

NAYS—23

Alexander	Graham	McConnell
Ayotte	Grassley	Paul
Barrasso	Heller	Risch
Coburn	Hoeven	Roberts
Cornyn	Inhofe	Sessions
Crapo	Johnson (WI)	Toomey
DeMint	Lee	Vitter
Enzi	McCain	

NOT VOTING—1

Wicker

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. A quorum is present.

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, may we have order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in order.

Mr. REID. I thank the Chair.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT PROCESSING DELAYS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate a message from the House with respect to S. 627.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate a message from the House which, the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Resolved, that the bill from the Senate (S. 627) entitled "An Act to establish the Commission on Freedom of Information Act Processing Delays" do pass with an amendment.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to that legislative matter, and I move to table the motion to concur and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Will the majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. REID. Yes, without losing my right to the floor.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Is it the majority leader's intention, after we have the vote on tabling the proposal that came over from the House, to file cloture on the Reid budget?

Mr. REID. Yes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I say to my friend, we would be happy to have that vote tonight. And I will also mention to my friend that the House of Representatives intends to vote on the Reid amendment tomorrow afternoon at 1 o'clock. In order to accommodate the schedules of Senators, we would be more than happy to accommodate the majority and have the vote on the Reid budget tonight.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, through the Chair, I say to my friend, the distinguished Republican leader, let's hope

they are more timely on their 1 o'clock vote than they have been in the last few days.

I would say this very directly: We would be happy to have a vote on the Reid amendment just like the House did today, a majority vote. We have gotten into a situation that is untoward. Everything that moves is a supermajority. That isn't the way it should be. So we are happy to have a vote anytime. But it should be a majority vote just like the House had. They had a majority vote today, and they had an overwhelming extra vote of none. So we would be happy to have a simple majority vote on the Democratic proposal that we are putting forward.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Is that a consent?

Mr. REID. That is a consent that we will be happy to have a vote if it is a simple majority vote.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, let me say that this is almost an out-of-body experience to have someone suggest a 50-vote threshold on a matter of this magnitude in the Senate. I am perplexed, Mr. President—genuinely perplexed—that my friend, the majority leader doesn't want to vote on his proposal as soon as possible. I object.

Mr. REID. Let's have order. Let the Republican leader be heard.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I object.

Mr. REID. So it is obvious to the world that in the Senate this is now another filibuster. That is what this is; it is a filibuster to stop us from moving forward on legislation. This is a filibuster in any name that you want.

I am disappointed. I asked for a roll-call vote on the tabling motion. I ask that we move forward.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table the motion to concur.

The yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 120 Leg.]

YEAS—59

Akaka	Hagan	Nelson (NE)
Baucus	Harkin	Nelson (FL)
Begich	Hatch	Paul
Bennet	Inouye	Pryor
Bingaman	Johnson (SD)	Reed
Blumenthal	Kerry	Reid
Boxer	Klobuchar	Rockefeller
Brown (OH)	Kohl	Sanders
Cantwell	Landrieu	Schumer
Cardin	Lautenberg	Shaheen
Carper	Leahy	Stabenow
Casey	Lee	Tester
Conrad	Levin	Udall (CO)
Cooms	Lieberman	Udall (NM)
DeMint	Manchin	Vitter
Durbin	McCaskill	Warner
Feinstein	Menendez	Webb
Franken	Merkley	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Mikulski	Wyden
Graham	Murray	

NAYS—41

Alexander	Barrasso	Boozman
Ayotte	Blunt	Brown (MA)

Burr	Hoeven	Murkowski
Chambliss	Hutchison	Portman
Coats	Inhofe	Risch
Coburn	Isakson	Roberts
Cochran	Johanns	Rubio
Collins	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Corker	Kirk	Shelby
Cornyn	Kyl	Snowe
Crapo	Lugar	Thune
Enzi	McCaIn	Toomey
Grassley	McConnell	Wicker
Heller	Moran	

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. RUBIO. Mr. President, I oppose the motion to table the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 627, the Budget Control Act of 2011. Although I do not support the bill as written, I believe that the Senate should proceed to it in an effort to amend the bill to include greater spending cuts, caps, and provisions which will boost our economy like progrowth tax and regulatory reform.

