

NAYS—8

Cruz	Heller	Sasse
Fischer	Lee	Sessions
Flake	Paul	

NOT VOTING—2

Boxer	Sanders
-------	---------

The bill (H.R. 2028), as amended, was passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in morning business for 20 minutes, equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I would like to reiterate something I am sure Senator FEINSTEIN would agree with. First, I thank the majority leader for scheduling our bill early. He scheduled it earlier than any appropriations bill has been scheduled in the last 40 years. The reason I am sure she agrees with that is because she told me that and because not only did the majority leader make this a priority but so did the Democratic leader, Senator REID, and all of the Democratic Senators.

We worked hard to try to set an example for the Senate for the next 11 appropriations bills. According to the Congressional Research Service, this is the earliest the Senate has passed an appropriations bill in the last 40 years. More than that, the vote was 90 to 8, which is an unusually large bipartisan vote for such a large and complex bill. I think that reflects on the fact that more than 80 Senators made contributions to this bill. We processed more than 21 amendments. Our experience is, when Senators have a lot of input into a bill, they are more comfortable with it and more likely to support it.

I especially thank not just the leaders but the Republican and the Democratic floor staffs for helping us with this. Passing a bill like this is more of an exercise in human nature sometimes than it is an exercise in policy, and they are the essential grease in making that happen. I thank them very much for it.

This is the basic constitutional work of the U.S. Senate. Both the Republican and Democratic leaders have gotten us back on track in doing this. I appreciate having the chance to be a part of it. I thank the Senators for their cooperation with Senator FEINSTEIN and me as we set out to get what I believe is an excellent result for the people of this country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

WORK OF THE SENATE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the American people have been frustrated in recent years with the dysfunction they see in Washington. Their assessment of us has been correct. The biggest symbol of dysfunction has been the inability, as the chairman of our Energy and Water Development Subcommittee just pointed out, to do the basic work of government.

There are 12 bills that fund the government, the basic work of government. We haven't passed each of those 12 bills since 1994. So under majorities of both parties, we have had at least some degree of dysfunction, and in recent years they all get balled up into one great big bill. It looks awful, and that is no way to conduct the affairs of the government.

I said that we were going to devote the floor time, which is always at a premium in the Senate, to give us a chance to do the work of what we were sent to do, regardless of party. Fortunately, we had Chairman ALEXANDER, who is arguably the best—or maybe the second best only to the Senator from Maine—bill manager on our side, take up the first bill, and there were some snags along the way. It took a little bit longer than we had hoped, but we have completed it. We have completed it at a record early time. We are going to keep on doing this right up until we break on July 15 to go to the conventions.

We are going to give the Senate every opportunity to do the basic work of government this year. Some have said that because it is an election year, we can't do much. I would like to remind everyone that we have had a regularly scheduled election in this country every 2 years since 1788 right on time. I heard some people say we can't do it because we have an election next year, and others have said we can't do whatever it is because we have an election this year. We have elections in this country right on time, and that is not an excuse not to do our work.

We will turn to transportation, which is chaired by the Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS, and military construction, chaired by Senator KIRK. We are going to bind those two together and move them across the floor, and then we are going to turn to the National Defense Authorization Act and pass that before the Memorial Day break, and then we are going to turn to the Defense appropriations bill right after authorization, and hopefully we can do that in a record short period of time because all of the amendments should have been offered on the authorization bill which will come right before it.

I thank Senator ALEXANDER for his good work and look forward to having Senator COLLINS pick up the baton and continuing the great progress we are making.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, before the Senator from Tennessee leaves the

floor, I, too, wish to commend him for his excellent stewardship of this highly complex appropriations bill and for the cooperative way in which he worked with the ranking member, Senator FEINSTEIN, and indeed all of the Members, not only those on the Appropriations Committee but the entire Senate. Senator ALEXANDER deserves a great deal of credit.

I also commend our leader for making it a priority for us to get the appropriations work done. Never before in recent years have we started the process so early. The Appropriations Committee has completed its hearings, we have marked up several bills, and we are proceeding with floor consideration. This will avoid a situation that I believe all of us really abhor, and that is being faced with voting for repeated continuing resolutions at the end of the fiscal year which lock in last year's priorities and do not reflect this year's priorities, or the bills are bundled together into an omnibus bill that is many thousands of pages long and does not receive the kind of in-depth debate and amendments it deserves. I commend the leader of the Senate for making this a priority and for ensuring that we are all doing our job.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Arizona be permitted to speak in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

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

The Senator from Arizona.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, in the fall of 2014, an outbreak had the world on edge in West Africa. The Ebola virus had come about, and three countries were being decimated. It was at this time that the director of the National Institutes of Health gave an interview where he argued that a vaccine would likely be available if the Congress had enough funding for the agency. He added that the Ebola virus had forced NIH to divert money from other critical research.

These are striking charges, especially for an agency that has a budget of \$30 billion. So it stands to reason that if underfunding NIH was allowing a crisis such as this, we ought to be appropriating more money to the agency.

We cannot ignore the fact, obviously, that at that time the Nation was \$18 trillion in debt and running nearly a half-trillion-dollar deficit. So I began to look into NIH funding and some of the research projects that were being

funded. Here are some of the questions I found researchers were trying to find answers to.

One of the questions they were trying to find answers to at the NIH, and this was part of a taxpayer-funded study or grant, is: Why do some people see Jesus's face on toast? That is right, a taxpayer-funded study to determine why people see the face of Jesus on toast.

