

and investigating our Nation's intelligence activities or whether our work can be thwarted by those we oversee.

I believe it is critical that the committee and the Senate reaffirm our oversight role and our independence under the Constitution of the United States.

I thank the Presiding Officer for his patience, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, while the distinguished Senator from California is on the floor, I will tell her through the Chair that I have had the privilege of serving in this body for 40 years. I have heard thousands of speeches on this floor. I cannot think of any speech by any Member of either party as important as the one the Senator from California just gave.

What she is saying is that if we are going to protect the separation of powers and the concept of congressional oversight, then she has taken the right steps to do that.

The very first vote I cast in this body was for the Church Committee, which examined the excesses of the CIA and other agencies—everything from assassinations to spying on those who were protesting the war in Vietnam. There was a famous George Tames picture, where then-chairman of the Armed Services Committee John Stennis was berating Senator Frank Church for proposing this committee. He said that he, Senator Stennis, could find out what he wanted to find out but didn't really want to know everything.

I was standing behind George Tames when he took that picture in my first caucus. There is pressure on the junior Members—and I was the most junior Member of the Senate at that time—not to vote for the Church Committee.

Senator Mike Mansfield said to me—as did Senator Fritz Mondale and others—that the Senate is bigger than any one Senator. We come and go, but the Senate lasts. If we do not stand up for the protection of the separation of powers and our ability to do oversight—especially when conduct has happened that is, in all likelihood, criminal conduct on the part of a government agency—then what do we stand for? We are supposed to be the conscience of the Nation.

The Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, has spoken to our conscience—to every one of the 100 Senators, men and women, of both parties. She has spoken to our conscience. Now let's stand up for this country. Let's stand up as the Senate should and as the Senator from California has.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMENDING SENATOR FEINSTEIN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to take a minute to commend Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN. There is not a more dignified, competent Senator in this body than DIANNE FEINSTEIN. She works tireless hours leading the Intelligence Committee. It is a very difficult job, always away from the press, one that is very important to our country.

Her statement outlined I believe one of most important principles we must maintain; that is, separation of powers. The Founding Fathers were visionary in creating this great government of ours, three separate but equal branches of government: executive, judicial, and legislative.

Her statement today pronounced, in a very firm fashion, that must continue, that separation of powers. The work the committee has done over the last many years dealing with what went on in the prior administration is imperative.

I do not know much of the details as to what they are working on, but I know what they have been working on generally. I admire what she has done and the committee has done, and especially her statement today was one of courage and conviction. We know, those of us who have worked with her over the years, that no one has more courage and conviction than DIANNE FEINSTEIN.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

BATTLING DISABLING DISORDERS

Mr. MCCONNELL. As a survivor of polio as a child, I have always empathized with children battling life-threatening or disabling disorders. I also have a special place in my heart for those who work day in and day out to help kids who are battling childhood diseases. That is especially true when these researchers and physicians are working with children in my home State of Kentucky at places such as the University of Louisville, the University of Kentucky, and Kosair Children's Hospital. That is why I have long been a strong supporter of pediatric medical research.

I cosponsored and helped shepherd the Childhood Cancer Act of 2008 through the Senate. I also voted for the

Combating Autism Act of 2006 and, as Republican leader, helped to secure its reauthorization in 2011. These were not partisan initiatives. They were areas where the two parties had generally worked together to advance the common good. Maybe that is why we don't hear that much about them, but I think we all agree there is more to be done.

Late last year the House passed bipartisan legislation, which I strongly support, to shift funding from lower priority programs to pediatric research, including childhood cancers, autism, Down syndrome, Fragile X, and countless other disorders and diseases that affect our children and don't yet have a cure. These efforts could be paid for by using taxpayer funding of the Republican and Democratic political conventions.

Frankly, it is hard to imagine that there would be any objection to moving these funds to do something we can all agree is a very high priority, and that is pediatric research.

Thanks to the leadership of House Majority Leader ERIC CANTOR, the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Savings Act, which was named in honor of a young girl from Virginia, passed the House on a wide bipartisan majority with nearly 300 votes. After it arrived in the Senate, I asked my colleagues on the Republican side to pass it and send it to the President for his signature, because I saw the positive impact these funds would have on pediatric research. All Republicans agreed to pass the bill on January 7, and today marks the 63rd day that Senate Democrats have failed to act—although I must say I understand it has now cleared and I think that is excellent. It is about time we passed this bill out of the Senate. I believe we are about to do that. This is the type of bipartisan legislation that should move easily through the Senate. We should be able to pass the measure today and it is my understanding we will be able to do that.

Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I am pleased today the Senate will pass legislation I support, the Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act. This bipartisan legislation honors the memory of Gabriella Miller, a young girl from Leesburg, VA who was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor at age 9.

In the face of her own diagnosis, Gabriella worked to help other children with pediatric diseases. She raised money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, spoke at local and national awareness events and authored a special writing in a children's book about cancer.

Gabriella and her family started the Smashing Walnuts Foundation, dedicated to finding a cure for childhood brain cancer. The organization was named for the walnut-sized tumor in her brain. Gabriella passed away last year, but her dedication to raising awareness and funding for pediatric disease research is part of her legacy.

The Gabriella Miller Kids First Research Act will require the director of the National Institutes of Health to allocate \$126 million—\$12.6 million each year for 10 years—of appropriated funds for pediatric research. The money would be allocated into needed research grants for pediatric autism, cancer and other diseases.