I strongly oppose the proposal put forth by Senate Majority Leader REID. The bill is filled with accounting gimmicks and does nothing to encourage enactment of a constitutional balanced budget amendment—an essential step towards ending our unsustainable deficits and debt that enjoys bipartisan support in both Chambers of Congress. Amazingly, as our economy continues to struggle, the Reid proposal appears to assume a tax hike upwards of \$3 trillion, which would kill jobs and impede efforts to grow the economy and reduce our staggering debt in the process.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

MOTION TO CONCUR WITH AMENDMENT NO. 589

(Purpose: To cut spending, maintain existing commitments, and for other purposes)

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment to S. 627 with an amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 589 to the House amendment to S. 627.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on the motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a cloture motion which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Reid motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 627, with amendment No. 589.

Harry Reid, Max Baucus, Barbara Boxer, Carl Levin, Tom Harkin, Benjamin L.

Cardin, Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Patrick J. Leahy, Mark R. Warner, Patty Murray, Christopher A. Coons, Richard Blumenthal, Sherrod Brown (OH), Kent Conrad, Mark Begich, John F. Kerry, Debbie Stabenow.

AMENDMENT NO. 590 TO AMENDMENT NO. 589

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 590 to amendment No. 589.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end, add the following new section:

SECTION

This Act shall become effective 5 days after enactment.

MOTION TO REFER WITH AMENDMENT NO. 591

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a motion to refer the House message to the Budget Committee with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] moves to refer the House message to the Senate Budget Committee with instructions to report back forthwith with an amendment No. 591.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end, add the following new section:

SECTION

This Act shall become effective 3 days after enactment.

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays on that motion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 592

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have an amendment to my instructions, which is also at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 592 to the instructions on the motion to refer the House message on S. 627.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "3 days" and insert "2 days".

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 593 TO AMENDMENT NO. 592

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have a second-degree amendment to my instructions, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Nevada [Mr. REID] proposes an amendment numbered 593 to amendment No. 592.

The amendment is as follows:

In the amendment, strike "2 days" and insert "1 day".

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Would the Senator withhold?

Mr. REID. If my friend the Republican leader wishes to speak, I, of course, would withhold.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. I thank the majority leader.

I wish to commend the Speaker of the House, JOHN BOEHNER, for his determination and perseverance.

It wasn't easy, but Speaker BOEHNER has been working tirelessly over the past few months and especially over these past few days to build consensus within his party and to pass a bill through the House that would end this crisis and take an important step toward getting our fiscal house in order.

While Democrats in the Senate have been over here plotting about how they can prevent a solution to this crisis, Speaker BOEHNER rolled up his sleeves and did the hard work needed to prevent the crisis. So I thank him for taking his responsibilities as a legislator, as a leader, and as a citizen so seriously and getting the job done. He and the other Republicans in the House have now passed two bills that would not only end this crisis, but would actually do something about its root cause.

They know as well as I do that Washington cannot continue to borrow 40 cents of every dollar it spends and not expect a reckoning. It may not be this Tuesday. But unless we do something to rein in our spending and our debt an even bigger crisis will come. That is why House Republicans have insisted on including a provision in the legislation they just passed that would only allow Congress to raise the debt ceiling if it also passes a law that requires Washington to balance its books.

This isn't exactly a radical proposal.

If Congress's inability to live within its means is the reason for this crisis, then why not pass a law that requires it? It makes perfect sense to almost everybody in America except a few hundred Democrats in Washington.

But that has been the story of this whole summer.

A lot of people look at Washington right now and say what they are seeing is a dysfunctional government. This isn't dysfunction. What you see in Washington right now is Democrats refusing to admit they've got a spending problem, and fighting any attempt to get it under control.

That is what this is all about.

Just take a look at what has been happening here in the Senate over the past 48 hours.

Rather than do their duty and come up with a bill that can pass, Senate Democrats have been busy ginning up opposition to everything else. Senate Democrats have not offered a single solution to this crisis that has a chance of passing either Chamber in Congress. Think about that: we have been staring at this deadline for months. And the majority party in the Senate hasn't even made the effort to come up with a solution that could pass a Chamber they control!

They have put all their energy into defeating everything else.

The majority leader claims he has a plan.

Well, here is what it does.

It asks Congress to make the largest debt ceiling increase in history, without paying for it.

It creates a committee that has no real power to generate more savings down the road.

And it doesn't require us to balance our books.

Until yesterday, the only reason Senate Democrats had for opposing the House bill was that it didn't raise the debt limit beyond the next Presidential election.

Yesterday, they came up with another excuse. They said the debt limit increase doesn't last long enough to provide certainty to the markets.

