

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018

Remarks on Signing the Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act of 2018

December 11, 2018

The President. Well, thank you very much. We appreciate it. In a few moments, I will sign legislation to assist religious and ethnic groups targeted by ISIS for mass murder and genocide in Syria and Iraq. The bill also authorities U.S. Government efforts to help bring preparations and perpetrators of these heinous crimes to justice and to justice very swiftly.

I want to thank Vice President Pence, Administrator Mark Green, Ambassador Callista Gingrich. Thank you, Callista. I hear you're doing a great job.

Ambassador to the Holy See Callista L. Gingrich. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Ambassador Sam Brownback for joining us today.

I also want to recognize the Members of Congress in attendance—Leader Kevin McCarthy. And thank you very much, Kevin, for everything. And congratulations on the ascension.

House Majority Leader Kevin O. McCarthy. Thank you. Thank you.

The President. That's a big—that's a big job, right?

Leader McCarthy. Yes.

The President. You're going to do fantastically. Thank you, Kevin.

And Representatives Chris Smith, Anna Eshoo, Michael McCaul, Steve Pearce, and somebody that nobody has ever heard of, Mark Meadows. [*Laughter*]

We're also honored to have an inspiring group of religious leaders, scholars, and advocates with us today. And I want to thank you all for being here. Tremendous people.

In recent years, ISIS has committed horrifying atrocities against religious and ethnic minorities in Syria and Iraq, including Christians, Yazidis, Shia, and other groups. And beyond the—beyond various groups, they've just been devastating to a lot of people.

And I have to say, we've done a very, very major job on ISIS. There are very few of them left in that area of the world. And within another 30 days, there won't be any of them left.

Since I took office, we've driven ISIS out of nearly all of the territory it once held in Syria and Iraq, devastating the caliphate. You've been reading about it. It's actually been covered reasonably fairly, which isn't bad.

This bill continues my administration's efforts to direct U.S. assistance toward persecuted communities, including through faith-based programs. It also allows the Government agencies to assist a range of entities in investigating and prosecuting ISIS's despicable acts. And they are very despicable indeed.

Today we honor the memory of all those killed by ISIS in Syria and Iraq, and we renew our sacred commitment to religious freedom. And I will now sign the bill, and I want to thank

you all very much for being here. It's a great honor. Very, very important. Great honor. Thank you.

[At this point, the President signed the bill.]

Okay. *[Applause]* Please.

The President's Meeting With Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer and Speaker-Designate of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi

Q. Mr. President, any postgame assessment of your meeting with Leader Pelosi and Leader Schumer?

The President. Well, believe it or not, I think it was a very friendly meeting. You know, you saw the beginnings of it, but it actually worked out to be, I think, pretty good. I've actually liked them for a long period time, and I respect them both.

And we made a lot of progress. If you look at criminal justice reform, that's a big thing. You know, we've been looking to do that for many years, and they haven't been able to do it. We've done it, hopefully, very soon in a bipartisan way. The bill, as you know—you probably heard today—it was put up by Mitch McConnell, who has been terrific. And it's going to be voted on very shortly, maybe Friday, but very, very soon. And we're looking forward to that.

We've made tremendous strides on the farm bill, and we're working on border security. You know, Republicans want very strong border security. And honestly, the Democrats, or most of them—it's hard to believe, but most of them want open borders, and that leads to crime, and it leads to other problems.

And you know, one of the problems that people don't talk about: You have a tremendous medical problem coming into a country—communicable disease, tremendous problems. People don't want to talk about it. I don't like talking about it. But these are the difficulties of what they want to do.

So we want strong borders. We want people coming into our country legally, through a process. We want people that are going to love and help our country. And I don't think they feel the same way, or maybe they just don't want us to get a vote. You know, it could be that too. Because it's hard to believe that they don't want some form of protection.

And with that, I have to say I thought it was a very good meeting. When you left—when the press left—we had a fairly long meeting, and we really discussed a lot of great subjects.

Q. Sir, the reason I ask is——

The President. Mike, come on over. Mike Pence, come on over.

Potential Federal Government Shutdown/Border Security

Q. The reason I ask, Mr. President, is, Leader Pelosi came back to the Hill and said, "Now you own the idea of a Government shutdown"——

The President. I don't mind. No, no.

Q. Perhaps that's one of your strategies?

The President. You know what? I could have debated Chuck Schumer for a long period of time, because he was saying, "It's yours—it's your idea." And then, finally, I said, "What—look, I don't mind." I don't know, what do you think? What do you guys think? I don't mind having

the issue of border security on my side. If we have to close down the country over border security, I actually like that in terms of an issue. But I don't want it to be an issue. I want it to be something that the country needs. It's not really an issue; it's something the country needs. It's common sense. The country needs it.

We need protection. We need border security. We need security from drugs that are pouring into our country. They're coming in right through that southern border, and we need a wall. We need border security, and part of border security is a wall.

So I don't mind owning that issue. I mean, Chuck's problem is that, you know, when the—when we last closed down, that was his idea. And honestly, he got killed. And so he doesn't want to own it. And I said: You know what? Rather than us debating who's owning it, I'll take it. I'll take it. If we close down the country, I will take it, because we're closing it down for border security, and I think I win that every single time. Okay?

Thank you all very much. I appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you very much, folks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:42 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Agency for International Development Administrator Mark Green; and Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Samuel D. Brownback. He also referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization. H.R. 390, approved December 11, was assigned Public Law No. 115–300.

Categories: Bill Signings and Vetoes : Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act of 2018, signing remarks.

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Names: Brownback, Samuel D.; Eshoo, Anna G.; Gingrich, Callista L.; Green, Mark; McCarthy, Kevin O.; McCaul, Michael T.; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Meadows, Mark R.; Pearce, Stevan; Pelosi, Nancy; Pence, Michael R.; Schumer, Charles E.; Smith, Christopher H.

Subjects: Agriculture : Farm bill; Civil rights : Freedom of religion; Congress : House of Representatives :: Majority leader; Congress : House of Representatives :: Speaker-designate; Congress : Senate :: Majority leader; Congress : Senate :: Minority leader; Defense and national security : Border security; Development, U.S. Agency for International; Holy See (Vatican City) : U.S. Ambassador; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Iraq : Political unrest and violence; Law enforcement and crime : Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Legislation, enacted : Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act of 2018; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; State, Department of : International Religious Freedom, Ambassador at Large for; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist organization; White House Office : Vice President.

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