

SEC. 5. EXTENSION OF COMMISSION AUCTION AUTHORITY.

Section 309(j)(11) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 309(j)(11)) is amended by striking ‘‘2011.’’ and inserting ‘‘2012.’’

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, Senator ROCKEFELLER and I, as the chairman and the ranking member of the Commerce Committee, have worked on a bill that will delay for 3 months, basically until June 12, this transition. It is voluntary. That was very important. Because many broadcast companies have made the investment for digital transmission, and they will be able to go to that digital transmission. It also allows people, even if they have coupons that are expired, to reapply and get coupons.

But I do wish to serve notice that I will not support another delay in implementation. By now people have had the notice, and we have done everything to help mitigate the cost of this transition. I talked to Senator ROCKEFELLER about that, and I think we are in agreement that now is the time for people to get their coupons and get their boxes because June 12 this transition will be made.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I wish to not only recognize what the Senator from Texas has indicated, but also I wish to say that these last couple days, weeks—whatever it is—have been a study in bipartisan cooperation. We have been up, we have been down. It wasn’t going to work, it could work, it might work. What we have concentrated on is going to the people who have concerns and answering every single question they might have. In a deliberative body such as the Senate, where we actually do that and people actually know we are trying to answer all their questions, and are answering all their questions, and when you have a chairman and a ranking member who are in tandem, working together on a very important matter, it counts.

I yield the floor.

KENTUCKY ICE STORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, this week people all across Kentucky are dealing with the effects of a massive snow and ice storm that ravaged the entire Commonwealth on Tuesday. This storm has caused the worst power outage in Kentucky history—more than 600,000 are without power.

This number is all the more devastating given that the previous record had been set only 4 months ago when the remnants of Hurricane Ike battered Kentucky last fall.

The power outages cover the entire Bluegrass State and have caused enormous problems, as you can imagine. Many schools and businesses are closed. Many roads are blocked from downed trees or power lines. Most dangerous of all, some people are unable to

heat their homes in this time of freezing temperatures.

Given the severity of the storm, the Governor of Kentucky, Steve Beshear, rightly reached out to President Obama to request a Federal declaration that a major emergency exists. I also contacted the President to ask that he respond quickly to the Governor’s request.

I am pleased to say that the President did respond quickly and declared a Federal emergency in most of Kentucky. Doing that has triggered the release of urgently needed Federal authority and funds that will give the people of my State the help they desperately need.

I want to thank the Governor for his quick and decisive action, as well as President Obama for his speedy response. It is making a real difference in the lives of Kentuckians as we speak.

Governor Beshear and his team have been working day and night to ensure all parts of the State are getting the relief they need. Our offices have been in close contact since the storm, and I am proud of the leadership he is demonstrating.

Most of all, I want to thank the many men and women across Kentucky who are working to aid their communities during this disaster.

From the police and firefighters, to the first responders, the power company employees, the shelters taking in those without power, and the people knocking on doors to check on their neighbors, everyone is pitching in to make sure Kentucky makes it through this storm.

And I am sure that we will. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to keep the citizens of Kentucky in their prayers during this difficult time.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS, RULES OF PROCEDURE

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, pursuant to paragraph 2 of rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I ask that the rules of the Appropriations Committee for the 111th Congress be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. These rules were adopted by the full committee membership on January 27, 2009.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE RULES—111TH CONGRESS**I. MEETINGS**

The Committee will meet at the call of the Chairman.

II. QUORUMS

1. Reporting a bill. A majority of the members must be present for the reporting of a bill.

2. Other business. For the purpose of transacting business other than reporting a bill or taking testimony, one-third of the members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum.

3. Taking testimony. For the purpose of taking testimony, other than sworn testi-

mony, by the Committee or any subcommittee, one member of the Committee or subcommittee shall constitute a quorum. For the purpose of taking sworn testimony by the Committee, three members shall constitute a quorum, and for the taking of sworn testimony by any subcommittee, one member shall constitute a quorum.

III. PROXIES

Except for the reporting of a bill, votes may be cast by proxy when any member so requests.