Leave aside the fact that Democrats have spent the last 2½ years perfecting the art of creating economic uncertainty.

Leave that aside.

The fact is, of the 31 times the debt limit has been raised over the past 25 years, 22 lasted less than a year. And I don't recall any of the Democrats who voted for those increases expressing any concern about economic uncertainty.

The simple truth is this: Senate Democrats have no good reason whatsoever for opposing the bill the House just passed.

This bill was actually negotiated in direct consultation with the Democrat leaders who now claim to oppose it.

You want proof? Well, ask yourself this: why does the Reid bill have the same title as the bill the House just passed? Coincidence? Why do the two bills contain pages of identical text? Coincidence? Look through it yourself.

Look at the Democrat priorities that are in there. How do you think they got in there?

I will tell you how: because they put them in there.

So it is an absolute mystery to me why any Democrat in the Senate would have opposed that bill.

There isn't an argument against it that is left standing. And we would all be voting to approve it right now if President Obama hadn't told Democrats to oppose it last weekend. The only reason—the only reason—we are

even still talking about this crisis is because the President of the United States doesn't want to have another debate about his own fiscal recklessness before his next election.

One more thing.

Just so there is no doubt that Democrats in Congress have abdicated their responsibility by failing to produce a solution of their own, I have a suggestion. Let's test out the Reid bill. Let's call it up and vote on it tonight. See how it does. Let's see the fruits of the Democrats' labors. Let's see what they came up with as this crisis approached.

The Speaker has sent over two bills that could end this crisis now. Let's call up the majority leader's bill and see if it will fly. And if it doesn't, then let's take up the House bill, pass it, and end this crisis now.

But Republicans have done our job.

Mr. President, I just wanted to ask my friend one more time. We have here a situation where the Senate has voted to table, in effect, the House-passed measure and the majority leader has filled up the tree and filed cloture on his proposal. As I indicated earlier, every single member of my conference here in the Senate would be happy to move up that vote.

As we all know, the markets are waiting to see if we are going to act. It strikes me that it might make sense for all of us on a bipartisan basis to go on and act as rapidly as possible. I believe every Member of the Senate has pretty well determined how they would vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to my friend's measure. Therefore, I would again ask consent that we immediately proceed to a vote on invoking cloture on the Reid amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is very obvious there should be a vote on my amendment and it should be with a simple majority. That is the way it has traditionally been in this body until the Republicans have tried to establish a supermajority, which doesn't work. This is a filibuster. This is something that should not be filibustered. They should back off the filibuster and let us vote. Let us vote. That is where we are. We feel very strongly on this side that if the House can pass something with a simple majority, so can we.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is noted.

The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I don't want to belabor this. I would just finally point out that we are in the rather curious position that the House of Representatives tomorrow at 1 p.m. will vote on the Reid proposal before my friend and his conference are willing to let us vote on his proposal.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we know that if the legislation in the House of

Representatives had required a supermajority, we would not be dealing with the Boehner—I am trying to say a nice word—the Boehner legislation. We wouldn't be doing that.

We are here now. We have tried our utmost to come up with a fair proposal that deserves an up-or-down vote. It is fair. It reduces the debt by \$2.4 trillion. In fact, most every bit of it includes material that the House has voted on before, the Senators have voted on before. It is something we should do. It is fair.

We have tried to compromise. That is not a bad word. I had a tentative meeting set with some Republican Senators this afternoon. The meeting didn't come to be. I have asked my friend the Republican leader to negotiate, and he has chosen not to do that. That is too bad.

I want to move forward. And if my friend wants to negotiate with others, fine. My door has been open all day. But we are doing the right thing. We will not agree to a 6-month extension, putting our country in jeopardy in just a few weeks. The Ryan budget has been out there whacking Medicare, whacking Medicare fraud. The cut, cap, and whatever it was does the same thing.

What I have put forward is a fair proposal. It is something we should do. It would get rid of the disaster that is facing us. It is the right thing to do.

The American people want us to work this out, and we have tried. We have given. We have compromised. There has just been no give on the other side. In fact, Mr. President, it has been quite the opposite.

We had a wonderful agreement set up here between the two people who ran the Budget Committee for years, Senators CONRAD and GREGG, a wonderful proposal to move forward expedited procedures. What happened? When we moved to it, seven Republicans who sponsored the legislation didn't vote for it. Then we moved forward with the Biden group. What happened with that? The Republicans walked out of that meeting. We had a situation where meetings were going on with the President. Leader CANTOR from the House walked out on that meeting. Speaker BOEHNER walked out on the President twice. The Gang of 6, trying to work something out, one of the leaders—the most vocal leader of that group took a sabbatical leave and stepped back in just a few days ago.

