

Medicare Cost Containment, Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 [31 U.S.C. 1105 note]. (Days of Senate session);
Minimum Standards for Identification of Documents; Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 [49 U.S.C. 44901 note]. (Days of Senate session); and
Independent Payment Advisory Board [42 U.S.C. 1395kkk]. (Days of continuous session).

TABLE I. PRO FORMA SESSIONS OF THE U.S. SENATE:
2005–2012
[As of March 8, 2012]

Congress & Years	Pro forma Day
112th (2011–2012)	02/24/2012 02/21/2012 01/20/2012 01/17/2012 01/13/2012 01/10/2012 01/06/2012 01/03/2012 12/30/2011 12/27/2011 12/23/2011 12/20/2011 11/25/2011 11/22/2011 10/27/2011 10/24/2011 10/07/2011 09/29/2011 09/02/2011 08/30/2011 08/26/2011 08/23/2011 08/19/2011 08/16/2011 08/12/2011 08/09/2011 08/05/2011 06/03/2011 05/31/2011 11/12/2010 11/10/2010 11/08/2010 11/04/2010 11/01/2010 10/29/2010 10/26/2010 10/22/2010 10/19/2010 10/15/2010 10/12/2010 10/08/2010 10/05/2010 10/01/2010 01/19/2010 01/05/2010 10/09/2009 08/10/2010 12/30/2008 12/26/2008 12/23/2008 12/19/2008 12/16/2008 12/12/2008 12/05/2008 12/02/2008 11/29/2008 11/26/2008 11/24/2008 11/13/2008 11/10/2008 11/06/2008 11/03/2008 10/30/2008 10/27/2008 10/23/2008 10/20/2008 10/16/2008 10/14/2008 10/10/2008 10/07/2008 10/06/2008 09/05/2008 09/02/2008 08/29/2008 08/26/2008 08/22/2008 08/19/2008 08/15/2008 08/12/2008 08/08/2008 08/05/2008 07/27/2008 06/30/2008 05/29/2008 05/27/2008 05/23/2008 03/27/2008 03/24/2008 03/21/2008 03/18/2008 02/22/2008 02/19/2008
111th (2009–2010)	
110th (2007–2008)	

TABLE I. PRO FORMA SESSIONS OF THE U.S. SENATE:
2005–2012—Continued
[As of March 8, 2012]

Congress & Years	Pro forma Day
	02/15/2008 01/18/2008 01/15/2008 01/11/2008 01/09/2008 01/07/2008 01/03/2008 12/31/2007 12/28/2007 12/26/2007 12/23/2007 12/21/2007 11/29/2007 11/27/2007 11/23/2007 11/20/2007 11/09/2007 10/05/2007 09/14/2007 01/24/2006 01/20/2006 01/03/2006
109th (2005–2006)	

Source: CRS analysis of relevant issues of the Congressional Record, Senate Calendar of Business, and data from the Legislative Information System of the U.S. Congress (LIS).

I trust that this information meets your needs. If I can be of any additional help, please do not hesitate to contact me at 7–0656 or cmdavis@crs.loc.gov.

DROUGHT

Mr. DURBIN. About 2 weeks ago, I visited a farm near my home town of Springfield, IL to see the impact of the ongoing drought.

From the road, I couldn't tell there was anything wrong with the crop.

But as we went into the field, it quickly became clear that the crop was in poor shape.

Following that visit, I met with the Illinois corn growers and the soybean growers and farmers from across the state.

The message I heard was straightforward; it is as bad or worse than it has been in decades.

Since that visit to a Springfield farm, drought conditions have only gotten worse.

100 percent of Illinois and 64 percent of the country is facing severe or harsher drought conditions.

Today, USDA announced 66 additional Illinois counties as primary disaster counties.

With this announcement, all but four counties, Will, Cook, Kane, DuPage—in Illinois qualify for disaster assistance.

Very little rain, combined with abnormally high temperatures, is decimating many of the primary crop-growing areas of the country.

71 percent of the corn crop and 56 percent of the soybean crop in Illinois is rated as poor or very poor.

This is in a State that regularly ranks as a top producer for both of these commodities.

That means feed prices for livestock and eventually food prices for the rest of us are increasing.

Everyone is going to feel the impact of this historic drought.

