating: "No one should face harassment, arrest, or physical assault simply because they are exercising a universal right to have their voices heard."

That is absolutely true.

And then he added that he would raise these issues directly with their oppressor, Raul Castro.

But once you have already embraced the oppressor of the Ladies in White and legitimized his regime on the world stage, what does this empty rhetoric and phrases matter to any of them?

In February 2015, Berta Soler testified before our House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and she stated: "Our demands are quite concrete: freedom for political prisoners, recognition of civil society, the elimination of all criminal dispositions that penalize freedom of expression and association, and the right of the Cuban people to choose their future through free, plural elections."

Elections in Cuba? Fidel Castro famously said, elections for what? They don't have any political system at all. There is only one party that is allowed to operate; that is the Communist Party. They have selections, not elections.

The Cuban people deserve more than just lip service and platitudes from the White House. They are demanding actions and reforms in Cuba to unclench the fist of the Castro control.

But solely a meeting with Cuban civil society is a very low bar, Mr. Speaker. It is not enough to help the Cuban people, especially after shaking the hand of a murderous tyrant like Raul Castro.

However, even this meeting with civil society is being undermined by

Castro's thugs, even this low bar. Gee, if I just meet with dissidents—check off the list—then my trip will have been a success.

Many civil society members have stated that they are now under house arrest, as I speak, and that Castro's security agents are preventing them from leaving their own homes until President Obama leaves Cuba.

In Cuba's communist newspaper, called Granma, the regime noted that President Obama's trip to Havana dispels the myth that human rights are being violated on the island. They are no fools. They understand the image is worth a thousand words. The image of President Obama in Cuba says no human rights are being violated. And the regime knows that all of the concessions that President Obama has given come with no strings attached.

I will end with this, Mr. Speaker:

No reforms are needed. No changes need to be made. In fact, the Castro regime has already stated that it will not change one bit after all of these concessions.

The Cuban people deserve better.

The American people deserve better.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 25 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, offered the following prayer: God of mercy, thank You for giving us another day.

The Psalmist could not find enough words to express trust in You. Personal experience of Your presence, care, and abiding guidance gave rise to his song: "O Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer. My God, my rock of refuge, my shield, the fullness of my salvation, my stronghold." Psalm 18:2.

Stir in our hearts today Your Spirit. Touch the soul of this Nation that we may see Your saving work in our work and the work of this House. Your strength behind our weakness, Your purpose in our efforts at laws of justice, Your peace drawing all of us and the entire world to lasting freedom.

You are ever faithful, O Lord, worthy of all of our trust, now and forever. May everything we do this day be for Your greater honor and glory.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the