IV. ATTENDANCE OF STAFF MEMBERS AT CLOSED SESSIONS

Attendance of staff members at closed sessions of the Committee shall be limited to those members of the Committee staff who have a responsibility associated with the matter being considered at such meeting. This rule may be waived by unanimous consent.

V. BROADCASTING AND PHOTOGRAPHING OF COMMITTEE HEARINGS

The Committee or any of its subcommittees may permit the photographing and broadcast of open hearings by television and/or radio. However, if any member of a subcommittee objects to the photographing or broadcasting of an open hearing, the question shall be referred to the full Committee for its decision.

VI. AVAILABILITY OF SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

To the extent possible, when the bill and report of any subcommittee are available, they shall be furnished to each member of the Committee thirty-six hours prior to the Committee’s consideration of said bill and report.

VII. AMENDMENTS AND REPORT LANGUAGE

To the extent possible, amendments and report language intended to be proposed by Senators at full Committee markups shall be provided in writing to the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member and the appropriate Subcommittee Chairman and Ranking Minority Member twenty-four hours prior to such markups.

VIII. POINTS OF ORDER

Any member of the Committee who is floor manager of an appropriations bill, is hereby authorized to make points of order against any amendment offered in violation of the Senate Rules on the floor of the Senate to such appropriations bill.

IX. EX OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP

The Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the full Committee are ex officio members of all subcommittees of which they are not regular members but shall have no vote in the subcommittee and shall not be counted for purposes of determining a quorum.

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

WHITE HOUSE OFFICE OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

• Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I welcome this opportunity to support consumer advocates across the country in encouraging the new administration to restore the White House Office of Consumer Affairs. For the past 8 years, the safety and rights of consumers have taken a back seat to special interests. We are all aware of troubling reports about unsafe toys for our children, unsafe household products for our families, and even unsafe food.

With a new administration focused on bringing needed change to the Nation, a new focus on consumer safety should be part of this change. During the Clinton administration, consumers had an effective advocate with a long record of commitment to protection in Ann Brown, chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. But staff cutbacks in the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission have further undermined effective efforts to protect consumers. Bipartisan legislation has attempted to address these challenges, but more progress is needed.

Now is the time for action. The new administration can go a long way in restoring the trust of Americans in the safety of the products they use by restoring the Office of Consumer Affairs to its rightful place in the White House. I urge the administration to do so, and I ask that the editorial from the January 4 New York Times may be printed in the RECORD.

The editorial follows.

[From the New York Times, Jan. 4, 2009]

A VOICE FOR THE CONSUMER

The time has come to give the American consumer a much stronger voice in Washington. President-elect Barack Obama has already named what amounts to an energy and environmental czar in the White House, and America's beleaguered consumers deserve no less.

Mr. Obama should restore the White House Office of Consumer Affairs, which vanished during the Clinton years, and appoint a director who has both the president's ear and the authority to rebuild the consumer protection agencies that were undercut or hollowed out by the fiercely anti-regulatory Bush administration.

There is no shortage of agencies ostensibly designed to protect consumers. But without an emergency like killer spinach or lead in children's toys, the Bush administration has mostly failed to hear customers' complaints. The consumer safety net is simply far too weak.

The Food and Drug Administration has suffered cutbacks in expert personnel, and still relies too heavily on industry to police itself. Credit-card holders who have been subject to all kinds of Dickensian tricks and traps were finally told by the Federal Reserve that relief is in sight—in 2011. Not so long ago, there was only one official toy tester at the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and oversight generally was so weak that Congress was forced to step in with new protections, which still could be strengthened.

It will be up to the Obama administration to bring these agencies back to life. In part this means restoring the morale of government workers who have too often been stymied by the anti-regulators at the top. It will also mean stronger consumer protection policies and hiring more skilled people. It will mean giving one official responsibility for coordinating the entire apparatus.

Presidents Johnson and Carter both recognized the need for a strong person to do that job. Both chose Esther Peterson, who during about eight years in office pushed for then-radical ideas like nutritional labeling on food and truth in advertising. As the Reagan anti-government era began, the consumer protection job steadily lost clout until it was shuttered in the late 1990s.

