

test of the spacecraft a year ago. That journey is going to accelerate, and in the lifetimes of many of those within the sound of my voice, they will witness a human crew of Americans and possibly an international crew that will go all the way to the planet Mars and return. Indeed what was science fiction based on science facts—the Matt Damon movie “The Martian”—really is right within our grasp. It is an exciting time as we bring our space exploration back to life so that the American people can see that there is a viable space program and that we have a goal and that goal is the planet Mars.

COAST GUARD LEGISLATION

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I want to take advantage of this opportunity to also share with the Senate that we have a very important Coast Guard bill on which we are going to try to get unanimous consent so that we can send it on to the House. There are parts that have been controversial and those parts generally have been worked out. There are one or two others.

This Senator thinks the American people—unless they get in trouble out on the high seas—don’t really have an understanding of what a professional military organization the U.S. Coast Guard is. We have the Coast Guard participating with our Defense Department over in the war zones—the area of responsibility over in Central Command. We have the Coast Guard basically doing the job for the U.S. Navy in the waters off of Alaska. We have a Coast Guard that is patrolling the waters off of the continental United States, as well as the island State of Hawaii. The Coast Guard is always there when Americans get in trouble, and indeed when mariners who are not Americans get into trouble. The Coast Guard is an incredible professional organization that is doing the job.

Down in the waters off of my State of Florida, the Coast Guard does this incredible job working with the U.S. Navy on the interdiction of drugs. When the drug smugglers have to be interdicted, the Navy, if they are tracking them, hands that over to the Coast Guard because the Coast Guard, in fact, has the law enforcement capability to go in and take down the smugglers.

The Coast Guard can shoot the motors out of these go-fast boats to interdict smugglers—even going after submerged vehicles—to stop them. The Coast Guard does that from not only their boats but also from the air. The Coast Guard stands tall. We in the Congress now need to stand tall for the Coast Guard.

Earlier this month the majority leader offered a unanimous consent to discharge from the Senate commerce committee and pass the Coast Guard Authorization Act, giving the Coast Guard the resources it needs to carry out its mission. It cannot be overstated.

It is a small, very agile service of 42,000 Active-Duty members. It plays a vital role in protecting the Nation from narcoterrorism, human smuggling, environmental disasters, and from the loss of life and property at sea.

So what is in this bill? It is the result of several months of negotiations between the House and the Senate. The chairman of our Senate commerce committee, JOHN THUNE, and I, as the ranking member of the commerce committee, have worked with our colleagues to craft a bill that will authorize a total of \$9.1 billion in each of the fiscal years 2016 and 2017. It is a \$380 million per year increase over the amount authorized last year, and it enhances the Coast Guard and its capability to do a number of the things that I have listed, which include cracking down on the drug trade and the destruction of evidence, including the destruction of illegal drugs. It enhances the Coast Guard capabilities to stop the smuggling of drug money across our maritime borders. The Coast Guard’s Western Hemisphere strategy is to combat the criminal networks, secure the borders, and safeguard American commerce. So to meet all that, this legislation’s increased funding is going to support the Coast Guard’s ongoing fleet recapitalization program, including the design and construction of a new offshore patrol cutter and continued production of a fast response cutter.

I have ridden in these fast response cutters. I have ridden in the go-fast boats as they simulated a drug smuggler that was trying to avoid us. This boat can do the hairpin turns and the sudden 180-degree turns at top speed, and that is how these guys can’t get away. If for some reason they were not able to interdict them at sea, we have them from the air.

I have watched the Coast Guard sharpshooters blow out the motors on a go-fast drug smuggling boat. But we have to recapitalize a lot of these old boats. The average age of a Coast Guard high endurance cutter is 45 years old. The average age of the Coast Guard’s 210-foot medium endurance cutter is 48 years old. These are two of the primary ships that are used for interdiction and rescue worldwide. So new offshore patrol cutters, fast response cutters, will give our Coast Guard an effective coastal and offshore interdiction capability in order to meet its objectives.

You think of the Coast Guard off the coast. They are in Washington. I am not talking about the ones onshore. They are out there protecting national security assets in and around the Potomac and the Anacostia Rivers.

