



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, APRIL 25, 2016

No. 63

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, our hearts rejoice with every remembrance of You. Make us eager to do Your bidding and worthy of Your generous mercy. We thank You that You hear and answer our prayers, providing us with the privilege of entering Your throne room whenever we desire.

Today, inspire our lawmakers with Your wisdom, infusing them with the steadiness of purpose that glorifies You. Give them power to follow after goodness, striving passionately to please You in their thoughts, words, and deeds. Lord, bless all their undertakings and cause them to prosper.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 1206 AND H.R. 4885

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I understand there are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bills by title for the second time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1206) to prohibit the hiring of additional Internal Revenue Service employees until the Secretary of the Treasury certifies that no employee of the Internal Revenue Service has a seriously delinquent tax debt.

A bill (H.R. 4885) to require that user fees collected by the Internal Revenue Service be deposited into the general fund of the Treasury.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar en bloc.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee recently said that the energy security and water infrastructure funding legislation before us marks an "excellent kickoff" to the appropriations process.

This is the first bill of the "Appropriations Committee to come to the floor," she said, and "it signals that we are ready to do regular order." I share Senator MIKULSKI's sentiment. It has been good to see colleagues working across the aisle expressing an interest and working cooperatively this appropriations season because we know continued cooperation will be essential to a successful appropriations process.

We have seen plenty of positive signs in the Appropriations Committee already. The committee has already approved one-third of the 12 funding bills on a bipartisan basis. With continued cooperation, we will have an opportunity to pass the first of these bills on the floor this week. The energy security and water infrastructure funding legislation before us is the result of many hours of hard work and research. It will reduce wasteful spending, it will bolster national security, and by ad-

vancing priorities like public safety, waterway infrastructure, economic development, and energy innovation it will impact all 50 of our States.

This excellent kickoff to the appropriations season enjoys bipartisan support. It advanced out of committee by a unanimous vote. It represents yet another example of what is possible in a Senate that is back to work. I thank the subcommittee chairman, Senator ALEXANDER, for working with Ranking Member FEINSTEIN to move this important bill out of committee. Let's continue our work today to get one step closer to passage.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic Leader is recognized.

COMMENDING THE PRESIDING OFFICER

Mr. REID. Madam President, I commented to my able assistant who is at my desk with me, Bill Dauster—I have always—whenever the Presiding Officer says the Pledge of Allegiance, I am amazed at how she stands at attention. It brings back her old military mind, I am sure. Very impressive.

FBI INVESTIGATION

Mr. REID. Madam President, as each day passes, the senior Senator from Iowa further distinguishes himself as the most political and partisan Judiciary Committee chairman in history. Last Friday, Senator GRASSLEY took his political partisanship to a new low when he encouraged the FBI to join the political crusade against Secretary Hillary Clinton.

The Senator from Iowa is confused about the role of the FBI. By law, the FBI is obligated to do its job and conduct an independent review for everything it has to work on free from political interference.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S2401

It is wrong for any Senator, especially the chairman of the Judiciary Committee who deals with these issues day after day, to urge the selective leaking of any Federal investigation. The FBI is not in the business of disclosing information to appease political operatives, but according to press reports, that is just the sort of thing the Republican Judiciary Committee has done.

Remember, there has been a lot of speculation that under Chairman GRASSLEY's leadership the personal information of a Clinton staffer was leaked to the press, including payroll records and a Social Security number, but urging a leak of the FBI investigation for political purposes was not the only thing Senator GRASSLEY said. The Senator from Iowa was asked what he thought was the worst change in Congress during his tenure. He responded that the increasing partisanship was disappointing to him.

The audacity and even the hypocrisy of that statement is staggering. Senator GRASSLEY decries partisanship, while he denies a hearing and a vote to an eminently qualified Supreme Court nominee. For what? No one has a good answer on that. The Senator from Iowa complains of partisanship, even as he uses the Judiciary Committee to wage a political war against Secretary Clinton and her staff.

Under the guise of oversight, Senator GRASSLEY has been wasting taxpayer dollars trying to besmirch Hillary Clinton's good name. This has been going on for years. The Senator's singular focus on Secretary Clinton borders on an obsession. Senator GRASSLEY has written dozens of letters containing hundreds of requests. He has held hearings. He has issued press releases. What have he and his committee achieved? Nothing. All the chairman has done is waste taxpayer dollars.