We have tried our utmost to negotiate something in fairness. We are where we are. We want an up-or-down vote on my proposal.

If the Republicans continue to filibuster this, they are going to have to show at 1 o'clock Sunday morning or thereabouts that they are going to continue the filibuster. We are not going to give up on this.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I think we all agree it is fairly routine to have the 60-vote threshold in the

Senate, particularly on a matter of enormous significance such as this. It is almost unheard of to suggest that a matter of this magnitude would be dealt with at a 51-vote threshold.

Where are we? It is an interesting history lesson my friend gives us about various debates we have had in the past, but this is where we are right now. Where we are right now is our good friends on the other side do not want us to move forward with a vote on what they are advocating.

Mrs. BOXER. Yes, we do.

Mr. DURBIN. Majority vote.

Mr. McCONNELL. We just heard the majority leader talk about—could we have order in the Senate, Mr. President?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in order.

Mr. McCONNELL. We just heard the majority leader making the arguments on the merits for his proposal. That is what we wish to move forward with. We would be happy to have the vote on cloture on his measure tonight so we could move forward and finally get a resolution here. We have the curious position the majority is in effect stopping action on its own proposal and the House of Representatives tomorrow will vote on the Reid proposal, apparently before the Senate will vote on the proposal of the majority leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Finally, the Republican leader said we don't need to carry this on forever. I agree with my friend. This legislation is of utmost importance. It has great significance, as he said. All the more reason there should not be a filibuster being conducted on this legislation. Our country is in the throes of an economic disaster. To think that they would filibuster this, they are not negotiating, and that is why we are at the last—we waited as long as we could to come forward with something that we would try to get through here. But we have not been able to do it because they have not negotiated in good faith. All the negotiation has been with ourselves.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this evening, the Senate is considering S. 627, as amended by the House of Representatives—the bill now called the Budget Control Act of 2011. Earlier this week, the House Republican Leadership used a procedural maneuver to strip from this bill bipartisan provisions to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act, FOIA, that unanimously passed the Senate. I urge the Senate to restore the bipartisan Leahy-Cornyn Faster FOIA Act of 2011, as originally and unanimously passed by the Senate in May, when the Senate considers its budget bill.

The Faster FOIA Act enjoys broad bipartisan support from across the political spectrum. The Senate unanimously passed this bill in May, after the Judiciary Committee favorably reported the bill by voice vote. Recently, more than 35 transparency organizations urged the House Committee on

Oversight and Government Reform to act on this legislation. On Tuesday, the Washington Post editorialized that the House should promptly enact this bipartisan bill to improve the FOIA process.

Senator CORNYN and I first introduced the Faster FOIA Act in 2005, to address the growing problem of excessive FOIA delays within our Federal agencies. During the intervening years, the problem of excessive FOIA delays has not gone away. We reintroduced this bill in 2010, and the Senate unanimously passed it last year. The current bill is the most recent product of our bipartisan work to help reinvigorate FOIA.

The Faster FOIA Act would establish a bipartisan Commission on Freedom of Information Act Processing Delays to examine the root causes of excessive FOIA delays. The Commission would recommend to Congress and the President steps that should be taken to reduce these delays, so that the administration of the FOIA is more equitable and efficient.

The Faster FOIA Act will help ensure the dissemination of government information to the American people, so that our democracy remains vibrant and free. This is a laudable goal that we all share. Neither Chamber of Congress should allow partisan politics to obstruct the important goal of this bill.

The ongoing debate in Congress about the national debt has made clear that we must find ways to work together, across party lines and ideologies, to address the many challenges facing our Nation. This bipartisan spirit is at the core of the Faster FOIA Act. I have said many times that open government is neither a Democratic issue, nor a Republican issue it is truly an American value and virtue that we all must uphold. I urge the Senate to include the Faster FOIA Act in its budget bill, and I urge the Congress to promptly enact this good government measure.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letters in support of reinstating the Faster FOIA Act in the final debt ceiling package.

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

SUNSHINE IN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE,
Arlington, VA, July 29, 2011.