In addition to this recapitalization, the bill allows the Coast Guard to begin updating its fleet of polar icebreakers, allowing the service to pay an estimated \$1 billion needed for the acquisition of a new state-of-the-art heavy polar icebreaker. Why do we need that?

Have you noticed recently what the Chinese have been doing in the Arctic? Especially, have you noticed what the Russians are doing in the Arctic? Have you noticed that the Russians have 19 icebreakers and we have just a few? Have you noticed that China is funding and building icebreakers for the Arctic?

Part of our icebreakers, the Polar Star and the Healy were built in the 1970s and 1990s. The Polar Star is now well beyond its intended 30-year service life. It is vital that we enable the Coast Guard to begin bringing these new vessels online to support the Coast Guard’s Arctic strategy and cooperative maritime strategy and to meet the President’s stated intent for increased American presence and capabilities in the Arctic.

I went with the Coast Guard to Alaska. As I said a moment ago, the Navy has really ceded the Alaskan waters to the Coast Guard to protect maritime shipping—a huge fishing fleet up there. But also on the North Slope of Alaska, which is the beginning of those Arctic waters, there is a lot of activity up there—not only fishing but exploring for oil. At times of the year when it is totally incapable of a seaworthy vessel to crack the ice, you have to have an icebreaker to do it. The Russians have 19. They are getting very aggressive in the Arctic. Just ask the Prime Minister of Norway, with all of his teams, how concerned they are with what the former Soviets are doing up in the Arctic. Thus, this bill enhances and speeds up our capability of getting another icebreaker—a modernized icebreaker.

So this legislation is also going to provide the Coast Guard parity with our Department of Defense sister services with respect to personnel policies such as parental leave and eligibility for combat-related special compensation. If they are out there on the frontlines, they should have parity with our sister men and women in uniform.

This legislation will ensure that the Coast Guard is properly equipped to protect our national and homeland security interests in our ports, on our coastal and inland waters, such as Washington, and on the high seas around the world.

This Senator believes that we will be able to do this by unanimous consent, if we work through a few more things. So I urge our colleagues in the Senate: Let’s get this up and get it passed before the Christmas recess so the House will have it the first part of next year so we can get on about the process of getting this bill authorized, completed, and sent down to the President for signature into law.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

ERIC WILLIAMS CORRECTIONAL OFFICER PROTECTION ACT OF 2015

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I am going to make a unanimous consent request, but first I want to say a few words about the legislation about which the request pertains. I want to thank my colleague Senator BOB CASEY for joining me on this.

It was back in 2014 that Senator CASEY and I introduced the Eric Williams Correctional Officer Protection Act. It is a bipartisan bill, and it is a simple idea. The idea is to better enable these men and women who protect us every day by working as corrections officers—to better enable them to protect themselves in the very dangerous environments in which they go to work every day.

Amazingly enough, under the Bureau of Prisons policy, prison guards are often placed on duty, guarding large numbers of inmates by themselves, unarmed, and with no meaningful way to defend themselves. Officer Eric Williams of Wayne County, PA, paid the price for this policy. In February of 2013, Eric Williams was working alone in a housing unit of a Federal prison, a unit of 125 inmates. Carrying only a radio, handcuffs, and a set of keys, he had no means of self-defense and no one with him to provide back-up. A gang member serving a life sentence for first-degree murder savagely attacked and killed Officer Williams. The inmate used a homemade weapon to stab Eric Williams 129 times. He beat Eric so badly that his skull was crushed. The damage was so severe that Eric Williams' father stated: "I didn't even recognize my boy laying in that casket." Eric was just 34 years old.

This Bureau of Prisons policy is very misguided. We send our law enforcement officers alone, without defensive gear, to guard large numbers that include convicted killers. So, working with Senator CASEY and with Eric Williams' parents, Don and Jean Williams, we introduced the Eric Williams Correctional Officer Protection Act. I should point out that Don and Jean Williams have been absolutely heroic advocates in insisting that correctional officers have this tool at their disposal.

This is a bill that would require the Bureau of Prisons to issue nonlethal pepper spray to guards at high- and medium-security prisons so that these guards will have some means to protect themselves, some means of self-defense. We know this works. We know this works because there are many, many documented cases where a violent attack is immediately ended by deploying pepper spray. The fact is, pepper spray completely and immediately incapacitates an attacker. It does so while doing no permanent damage.