The fight for funding pediatric research is far from over but this is a step in the right direction. As Gabriella said, “You may have a bad day today, but there’s always a bright shining star to look forward to tomorrow.” It is my hope that this legislation will help fund research that leads to future treatments and cures.

I would like to thank Senator MARK WARNER and Senator ORRIN HATCH for supporting this legislation and Congressman CANTOR for championing the bill through the House of Representatives.

This bipartisan effort is about making sure pediatric disease research is a high priority. I am proud we were able to pass legislation that honors Gabriella Miller, her family, and her inspiring work as an advocate for pediatric disease research.

GABRIELLA MILLER KIDS FIRST RESEARCH SAVINGS ACT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 289, H.R. 2019.

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

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

An act (H.R. 2019) to eliminate taxpayer financing of political party conventions and reprogram savings to provide for a 10-year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the National Institutes of Health, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to proceeding to the measure?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we on this side accept this measure, but I do have a few things I want to say before saying there is no objection.

Sequestration cut \$1.6 billion from NIH last year—\$1.6 billion. In the omnibus we passed, we gave them current level funding, but that hole for NIH is still there. NIH has lost huge amounts of money over the past few years in the way that we have struggled to get financing for our country. We in the past have been the guiding light for research on diseases and conditions. We are still there, but we are losing ground. Every country in the world looks at the NIH as a place they would like to be.

This is a small amount of money, but it will be extremely helpful to the NIH.

I would hope my Republican colleagues would join with us in increas-

ing funding for the National Institutes of Health.

Senator DURBIN is going to introduce a bill today that will fund NIH at levels they need to be funded. It has to be paid for, but it is so very important that we not claim victory for the NIH because of this. It is a small victory and I accept that. I think it is extremely important that we understand the NIH is billions of dollars short of being able to maintain the place they have had in years past.

I repeat, they have been losing ground. The last 5 years have been extremely tough for them. We need to do better for the National Institutes of Health. We have scientists around our country who want to do good work. They want to devote their lives to medical research, but they are not applying for these grants. So many of them are turned down that they are basically—well, maybe I won’t even bother trying.

I am pleased to hear the Republican leader move forward. It is something that is a small step forward to help children who badly need help in the ways of these diseases, which are so difficult for the kids, of course, for the parents and families and certainly our country.

Again, before we leave this issue, I would hope that the appropriations process we are going to go through this year will help us get money. What we have done today is only an authorization, and the public out there should understand it is only an authorization. Until we have appropriations going, there will be nothing going to pediatric research at the National Institutes of Health. We have to carry forward and not have all of these banner headlines that the kids are going to suddenly get help they deserve. That will not happen until we appropriate money for this.

I do not object.

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

Mr. McCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid on the table.

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

The bill (H.R. 2019) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. McCONNELL. I wish to reiterate what we have done. H.R. 2019, which will now go to the President for signature—the original author is Majority Leader ERIC CANTOR in the House—will eliminate taxpayer financing of political party conventions and reprogram savings to provide for a 10-year pediatric research initiative through the Common Fund administered by the NIH.

GLOBAL WARMING

Mr. President, our friends on the other side who run the Senate spent a lot of time talking last night. I am not sure what any of it accomplished. The

reviews seem to be pretty terrible. The AP dubbed the talk-athon a lot of hot air about a lot of hot air and said the speeches were little more than theatrics.

Maybe, as some speculate, Senate Democrats were just trying to please the left-coast billionaire who plans to finance so many of their campaigns.

The talking Senators didn’t really introduce any new legislation. I didn’t hear the talking Senators announce votes on bills already pending before the Senate. They basically just talked and talked and tossed out political attacks at a party that doesn’t even control the Democratic-run Senate.

No wonder the American people have such a low opinion of Congress.

The so-called talk-athon perfectly illustrated something else too—the emptiness of today’s Washington Democratic majority.

I remember a time when Democrats could say with some legitimacy that they were the party for working people. Those days seem to be receding further and further into the rearview mirror. Because whether it is addressing the opportunity gap in the ObamaCare economy or building the Keystone Pipeline or last night’s whatever that was, Washington Democrats keep opting for the empty political stunt over the reasonable, substantive solutions for the middle class.

Here is the thing: We need two serious political parties in this country debating serious ideas. When we see Washington Democrats throwing seriousness out the window like this, it is bad for everybody. If Washington Democrats are actually serious about all of the talk last night, they should follow it with action. The Democrats control the Senate. Bring up, bring up the cap-and-tax bill and let’s have a debate, put it on the agenda, and let’s debate it.

As the AP noted, despite all of the bravado, Democratic leaders made it clear they have no plan to bring a Democratic climate bill to the floor this year. So what was all the talking about?

Our friends on the other side set up the agenda. Call up the bill. The reason they won’t isn’t because of obstructionism or whatever else they might want to claim. It is because too many Members of their own party would vote against it.

Remember, Washington Democrats couldn’t even pass that bill when they controlled the Senate with a filibuster-proof majority back in 2009 or 2010. More importantly, the American people don’t want a national energy tax that would make their utility bills even higher than they already are.

Look. Americans have widely differing opinions about how Washington should be approaching environmental policy. That much is very clear. But one thing we should all be able to agree upon is this: Imposing massive restrictions upon our own economy, devastating the lives of our own mining