In response to conditions on the ground, Governor Quinn created a multi-agency drought task force in Illinois.

The task force is coordinating State and Federal resources to ensure pro-

ducers and communities are receiving the timely assistance.

President Obama and Secretary Vilsack have done a commendable job of taking steps to help provide assistance to impacted producers and communities.

They have sped up the disaster declaration process helping producers more quickly gain access to the limited disaster programs currently available.

They have reduced interest rates on emergency loans.

They have made it easier for land that is in conservation to open earlier for haying and grazing for livestock producers.

And the administration is working with crop insurance companies to try to give producers more time to make premium payments.

But we can do more.

And since we can't make rain, the single most important step Congress can take is to pass a farm bill.

Most farmers will tell you they can survive one bad year.

But right now farmers can't even plan for future years.

More than a month ago, the Senate passed the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act, more commonly known as the farm bill, with a 64–35 bipartisan vote.

The bill would reauthorize several expired disaster programs to immediately help producers.

Equally, if not more important, the bill would provide certainty for producers—allowing them to make long-term plans for getting through this drought and recovering from a bad year.

Unfortunately the House has failed to act.

In the roughly 40 days since the Senate passed a bill, the House has not even brought a companion measure to the House floor. During those 40 days another 20 percent of the country has developed drought conditions. During those 40 days, 98 of 102 counties in Illinois qualified for disaster assistance. During those 40 days, many farmers in Illinois have lost their crops.

It is well past time for the House to take up and pass a farm bill that includes robust disaster assistance paired with the long-term policy farmers need.

I will repeat something I said 2 weeks ago.

Our producers and rural America already face a natural disaster. I don't think it is too much that we spare them a manmade disaster by failing to pass a farm bill.

DEATH OF OSWALDO PAYÁ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, some of you may have seen in the press last week that an inspiring Cuban citizen who tirelessly fought for a peaceful transition to democracy recently died in a tragic car accident on that island.

Oswaldo Payá was a modest man. A brave man. A hero. A Cuban patriot.

And he was also very wise.

He realized that one of the best ways to change the cruel and repressive Cuban regime was to work from within.

He used a provision in Cuba's constitution to seek peaceful political change and openness.

More specifically, he and his team created the Varela Project to gather more than 11,000 signatures of Cuban citizens on a petition that called for a more open political system.

Keep in mind that putting one's name on a petition to the Cuban Government is a courageous thing to do on that island. It puts that person and his or her family at great risk.

Nonetheless, in May 2002, he bravely presented the petition to the Cuban National Assembly for action exactly as allowed for in the Cuban Constitution.

What did the Cuban Government do in response to a heroic and reasonable call for change allowed for under the country's own laws?

It harassed Payá and his followers. It began its own referendum that made the island's socialist system "irrevocable," even after an additional 14,000 signatures were added to the Varela Project petition.

A year later many of Payá's allies were arrested in a crackdown that sent many dissidents, writers, and even librarians to prison.

Can you believe this craven response?

The Cuban Government couldn't blame this Cuban-born effort on the United States, on other outside forces, on any of the usual suspects on which it blames all the island's woes.

Thousands of brave Cubans asking for political reform within the bounds of their own constitution were simply belittled, ignored, and harassed.

Payá was a modest man. I had hoped to meet him on my trip to the island earlier this year, but we were unable to visit—you see, the Cuban government doesn't want outsiders to visit people like Payá.

His peaceful and tireless efforts for peaceful change earned him the European Parliament's Sakarov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 2002, the National Democratic Institute's W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award in 2003, and a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize from Václav Havel in 2005.

Payá's daughter Rosa Maria said amid her loss and tears last week that her father never gave up hope that the country could be changed from within and that "he just wanted for Cubans to have their rights . . . that's all he ever wanted."

Tragically the Cuban Government even arrested almost 50 Cubans who showed up to pay their respects at Payá's funeral.

Can you imagine—arresting people at a peaceful memorial service?

My colleagues, Senators BILL NELSON, MENENDEZ, and RUBIO, have introduced a Senate resolution recognizing his work and calling for the peaceful democratic changes in Cuba that Payá

spent his life pursuing. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of that resolution and was happy to see that it passed the Senate just yesterday.

