

continued to receive paychecks for over a year.

The Washington Post again reported the case of a former high-level Environmental Protection Agency employee who pretended he was a member of the Central Intelligence Agency for years. This employee collected paid leave under the pretense he was conducting top-secret work for the CIA when, in fact, he was home exercising and pursuing a personal research project. He effectively, according to the Post, stole \$900,000 from taxpayers for work he never did. That included his salary and bonus. He was actually paid bonuses. The man was paid a bonus payment for not working—defrauding the Agency he worked for. The good news is that they caught him. The bad news is that it took 2½ years to figure out something was going on.

An article in the Washington Times details a 4-year case where an employee at EPA was fired for “sending a ‘hostile email’ and making inappropriate statements that ‘caused anxiety and disruption in the workplace.’” That employee was ultimately removed from the EPA a second time but only after he received 1,496 hours of backpay.

And on and on it goes. I could stand here for a long time talking about examples of paid leave to personnel totaling \$31 million for payments of paid leave for over a 1-year period of time. It is not just the EPA. I am not picking on one agency. Every agency in government has these policies. GAO estimates that there are some bad track records for these agencies. For instance, the Department of the Treasury has 25 employees on paid leave for over a year and the Department of Veterans Affairs has over 46. And even more disturbing is the fact that the GAO investigation found that Federal agencies don’t have sufficient documentation for the paid leave, if they had any documentation at all. How can you put someone on paid leave, how can you make payments for over a year and have no documentation as to why you are making the payments?

Coming to the floor with these waste of the week, fraud-and-abuse situations, it is hard to comprehend how these things go on. The ingenuity of those who are committing fraud and those who oversee agencies that are paying this out is stunning.

I want to make it clear that I am not against paid leave. There are many valid cases. But taxpayers deserve to know why Federal agencies are paying their employees not to work for over a year without sufficient documentation for taking such action. In fact, this ought to go for all paid leave, whether it is for 1 day, 1 month, or 1 year.

Particularly, though, what ought to be ringing an alarm bell is someone who is on the record as receiving paid leave for several months or over a year—and I am only documenting that which was documented for over 1 year. Who knows how much this would total

if we looked into every agency’s policies and found out that they weren’t documented and that they couldn’t prove that the paid leave was legitimized.

I need to give credit where credit is due. The Office of Personnel Management has finally recognized that this is a costly issue and has moved to take steps to address this misuse of taxpayer dollars. This summer, the agency announced guidance on what does and doesn’t constitute paid administrative leave. I urge OPM to follow up now and ensure that all Federal agencies are implementing these recommendations. But why did it take us so long? Why do we have to have an investigative report? Where is the management? Where is the management in these agencies that oversees this and does not allow this to happen? Why do we have to wait for the Government Accountability Office to come in and audit these agencies and find this unbelievable amount of waste, fraud, and abuse that takes place?

So taxpayers are on the hook for another \$31 million of waste. We add that to our ever-growing total of waste, fraud, and abuse, now reaching well over—almost \$119 billion. And we have Members down here talking about a program that needs funding because it is an essential program, but we don’t have the money to do it. Others come down and say we can’t cut a penny more from any of the programs we have—and that is another issue—and yet we continue to waste this kind of money.

Next week it will be item No. 28 as we go forward exposing waste, fraud, and abuse in the Federal Government, taking hard-working taxpayers’ dollars at a time when the economy is not doing all that well. This is something which continues to be a noose around the Federal Government’s neck and which needs to be addressed.

Madam President, with that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I was seeking the floor, but it is my understanding that Senator McCONNELL, our leader, is on his way to the floor. I will wait until he speaks. I don’t think we have to ask for a quorum call because I think he will be here in just a minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

##### CLOTURE MOTIONS WITHDRAWN

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the two pending cloture motions with respect to H.R. 2577 be withdrawn.

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

#### SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2015, PART II

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 3996, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3996) to provide an extension of Federal-aid highway, highway safety, motor carrier safety, transit, and other programs funded out of the Highway Trust Fund, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I know of no further debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

The bill (H.R. 3996) was passed.

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be made and laid upon the table.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### TERRORIST ATTACKS IN THE UNITED STATES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, because of what happened in Paris last week, a lot of speeches are going to be given on the floor of the Senate about terrorism. But it is too bad that we only seem to talk about the dangers of terrorism when bad things happen in the United States or happen in Paris or someplace else that brings the issue to our attention. I think what we all need to remember is that it is a constant danger that may not appear to us daily, but somewhere out there are people thinking about killing us for what we believe.

So I rise today, again, expressing my sympathies to the people of Paris and those affected by Friday’s terrible attacks by radical Islamic terrorists there. On behalf of the people of Iowa, I continue to stand with the people of France.

Unfortunately, the attacks last Friday should not have been a surprise. Radical Islamic terrorists have been waging war against the United States and our allies for years. When thinking about the last three decades of the last century, you think about the terrorism at the Munich Olympics or an American being murdered on a TWA plane. Then we had a Jewish person in a wheelchair thrown overboard in the Mediterranean. There was the attempt to bring down the Twin Towers in 1993