Another study that was funded by NIH is: Do drunk birds slur when they sing? That was part of a \$5 million NIH grant that found not only is the answer yes, but according to NIH standards, there is a binge-drinking bird out there now.

They also wanted to answer the question of: What type of music do monkeys and chimpanzees prefer to listen to? I am not sure what is more surprising, the fact that the NIH wanted to study this or that the answer is Metallica.

Another thing they wanted to study: Is yawning contagious? I would say anyone who has ever listened to a Senator give a speech knows the answer is yes, but the NIH decided to spend taxpayer money to study it anyway.

So I began seeing projects being funded by other research arms within the Federal Government, including the National Science Foundation and DARPA in the Defense Department. Here are some of the questions those agencies are using their multibillion-dollar budgets to try to answer: Where does it hurt to be stung most by a bee? One researcher used part of a \$1 million NSF grant to sting each part of his body. He came to the conclusion it is most painful on the nostrils or on the lips or on other, shall we say, more sensitive areas, although he admitted his adviser would not allow him to be stung on the eyeball so we really don't know which body part holds the title of being the most painful.

Another thing that was studied by NSF and DARPA is: Who will be America's next top model? That is right. Taxpayer money was spent to try to find out who would be America's next top model. Researchers used taxpayer money to scour Twitter and Instagram to develop scientific models that could forecast success for models in the fashion industry. It turns out that having a strong social media presence helps more than meeting the industry's "aesthetic standards." This is a phenomenon the researchers dubbed the "Kendall Jenner effect." Not surprising there.

Another study was: Are chimpanzees better gamers than humans? At least one chimpanzee that was sometimes bribed with candy to keep working was better than humans at gaming. Unfortunately, that chimpanzee has since died from complications from diabetes. That study which found that humans are not above trying to cheat in order to beat a chimp at a video game was part of a \$340,000 grant awarded by NSF and NIH.

I am not going around here trying to say that NIH, NSF, DARPA, and other

federally funded research is a waste of money. It is not. To the contrary, I believe federally funded research can do wonderful and amazing things.

In 1961, at the height of the Cold War, the United States faced the Soviet Union in a heated space race. President John F. Kennedy stood before Congress and aimed for the Moon. He said:

I believe this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth. No single space project in this period would be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space.

Armed with a clearly defined goal and backed by concentrated research from the Federal Government, America's best scientists, researchers, and engineers got to work. Eight years later, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were walking on the Moon. That is a towering feat that no country has ever been able to repeat. More than a half century later, that moonshot stands in stark contrast to a massive and disorderly constellation of federally funded science projects floating aimlessly in the Federal budget.

Projects that ask, for example: Are Republicans or Democrats more disgusted by eating worms? This researcher whom you will see in this picture found that the answer is that Republicans are more disgusted. That said, once folks hear that this study was funded with taxpayer money—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 2 additional minutes.

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

Mr. FLAKE. When folks hear that this study was funded by taxpayer dollars, I am sure there will be equal disgust by both Republicans and Democrats.

Another study was funded to see if one can outrun a dinosaur. The NSF and NIH gave taxpayer dollars to enterprising researchers who are not deterred by the fact that dinosaurs are now extinct. They found an alligator was close enough. They had to put him on a treadmill to find out how fast he could run. They found out what nobody—certainly not even the Presiding Officer from Louisiana—would discover; that alligators don't like treadmills very much. He wasn't very cooperative, but they went ahead with the study, and found that humans could probably outrun a dinosaur. It is a good thing.

"Are cheerleaders more attractive when they are a part of a squad?" was another study we funded. This was a NSF taxpayer-funded grant that was actually inspired by the sitcom "How I Met Your Mother." They had something on that show called the cheerleader theory. Researchers found that the answer is, yes, cheerleaders are more attractive as part of a squad than individually. Their tongue-in-cheek re-

search paper postulates that "having a few wingmen or wingwomen may indeed be good dating strategy, particularly if their facial features complement, and average out, one's unattractive idiosyncrasies."

That brings us full circle, as the White House has asked Congress to appropriate \$1.5 billion for emergency spending to tackle the latest crisis, Zika. I believe we do need to find a solution and a vaccine for the Zika virus, but we ought to look hard at the other things that these agencies are spending money on as we talk about more money for these research projects.

To that end, I have released "Twenty Questions: Government Studies that will Leave You Scratching Your Head." This is a study—you can see the cover here—the report not only profiles many of the questionable projects I have highlighted today, it seeks to set a path to ensure that our money is spent wisely.

The report recommends that these agencies set clearly defined national goals and objectives for federally funded research. Following the example set by President Kennedy's moonshot more than a half century ago, we ought to give the agencies a clear mission.

The report also recommends that agencies prioritize billions of dollars in existing Federal research funding to best meet the national goals in a manner that strengthens America's scientific leadership. We also need to ensure that these research projects are transparent. So when funding goes to these research projects, we ought to know how much is spent on each individual project, not just the broader grant. We don't know exactly how much money was spent on the cheerleader effect because we can't—they will not tell us.

I have introduced legislation in concert with this report which will require that the Federal agencies actually tell us how much money is spent on these individual projects.

It is time Washington sets clear goals for federally funded research and we improve transparency measures. I hope we can do so.

With that, Mr. President, I yield back.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASIDY). Morning business is closed.

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2016

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 2577, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2577) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and