The Judiciary Committee chairman is so desperate to legitimize his attacks against Hillary Clinton he is willing to encourage a selective leak of a Federal investigation by, of all people, the FBI.

All this in an effort to award the Presidential nomination to Donald Trump. I agree in one respect with Senator GRASSLEY. Partisanship in this Chamber is awful. It is paralyzing the Senate and is preventing us from doing our constitutional duties, but much of this is the handiwork of the Judiciary Committee and Senator GRASSLEY.

I ask the Chair to announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 4

p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CHILD POISONINGS FROM LAUNDRY PODS

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to use articles as examples relevant to the subject of my speech.

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

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the rapid rise in child poisonings caused by single-use laundry products. Earlier today, we had an update on the number and severity of these poisonings from the American Academy of Pediatrics. It was in an in-depth study just published in their journal, Pediatrics.

The news is not very good, because in 2013 and 2014 that academy reports that there were over 22,000 child exposures to laundry products, resulting in the deaths of at least two children due to the chemicals in these pods, and many others have faced serious injury, with at least 17 children in that time period going into comas because of exposure to these chemicals.

What am I talking about? This is a laundry pod. It is very colorful on the outside, and it smells very good. It is quite soft. Its texture, particularly to the touch of an infant—an infant's hand and face—is very soft and reassuring. The problem is that if it gets into an infant's hand, where is it going to end up? It is going to end up in their mouth, and these packages are soluble. So, naturally, the plastic exterior is going to dissolve, and all of these chemicals are going to end up in the child's digestive system.

As a result of these pods, we have had two children die, and we had 22,000 child exposures in that 2-year period the study covers, with 17 children going into comas. Others have suffered seizures or internal burns to their lips, mouths, and the esophagus. If it gets into their esophagus and burns, then you have a problem.

Now, what we have been advocating, Senator DURBIN and I, in our legislation is to make them as safe as possible and to get the Consumer Product Safety Commission involved in these things. This Senator has met with the industry. Let me show you some of the things in which, indeed, they have made progress.

This is a detergent pod package, and in order to get in it—and this pod came in this packaging—you have to tear it open. That is one good thing. They

have designed this container so that it would be very difficult to get into. Even I am having difficulty getting into it. The pods would be in this container—something that would be child proof.

They designed this container. This has one of those slide bars, such as on a plastic sealant freezer package, where you have to push down on it and apply pressure in order to get the slide that unzips the seal. That is also a good thing.

But let me show you what the industry is resistant to doing. Children are naturally attracted to colorful candy. Here shown on this chart are a variety of candies, such as gummy bears, but among all of these are interspersed some of these pods. This is one. This is another. This is another, and this is another—not unlike the colors on this pod. So if we don't have the packaging preventing the child from getting to this pod, then we are going to have a problem, which is why we lost two children and 17 others went into comas in the last 2 years.

Now, a lot of people like these products, and so does the Nelson family. They serve a very useful purpose. At the same time, we need to make them as safe as possible. So why not just remove the color from the package and make it less attractive to the child.

Last year, Senator DURBIN and I introduced legislation that would require better labeling, more child-resistant packaging and safer chemical formulations for these single-use laundry pod products. The bill has been referred to our Commerce Committee, and as the ranking member of that committee, I am going to talk again to Senator THUNE, who is the chairman of the committee, to see if we can get the committee to take up the bill as soon as possible.

Earlier this year, we were able to get both the House and the Senate to pass legislation requiring childproof packaging for bottles of liquid nicotine, some of which had injured children and, in some cases, resulted in death as well and had poisoned thousands of others. If we could get that done in a bipartisan manner, which we did and that is now law, then there is no reason why we can't, in a bipartisan way, address the issue posed by this problem. Keeping children safe is not a partisan issue. It is just common sense.

In the interim, we want to encourage the manufacturers to keep working on new standards to reduce the poisonings. We appreciate very much the efforts at things such as this and this. That is helpful. Last week, one manufacturer announced plans to put many of the laundry pods they sell into new, more child-resistant packaging. They also announced a public education campaign urging parents to keep laundry pods away from their children. That is certainly helpful. But at the same time, we need to keep working to make these pods less attractive to children and, perhaps more