

time. He continues to be a very important friend to me. I am very grateful for that friendship. I join Senator MURRAY in commending our staff. But, first of all, I think I should mention my appreciation for the majority leader, BILL FRIST; and HARRY REID, the Democratic leader, for giving us the latitude and the authority to manage this bill on the floor of the Senate for the Committee on Appropriations to help ensure that every Senator had an opportunity to speak and offer amendments, to be a part of the passage of this bill in every sense of the word. We appreciate the leaders giving us that authority and for not trying to manage the bill from their offices. I really appreciate that.

Also, I have to commend the staff members on our side: Keith Kennedy, staff director, who has been working in the Senate for the Appropriations Committee for a good many years. He has a lot of experience. He is a person of great integrity, and I am very fortunate that he has agreed to serve as staff director of this committee and continue to provide guidance and supervision for all of the members of the staff of the Committee on Appropriations.

We are very proud of all of the staff. Those who have been particularly helpful to me during the handling of this bill, in addition to Keith, include Clayton Heil, our counsel for the committee, who has been on the floor of the Senate for much of the handling of the bill; Les Spivey, who is also a member of the full committee staff, he does a good job as well. I guess you could say he is our token Mississippian who is on the first team of the committee staff.

Terry Sauvain has been someone with whom I have enjoyed working for a number of years. He has worked closely with Senator BYRD for a good many years. We appreciate Terry's continued good assistance, particularly in the handling of this bill.

Chuck Keiffer and Peter Rogoff—Peter works for Senator MURRAY on the committee staff and has a lot of experience. He has been very helpful to us as we have managed this bill in the Senate.

I thank David Schiappa, Laura Dove, and Jodie Hernandez. They have been at the desk keeping up with all of the amendments, colloquies, and order of business, and keeping people advised through cloakroom telephones and answering Member's questions when they come onto the Senate floor. They go to that spot and ask for the pending business or what the order of amendments may be. They have been absolutely professional and diligent and helpful in every way.

On the Democratic side, I thank Marty Paone and Lula Davis for helping to keep up with things for the Democrats and helping to provide advice and counsel to all of us who have been involved in the handling of this bill. We are deeply grateful for their assistance.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:15 today, the Senate proceed to executive session for consideration en bloc of the following nominations: No. 617, Brian Cogan, to be U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of New York; No. 618, Thomas Golden, to be U.S. district judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

I further ask consent that the following Senators then be recognized to speak: Senator SPECTER for 5 minutes; Senator LEAHY for 5 minutes; Senator SANTORUM for 5 minutes. Further, following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to votes on the confirmation of the nominations in the order listed above; provided that following the votes, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

Mrs. MURRAY. There is no objection on the Democratic side.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. On behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business.

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

The Senator is recognized for 10 minutes.

RECITING OR SINGING STATEMENTS OF NATIONAL UNITY IN ENGLISH

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I am here today because I may have misunderstood the actions on the other side of the aisle. Something rather surprising has occurred. It would appear from their actions that my colleagues in the Democratic Party seem to believe that we ought to sing the national anthem, say the Pledge of Allegiance, and take the oath of citizenship in this country in something other than our common language, English.

Here is why I say that. On Monday, along with several other Senators, I introduced a very simple resolution, a resolution affirming that statements of national unity, especially the Pledge of Allegiance and the national anthem, ought to be recited or sung in our common language, English. That is all it says.

Let me read the relevant part of the resolution. It says:

Now, therefore, be it Resolved, that the Senate affirms that statements or songs that symbolize the

unity of the Nation, including the National Anthem, the Oath of Allegiance sworn by new United States citizens, and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States, should be recited or sung in English, the common language of the United States.

This is not a resolution about what we are free to do in the United States; this is about what we ought to do in the United States. It is very straightforward. It does not infringe on anyone's right to free speech, or prohibit translation. It does not say Americans should not learn a second language. In fact, I encourage our children to learn a second language or even a third language to better compete in this global economy.

The resolution does say that we believe that we Americans ought to recite the pledge and sing "The Star-Spangled Banner" and other statements and songs that unite us as a Nation in the language that unites us as a Nation, English.

Last Monday, every Senate office received a request for the resolution to be passed by unanimous consent. I would not expect this resolution to just be bipartisan, I would expect it to easily be unanimous. That request was agreed to by every Republican, but on the other side someone objected.

Should I assume that the Democratic side objected because they believe we Americans should, at least some of the time, sing our national anthem in Spanish or some other foreign language? Do they believe we should recite the Pledge of Allegiance in Chinese, which is the second most spoken foreign language in the United States?

This is important. It is important enough that we inscribed in this Chamber, above the Presiding Officer, our original motto for this country: "One from many." It is not "Many from one." Our greatest accomplishment as a country is not our diversity, which is a magnificent achievement; our greatest accomplishment is we have taken all of this diversity and made it into one country. And we have a few things that unite us: our common history, the principles of our founding documents, and our common language. If we should lose that, we would be a United Nations, not the United States of America.

This is important because this is the emotion which underlies most of the immigration debate we are having. The concern among many Americans, other than the rule of law which has to do with securing the border, is to make sure that those who come to our country become Americans. And we do not do that by race, we do not do that by ethnicity, we do not do that by what country an immigrant comes from, we do it by a few simple uniting ideas: our founding documents, our common history, and our common language.

This has been true for a long time in our country. When a legal immigrant comes to the United States—and this has been the law for 100 years—and he or she applies to become a citizen, he

or she must, by law, demonstrate an eighth grade level of understanding of the English language.

