



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 110th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 154

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2008

No. 11

House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, January 28, 2008, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2008

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable AMY KLOBUCHAR, a Senator from the State of Minnesota.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Merciful Father in Heaven, we pray today for the hurting people of our Nation and world. Use us to help the poor, the homeless, the hungry, and the jobless. Make us Your instruments to bring relief to those who live in daily fear of financial calamity.

We pray for the Members of the Senate who feel the hurt of the marginalized and are working for equitable and just legislation. Give them wisdom and courage as they bear the burdens of our society in domestic and international affairs.

We pray for those outwardly composed who suffer within and are not free to verbalize their pain. Comfort them with Your presence. Help us all to know You better that we may love You more. We pray in the Name of Him whose love is unconditional and whose care is unlimited. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable AMY KLOBUCHAR led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, January 24, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable AMY KLOBUCHAR, a Senator from the State of Minnesota, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, today, we are going to quickly resume consideration of S. 2248, the FISA legislation. Currently, the Judiciary Committee substitute amendment is pending. We hope to reach a time agreement with that amendment soon. I hope we can do it prior to the 12:30 event that we Democrats always have on Thursday. I hope we can do that. I hope there will be a number of rollcall votes today on

FISA-related amendments, that we can complete action on this important legislation as quickly as possible.

FISA

Mr. REID. Madam President, as I indicated, we started this debate again last evening. Both the Senate Intelligence and Judiciary Committees have jurisdiction over this legislation. Senators ROCKEFELLER and BOND, Senators LEAHY and SPECTER worked very hard on their particular aspects of this legislation.

We, under the regular order, in a case of sequential referral—that is what we have in this matter—the Intelligence Committee text is the underlying bill, and the Judiciary Committee text is automatically pending as a complete substitute.

Last night, Chairman LEAHY, with the authorization of a majority of the committee, sent a slightly modified version of the Judiciary Committee amendment to the desk. We will have a vote on that amendment sometime today. The Judiciary Committee made what I believe to be some important improvements in this legislation, adding protections for the privacy of law-abiding Americans.

This is a strong bill. I will support it. I encourage my colleagues to do so as well.

In the event the full Judiciary Committee bill is not accepted by the Senate, I hope we can adopt some of the individual improvements from the Judiciary bill that is now in the form of an amendment.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Several of my colleagues, many of whom serve on the committees of jurisdiction; that is, both committees, plan to offer pieces of the Judiciary Committee bill as separate amendments.

In addition to considering the procedures included in title I of the bill, we will also debate the question of whether telephone companies that allegedly facilitated President Bush's warrantless wiretapping program should be granted retroactive immunity from civil lawsuits.

Senators DODD and FEINGOLD will seek to strike that immunity title. They will seek to strike it in its entirety. I personally oppose immunity and will support that amendment. But, of course, others disagree. If this amendment is not adopted, there will be other amendments to limit the immunity provisions in the Intelligence bill.

I hope there will not be extended time on these amendments. We can work through this. Friday is tomorrow. We have to finish this legislation, and we have to do it this week. It is an important piece of legislation. I have requested a 30-day extension. That is not going to be given. So everyone should understand, we have to go forward with this legislation.

Senators SPECTER and WHITEHOUSE have an amendment they plan to offer, as do Senators FEINSTEIN and NELSON of Florida.

As I have said before, if there are Senators who do not like these amendments and think they should be subjected to 60-vote thresholds, these Senators are going to have to engage in an old-fashioned filibuster. We are not going to automatically have these 60-vote margins. These amendments are by and large germane. They should be adopted if a majority of the Senate supports them.

Finally, yesterday, as I have indicated, I sent a letter to the President asking for a brief extension. I have heard from many sources that is not going to be granted.

The Senate will work as quickly as we can, but I think it is going to be very difficult for both Houses to negotiate and pass a final bill prior to the February 1 expiration date. But that is what we have to do, so we have no alternative.