During his campaign, Mr. Obama promised consumers that he would help them get a fairer deal. As the victims of lead toys and predatory lenders can attest, they certainly need one. Restoring the Office of Consumer Affairs and appointing a director as strong and capable as Mrs. Peterson would be an encouraging first step.●

ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, in the 4 years since the federal ban on assault weapons was allowed to expire, hundreds of people in this country have died and been injured by previously banned weapons. The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence report, "Assault Weapons: Massed Produced Mayhem," details the deaths of 165 people and the injury of 185 people by assault weapons since the ban expired. This includes the death and injury of 38 police officers. The simple fact is, our communities are less safe than they were 4 years ago.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives described assault weapons in their Assault Weapons Profile as weapons "designed for rapid fire and close quarter shooting at human beings. That is why they were put together the way they were. You will not find these guns in a duck blind or at the Olympics. They are mass produced mayhem." Unlike semiautomatic hunting rifles, which are designed to be fired from the shoulder and rely on the accuracy of a precisely aimed projectile, assault weapons are designed to be fired at the hip and to maximize their ability to rapidly shoot multiple human targets.

The report also outlines the dangerous weapons race law enforcement officers have been forced to enter in an effort to counter the increasing likelihood that they will be confronted by a criminal wielding an assault weapon. In addition to the common criminal, assault weapons are highly attractive weapons for terrorists. The ease with which they can currently be purchased, combined with their designed ability to inflict as much damage as possible, make them ideal tools for conspiring terrorists. Just last year five men were arrested in New Jersey with a stockpile of assault weapons, while planning to attack the U.S. States Army base at Fort Dix.

Despite the overwhelming support of the law enforcement community, the ongoing threat of terrorism and bipartisan support in the Senate, the assault weapons ban was not allowed to expire. Now, 4 years later, 19 previously banned military-style assault weapons, some capable of firing up to 600 rounds per minute, are once again pervading our streets and neighborhoods. This Congress we must take up and pass sensible gun safety legislation, including reinstating the assault weapons ban.

BLAIR NOMINATION

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I support the nomination of ADM Dennis

Blair to be Director of National Intelligence. I do so as a strong supporter of intelligence reform and in the belief that Admiral Blair brings not only a keen understanding of the current challenges to interagency cooperation but an enthusiasm for reform. I am also encouraged by his consistent and repeated commitments to keep the congressional intelligence committees fully and currently informed, and his desire to end the stonewalling conducted by the Bush administration. The confirmation process has raised a number of issues of concern that I believe have been adequately addressed, although it is my hope and expectation that Admiral Blair, if confirmed, will work with me and other members of the committee on these, as well as other important matters.

Admiral Blair has committed to ending the Bush administration practice of hiding programs such as the CIA detention program and the President's warrantless wiretapping program from the full committee and has said that these programs "were less effective and did not have sufficient legal and constitutional foundations because the intelligence committees were prevented from carrying out their oversight responsibilities." He has also committed to breaking down the stovepiping of oversight whereby Intelligence Committee members are denied access to important Department of Defense activities. These commitments are a critical first step in ensuring effective oversight and in reestablishing a collaborative relationship between our two branches of Government.

While I was disappointed with Admiral Blair's refusal, at his hearing, to characterize waterboarding as torture, I am confident that he will carry out President Obama's Executive order prohibiting "enhanced interrogation techniques." I am also assured by his statement that "the United States must not render or otherwise transfer anyone to a country unless we have credible assurances that they will not be subject to torture or other unacceptable treatment."

His statements on privacy, civil liberties and checks and balances have also been reassuring. He has expressed concern about the U.S. Government's accumulation of detailed private information on U.S. citizens. He has reaffirmed that FISA is the "only legal authority for conducting surveillance within the United States for intelligence purposes." He told me at his hearing that he would submit intelligence programs to the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel at the outset, so that they are conducted under clear legal authorities. And, more generally, he has stated that he sees it has his responsibility to "make clear that protecting the privacy and civil liberties of Americans is as important as gathering intelligence." I do have concerns about his statement that he supports immunity for companies that allegedly cooperated with