It was 150 years ago we founded common schools. We call them public schools today. Albert Shanker, the former head of the American Federation of Teachers, said the reason for the common school was so we could teach mostly immigrant children to read and write in English, to do math, and what it means to become an American, with the hope they would go home and teach their parents.

We have always known it is important as Americans to have a common language because that is how we can communicate with one another. Immigrants to our country understand this. That is why they come here. They want to be part of our country that shares the values of liberty and equal opportunity. They want to contribute to our history of striving toward those values. They want to learn our common language, and usually do, as evidenced by long waiting lists for a number of English as a second language adult education courses across our country. That is why this Senate, just a few weeks ago, passed an amendment to the immigration bill by a vote of 91 to 1 to help legal immigrants learn English and to allow those who become fluent in English to become American citizens 1 year faster.

We value our common language. It isn't an argument that is hard to understand. In fact, when I first announced this resolution, the first supportive e-mail I received in my office came from Mr. Ramon L. Cisneros, the publisher of *La Campana*, a Spanish-language newspaper in Nashville with 18,000 subscribers.

He wrote:

. . . Thank you for this resolution. We are Hispanic Americans and sometimes we write in Spanish for the benefit of those newcomers who are in the process of learning English. However, our common language as Americans is and will always be English. And our national symbols should always be said and sung in English.

I didn't ask Mr. Cisneros to write to me, but I am glad he did. He is proud of his Hispanic heritage. He performs an important service for Hispanics in the Nashville area, which is a growing part of our State, but he is also a proud, patriotic American. Our country is enriched by citizens like Mr. Cisneros.

I am puzzled by the reaction from some of my colleagues in the Democratic Party who seem to want to endorse the idea that we should sing the national anthem in some other language and recite the Pledge of Allegiance in some other language. We salute the American flag. We pledge allegiance to the United States, and we speak in our common language. That is how we unite ourselves.

Also, we might do a little bit better if we taught more U.S. history and civics in our public schools, which is another subject I have been working on with strong support on the Democratic

side from Senator KENNEDY, from Senator REID, and especially from Senator BYRD.

I might note that in the House of Representatives, some Democrats have already chosen to cosponsor this same identical resolution. It has been offered by Congressman RYUN of Kansas. I have a hard time understanding why Democrats in the Senate are not supportive. Maybe I just made a mistake. Maybe I misunderstood what has happened. So let me try once again.

I ask unanimous consent that S. Res. 458 be discharged from the Judiciary Committee; further, that the Senate proceed to its consideration. I further ask that the resolution and preamble be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, on behalf of other Democratic Members, I will object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I think that makes my point. Apparently, I did not misunderstand. Apparently, the Democratic Party in the Senate does not agree that we should say the Pledge of Allegiance, sing the national anthem, and take the oath of citizenship in our common language, English. That is a grave misunderstanding of our country's greatest accomplishment. Our diversity is a magnificent achievement, but our greater achievement is that we have taken all of this diversity and formed it into one country so that we are the United States of America. It is a central part of becoming American.

I am extremely disappointed by this objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

ENGLISH IN AMERICA

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, let me say that Democrats and Republicans are perhaps not all of one mind on the question the Senator just raised.

I personally believe it is absolutely essential to the strength of America that we encourage and insist that people who come to this country speak in English. A common language is absolutely essential to the unity of a nation. I look to our neighbors to the north and see the incredible traumas they have been through because they are speaking in two different languages.

My own strong belief is we ought to say the pledge in English, we ought to sing the national anthem in English. That doesn't prevent someone else from singing it in another language. That does not offend me. But I do think that it is absolutely essential for the strength and the unity of our Nation that those who come here, those who become citizens, are able to speak English.

I come from a proud tradition of immigrants. We are sort of the North Dakota melting pot. I am part Danish, I am part Swedish, I am part Norwegian,

I am part German, I am part Scots-Irish, I am part French. So many of the people of my State came here from Scandinavian and German countries. They are intensely proud of their traditions. Many of them continue to speak the languages they came to this country with, but almost without exception they made a priority of learning English, speaking in English. I believe that is essential to our common heritage, that we have a common language.

I personally certainly believe that in any official setting, we ought to sing the anthem in English, we ought to say the pledge in English. If someone wants to, at some other setting, sing in some other language, that does not offend me, but in any official setting and in terms of what we ask and insist people do who are going to be part of our country, it is absolutely imperative they learn English. That is not just for the good of the country, although it is certainly that, it is also for their own good.

My wife's family came here from Italy. My wife told me many times about growing up in that family. Her grandfather for a time came and lived with them. There was an insistence in their family on speaking English even though the grandfather who lived with them spoke no English.

I find many who come from an immigrant background—as did I, as did my wife and her family—in our families, there was an understanding that the first order of business was to learn English, to speak English if we were going to be part of this country of which we are so proud.

I hope very much this is not presented as a partisan matter. I don't think it is. As one person on this side of the aisle, I believe it is imperative that we take the pledge in English, that we sing the anthem in English, that we insist that people who come to be part of this country learn English. I believe it is absolutely essential that English clearly be the official language of our Nation. That is absolutely imperative for us as a country.

I also believe it is absolutely in the interest of the people who come here. That is certainly the lesson learned in my family, of people coming from all over the globe. My relatives who came from Denmark, my relatives who came from Sweden, my relatives who came from Norway, and my relatives who came from Germany were so proud to be part of this country. And they recognized that it was in their interest and it was their responsibility as a first order of business to learn English.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS AND AGRICULTURE DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the legislation we have just passed and to say to my colleagues there are provisions in the legislation for agriculture disaster that have been ridiculed in some circles. I would say