Republicans have objected to my requests for a 30-day extension of the act, as I have mentioned. This matter is too important for us to be bogged down in procedural matters at this time.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to provide our intelligence professionals with the tools they need to combat terrorism, while protecting the privacy of law-abiding American citizens.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

FISA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, we may only be a few days into the session, but it is not too early to note a change in tone from last January. Talks are moving forward on an economic growth package between the Secretary of the Treasury, the House Republican leader, and the Speaker, and there is good reason to expect an important national security achievement on FISA at the latest by next week.

I had hoped we would move to FISA first, since nothing could be more urgent than protecting this vital national security tool before its expiration on February 1. Our first duty is to protect Americans from harm, and we know for a fact this law has helped us—helped us—detect and disrupt terrorist plots. It would be grossly irresponsible for Congress to weaken it or to let it lapse. And the notion that some in Congress would even consider filibustering this vital antiterror tool is difficult to comprehend.

Fortunately, common sense seems to have prevailed. I was encouraged to see that my good friend, the majority leader, believes we can pass a FISA bill with sufficient time to get it signed before it expires. I am very pleased to see that the chairman of the Intelligence Committee believes the bipartisan version reported out of his committee last fall will be the one that will ultimately pass, hopefully, by February 1. This is good news not only because the Intelligence Committee's version is the best, but, most importantly, with some modification it is also the only one the President will sign.

We have put this off long enough. Let's work to pass this bill. I know the majority leader believes we should move forward on it as well. I certainly concur in his judgment on that matter.

TRIBUTE TO THE AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I rise because yesterday marked the 150th anniversary of the American Printing House for the Blind. Located in my hometown of Louisville, KY, the American Printing House for the Blind is the national source of reading materials and learning aids for over 10 million blind and visually impaired Americans. Thanks to this Kentucky institution, they can now fully participate in the American dream.

Until the founding of APH, different schools for the blind across the country each prepared their own materials. But soon educators realized the need for a national printing house to fill this role. Louisville was chosen for its central location in the country and because it is situated on the Ohio River.

On January 23, 1858, the Kentucky General Assembly passed an act to charter the American Printing House. In 1879, the Federal Government designated APH the official source of

learning materials for blind students across the Nation, and the facility has continued to receive Federal support since then. Thanks to that support, sales, and donations as well, APH has been able to create some remarkable products that have changed the lives of many blind and visually impaired Americans.

The facility published its first book, "Fables and Tales for Children," in 1866, using the raised letters that were then the standard. In 1893, they published their first books in Braille. Today, they have helped the blind engage the 21st century with talking books, magazines, and even a recorded talking encyclopedia.

They have developed computers to help the blind access the Internet or read recorded books. They have even created a sonar aid for the blind to use that can detect how far away objects are by emitting tones that sound like chirping birds.

Before the American Printing House for the Blind existed to create all of these wonderful products, it was widely assumed that the blind and visually impaired just were not capable of learning as much as everyone else. Today, of course, we know that is completely untrue.

I want to share with my colleagues a letter APH received that illustrates the point very well.

A young fourth-grade girl in Nebraska named Ruthie was so grateful for a computer software program called Math Flash, developed at APH, that she wrote the facility to thank them. This is what she had to say:

I used to hate math because everyone else was smarter than me. Math Flash makes it easy and fun because it has adding and subtracting games that help me remember. I can practice whatever I want with no help from my teacher or my mom. I could even be a math teacher maybe.

When you realize that most teachers or parents would be ecstatic to hear of such a passion for learning in any student, whether sighted or visually impaired, you begin to see the miracle the American Printing House for the Blind has made possible. They have opened up a world of knowledge and information to millions of Americans.

The city of Louisville and the Commonwealth of Kentucky are proud to be the home of the American Printing House for the Blind, which adds much to our community. The APH Museum attracts many visitors from around the globe every year to see important historical artifacts, such as Helen Keller's Bible in Braille.

I want to thank the Senate for its unanimous approval yesterday of a resolution I sponsored expressing this Nation's gratitude—gratitude—to the American Printing House for the Blind for its 150 years of service to this Nation. Their efforts have been essential to allowing the blind and visually impaired to be fully included in education.