Lastly, let me note that Payá was often concerned for his safety—sadly, given the Cuban Government's treatment of those wanting political freedom, not an unwarranted fear.

So I want to emphasize an important point in the Senate resolution on Mr. Payá. Specifically, I call on the Cuban Government to conduct a credible and transparent investigation into the auto accident that caused his death.

The Cuban Government owes this Cuban patriot and the Cuban people nothing less than a full accounting of his death. It also owes them the basic freedoms he tirelessly stood for.

Mr. President, I want to also take this opportunity to talk about another tragedy that continues day after day in Cuba—that of the detention of American citizen Alan Gross.

Alan was arrested more than 2½ years ago while trying to help the Cuban people have greater ability to communicate with one another.

When you go to Cuba, you realize the Castro regime not only blames the United States for all its woes but cynically makes it difficult for everyday Cubans to communicate or connect to the outside world using the Internet.

That is why thousands upon thousands of Cubans use a free Internet library every year at the U.S. Interests Section in Havana.

Alan Gross was arrested initially as a spy and eventually sentenced to 15 years in prison.

That is right—15 years.

Mr. Gross apologized for his actions and has asked for Cuban compassion to allow him to visit his 90-year old mother suffering from inoperable lung cancer in the United States. The United States recently let a former Cuban detainee who was out on supervised release in the United States visit his ailing brother in Cuba, but the Cuban Government has shown no such decency in return.

I met Alan in January in Cuba, and I am appreciative of the Cuban Government for allowing me that visit. He tried to remain in good spirits, but it wasn't easy. He has lost more than 100 pounds since his incarceration. He struggles to keep busy and healthy in jail, but it is not easy. Quite simply, he has been separated from his family for far too long.

Alan Gross is a kind, decent man. He is no spy. He is no threat to anyone. In fact, despite all that has happened, he noted to me how deeply he still cares for the Cuban people.

Let me say this as clear as I can: Alan Gross should no longer be a pawn of the Cuban Government in its disagreements with the United States.

The Cuban Government has made its point. It will get nothing but international shame from holding Alan any longer.

Let me also note that I do not support the failed U.S. embargo against

Cuba and think the best way to see change on the island is to flood it with American ideas and people.

But I will have to think long and hard before I do anything further to ease our relations while Alan remains so cruelly behind bars.

To Oswaldo Payá's family and brave colleagues and to Alan Gross, please know that you are not forgotten here in the Senate and around the world.

TRIBUTE TO REPRESENTATIVE PAUL FINDLEY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today I wish to honor former Congressman Paul Findley—a great American who served his country in war and in the hallowed halls of Congress, a son of Illinois, a prolific writer and Lincoln scholar, a former political adversary, and my now friend.

Paul Findley was born in Jacksonville, Illinois, on June 23, 1921. And at 91 years of age, today Paul is as active and involved as he has ever been. Paul earned a bachelor's degree from his beloved Illinois College in his hometown in 1943, where he was inducted into the prestigious Phi Beta Kappa society. After college, Paul served as a lieutenant in the Navy in the Pacific Theater from 1943 to 1946. His honorable service and that of the dwindling number of living Americans who served during World War II—one of the most difficult periods in our country's history is something we should all take time to reflect on and thank them for.

After the war, Paul became president of Pike Press, Inc., in Pittsfield. He spent several years as editor of this small town weekly newspaper. In 1952, Findley lost a bid for the Republican nomination for State senator—something he and I have in common, having lost our first campaigns for public office—but it didn't stop either of us.

In 1960 Paul Findley was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives representing the 20th Congressional District of Illinois. He served in the House honorably for more than 20 years, until in 1982 a young lawyer from Springfield and a long shot to win surprised a lot of people, including many of his supporters, by unseating the incumbent Findley. Though Paul Findley and I were opponents in that campaign, I always respected him and his public service. Notwithstanding what is often a bitter and rancorous climate of partisan politics, I am proud to call Paul Findley my friend.

One of Paul Findley's greatest accomplishments during his long and distinguished congressional career was his dogged, ultimately successful effort to preserve a great American treasure—the Springfield home of our beloved son of Illinois, Abraham Lincoln. Strolling today through this historic neighborhood at the heart of Springfield, as thousands of visitors do each year, it would be almost inconceivable that preserving Lincoln's home was ever a matter of debate. But it once