

Christian Leaders Condemn Kyl/DeMint Attempt to Use Christmas to Derail New START

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Arlington, VA—Prominent Christian leaders joined together to decry recent statements by Senator Kyl and Senator DeMint that a vote on New START would be “disrespect[ful]” to Christians and “sacrilegious.” These statements follow a joint press conference last week by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and National Association of Evangelicals calling on the Senate to ratify New START before it recessed—a sentiment that has been echoed by the National Council of Churches and other Christian bodies representing believers from across the theological and denominational spectrum. These leaders argue that Christmas is the perfect justification for the Senate to be working to pass a treaty that is aimed at bringing peace on earth.

“I can think of no more appropriate time of year for the Senate to pass a treaty that promotes peace and good will. Surely that is the kind of gift that is worthy to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace. For two Senators who have steadfastly opposed this on political grounds to now use Christmas to justify their position is a cynical manipulation of religion in the worst possible way. It is this manipulation of the Christmas season that is truly sacrilegious.”

Rev. Jim Wallis, Founder Sojourners

"Senator Kyl's and DeMint's statements suggesting Christmas is a reason to delay action on a treaty aimed at reducing the threat of nuclear war is a misuse of the Christian holiday. If anything this time of year should be an encouragement for our leaders to work harder for peace on earth in response to God who wills peace for all. Peace is major theme of the Advent season and celebration of Christmas. The National Council of Churches looks forward to being able to celebrate ratification of this treaty to reduce nuclear stockpiles and improve verification. Any delay would be contrary to our commitment to peace on earth."

Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, National Council of Churches

"In the season when "Peace on earth..." was declared at the coming of the Prince of Peace, there is no better time to ratify the new START Treaty that will make peace and our national security more certain."

Rev. Dr. Joel C. Hunter, evangelical mega church pastor

"The American Catholic bishops have called on the Senate to ratify the New START agreement. To do so now, in this season that for many marks the birth of the Prince of Peace, would be especially poignant. Senators Kyl and DeMint insist that working on New START over the holidays would dishonor people of faith. That's transparent. Working men and women are at their jobs in this holy season---before Christmas, after Christmas, and for some even on Christmas Day. I'm convinced the Christ Child specially blesses those first responders, military personnel, health care providers, and other emergency workers who spend His birthday in service to others. Senators, truly honor Christians. Stay at your desks until this work to which you have been called is resolved."

Stephen Schneck, Director, Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies, The Catholic University of America

"Christians can disagree in good faith on the best way to apply our faith in the public arena, but the statements by Senator Kyl and DeMint are the worst examples of faith in politics. They have been working to kill START for weeks. A concern for the

faithful isn't driving their arguments or they would have mentioned faith earlier and Senator DeMint wouldn't be working to push the debate until Christmas. This is cynical partisan politics masquerading as piety, and our leaders should be above that."

Eric Sapp, Executive Director, American Values Network

"The attempt by New START opponents to use Christmas for tactical political advantage is profoundly offensive for three reasons. First, this move represents the worst mix of religion and politics. As one who ministers among a rising generation of Christians, I see countless peers walking away from their Evangelical faith because political tactics just like this have sullied the name of Christianity. Our belief motivates us to bring a moral witness