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USA: 1; Mitch McConnell: 0

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Distinctly Catholic

Sixty-seven senators voted to invoke closure on the START Treaty yesterday, the same number needed to ratify the agreement that will reduce nuclear warheads and guarantee a restoration of inspections of Russian missile sites.

The vote is a victory for common sense in the conduct of foreign affairs and a defeat for the "Never give a win to Obama no matter what" stance adopted by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Hats off to the Republican senators who put the nation's interest above the partisan recklessness of the GOP leadership.

Foreign Affairs has not been on the radar screen of the Tea Party extremists in the GOP base, so it is unclear if the senators who voted for START will pay a price in the 2012 primaries. For some, any embrace of Obama is bad per se, no matter what the issue. Ask Gov. Charlie Crist.

But, if McConnell's tactics continue for the next two years, the possibility exists that any government action will be paralyzed. His abuse of the filibuster has become insidious. Here's hoping that yesterday's vote - and today's expected passage of the treaty itself - is a sign of things to come.

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