Well, it is too late for Eric Williams, but there are thousands of correctional officers across America who are working in dangerous environments every day. If we pass this legislation, we are probably going to save some of their lives over time.

The bill is bipartisan, as I pointed out. It has been endorsed by the American Federation of Government Employees, by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, by the Council of Prisons Local 33. I am pleased to announce that thanks to the concerted and, as I said, heroic efforts of Eric's parents, Don and Jean Williams, and many law enforcement and correction officers across the country, I believe that today the Senate is ready to enact this legislation.

I also thank my cosponsors, Senators MANCHIN, McCONNELL, CORNYN, INHOFE, CAPITO, LANKFORD, KIRK, and VITTER.

Before I make the formal unanimous consent request, I yield to the senior Senator from Pennsylvania who has joined me in this effort, Mr. CASEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I want to thank Senator TOOMEY for his work on this legislation—our work together. As Senator TOOMEY did, I especially want to commend Don and Jean Williams, the parents of corrections officer Eric Williams. I will not reiterate the horrific nature of his death; Senator TOOMEY outlined that. I cannot imagine more of a nightmare for a corrections officer and for his or her family.

We can bring some measure of protection to these officers by making sure that every possible circumstance is one in which the officer has pepper spray to be able to prevent an attack or to slow an attack down enough until that corrections officer gets help.

I want to say how much we appreciate the fact that this is bipartisan. This is one of those issues that should not have any kind of political division. Senator TOOMEY outlined the challenge and also the solution for this problem.

This is not a guarantee, but it means that if a corrections officer—and they are always outnumbered, by the way. If they are outnumbered, they will have some measure of protection.

I want to emphasize one thing I certainly forgot about or maybe never fully understood until I was in a line at corrections officer Eric Williams' viewing before his funeral. The line was full of law enforcement officers. I think sometimes we forget—and it was made clear to me that night—that these individuals are part of law enforcement, just like police officers at the local level or State police officers or other law enforcement personnel. When you work in a Federal prison and you are a corrections officer, you are part of law enforcement.

Those of us who work hard to provide resources for law enforcement should once again support legislation like this. I want to thank Senator TOOMEY for his work. I want to thank those who made this possible. I hope we can have this legislation pass through the Senate before we leave by the end of this week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, again, I want to thank Senator CASEY for his excellent work on this. At this time, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of S. 238 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

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

The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 238) to amend title 18, United States Code, to authorize the Director of the Bureau of Prisons to issue oleoresin capsicum spray to officers and employees of the Bureau of Prisons.

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

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

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

The bill (S. 238) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 238

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Eric Williams Correctional Officer Protection Act of 2015".

SEC. 2. OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE BUREAU OF PRISONS AUTHORIZED TO CARRY OLEORESIN CAPSICUM SPRAY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 303 of part III of title 18, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

§ 4049. Officers and employees of the Bureau of Prisons authorized to carry oleoresin capsicum spray

"(a) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Bureau of Prisons shall issue, on a routine basis, oleoresin capsicum spray to—

"(1) any officer or employee of the Bureau of Prisons who—

"(A) is employed in a prison that is not a minimum or low security prison; and

"(B) may respond to an emergency situation in such a prison; and

"(2) to such additional officers and employees of prisons as the Director determines appropriate, in accordance with this section.

"(b) TRAINING REQUIREMENT.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—In order for an officer or employee of the Bureau of Prisons, including a correctional officer, to be eligible to receive and carry oleoresin capsicum spray pursuant to this section, the officer or employee shall complete a training course before being issued such spray, and annually thereafter, on the use of oleoresin capsicum spray.

"(2) TRANSFERABILITY OF TRAINING.—An officer or employee of the Bureau of Prisons who completes a training course pursuant to paragraph (1) and subsequently transfers to employment at a different prison, shall not be required to complete an additional training course solely due such transfer.

"(3) TRAINING CONDUCTED DURING REGULAR EMPLOYMENT.—An officer or employee of the Bureau of Prisons who completes a training course required under paragraph (1) shall do so during the course of that officer or employee's regular employment, and shall be compensated at the same rate that the officer or employee would be compensated for