Hon. HARRY REID,
U.S. Senate.
Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
U.S. Senate.
Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
U.S. House of Representatives.
Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
U.S. House of Representatives.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER REID, MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, SPEAKER BOEHNER, AND MINORITY LEADER PELOSI: We urge the Congress to reinstate the bipartisan, uncontroversial language strengthening the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that was removed from S. 627, the Faster FOIA Act, as it was amended to address the unrelated issue surrounding the debt limit. The original language would create a bipartisan commission to recommend concrete ways to

strengthen transparency in the federal government and has broad, bipartisan support.

The Sunshine in Government Initiative is a coalition of media associations promoting government transparency, especially focusing on FOIA. SGI members include the American Society of News Editors, the Associated Press, Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, National Newspaper Association, Newspaper Association of America, Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and Society of Professional Journalists.

Especially in this fiscal environment, the Faster FOIA Commission would help the public understand how taxpayer dollars are being spent by bringing together experts inside and outside the government to look “under the hood” of agency FOIA operations and to propose within a year the most realistic, effective and cost-efficient improvements to improve government transparency.

The Freedom of Information Act is the vital law that helps ensure the public can see what its government is up to while protecting personal privacy, national security, trade secrets and other important interests. The Commission’s work should provide timely insight to help inform next steps that Congress with your leadership might undertake to strengthen transparency in the federal government.

Sincerely,

RICK BLUM,
Coordinator.

JULY 28, 2011.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, The Capitol,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, The
Capitol, Washington, DC.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, The Capitol,
Washington, DC.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives,
The Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER REID, MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, SPEAKER BOEHNER AND MINORITY LEADER PELOSI: On behalf of the undersigned organizations concerned with government openness and accountability, we are writing to urge you to restore the bipartisan Faster FOIA provisions in S. 627, now known as the Budget Control Act of 2011.

This week, Speaker Boehner took S. 627 as a vehicle for his budget bill. This procedural maneuver could shave a few days off of Senate consideration, should the House pass the Boehner budget control bill. However, in doing so, the Speaker unnecessarily stripped the Faster FOIA Act from S.627, completely replacing the language with the budget bill. If the Faster FOIA language is not restored in S. 627, the bipartisan progress made by the Senate on the legislation will be wiped out. This is a setback for openness and accountability in the executive branch, and bipartisan action in Congress.

The Senate unanimously passed the Faster FOIA Act, authored by Senator Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Cornyn (R-TX) in May. The legislation would establish the Commission on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Processing Delays (the Commission) to examine several thorny issues that create unreasonable bars to public access under the FOIA and recommend to Congress and the President steps that should be taken to reduce delays and make the administration of the FOIA equitable and efficient throughout the federal government.

The Faster FOIA Act enjoys strong support among a broad range of non-governmental organizations. Recently, more than 35 orga-

nizations joined to urge the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to act on the legislation. A recent editorial in the Washington Post also called on the House to embrace the bill in the same bipartisan spirit as the Senate in the interest of improving the FOIA process.

We urge you to advance openness and accountability to restore the bipartisan Faster FOIA provisions in S. 627. We thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

American Library Association, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington—CREW, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Freedom of Information Center at the Missouri School of Journalism, Fund for Constitutional Government, National Freedom of Information Coalition, National Security Archive, OMB Watch, OpenTheGovernment.org, Project On Government Oversight—POGO, Public Citizen, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

MORNING BUSINESS

BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I believe libraries are critical institutions to our Nation and our democracy. Today, I recognize one library in particular, Brown University Library, for its 150th anniversary as Rhode Island’s oldest Federal Depository Library.

The Federal Depository Library Program was established by Congress to ensure that the American public could access government records and information locally. The 10 depository libraries in Rhode Island are part of a network of more than 1,200 libraries nationwide that provide free access to Federal Government materials, both in print and online.

In 1861, under a newly enacted law granting each Senator the authority to assign one depository in their State, Senator James F. Simmons designated the Brown University Library as an official depository to receive U.S. Government publications. While Brown University had been receiving government documents through various channels since revolutionary times, this designation established Brown as the first depository library in Rhode Island and one of the earliest so designated libraries in the Nation.

For the past 150 years, the Brown University Library has helped students, faculty, and residents throughout Rhode Island find and use government information. The collection at Brown contains a wide variety of government documents that reflect the rich history of Rhode Island and the Nation as a whole, including historical debates surrounding the adoption of the 13th amendment abolishing slavery and legislation authored by my predecessor Senator Claiborne Pell establishing the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is also home to a wealth of information useful to Rhode Islanders, such as demographic