



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, MAY 23, 2016

No. 81

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.

Mighty God, You shine in glorious brilliance. The world belongs to You and everything in it. Teach us to trust You in turbulent times, striving always to live for Your glory.

Bless our Senators. Make Your completeness surround their incompleteness, Your strength support their weakness, and Your wisdom guide them down paths they cannot see. Give them the insight, the courage, and the faith to escape the repetition of old errors as they seek to embrace Your truth.

Lord, help us all to offer to You the sacrifice of repentant hearts.

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.

TRANSPORTATION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, last week, the Republican-led Senate passed two more appropriations bills by a large bipartisan majority. Both bills passed out of committee with

unanimous support, were subject to hours of debate and deliberation, and included the input of both Democratic and Republican Senators.

The first appropriations measure, for transportation and housing infrastructure, will help ensure air travel is safer and more efficient, invest in important infrastructure, and strengthen America's surface transportation network.

As Senator COLLINS pointed out last week, this bill includes "recommendations from more than 75 Senators from both sides of the aisle" as well as more than three dozen amendments. I thank my friend from Maine for her skilled leadership and hard work with Ranking Member REED of Rhode Island and colleagues from both sides to advance this measure.

The second funding measure, for veterans and military construction, will ensure that veterans receive benefits and health care they have earned while enhancing oversight and accountability at the VA, helping improve quality of life on military bases for soldiers and their families, and advancing critical national security projects like missile defense. As Senator KIRK noted last week, this bill incorporates over two dozen amendments, both from Democrats and Republicans. Senator KIRK is a true champion for veterans. I know he always had the needs of our heroes top of mind as he worked with Democrats, with Republicans, and in particular with Ranking Member TESTER of Montana to move this critical bill forward.

By returning to regular order and working through the appropriations process, we have been able to pass appropriations measures like these that support national priorities in a responsible way.

I also appreciate Senators working toward a compromise approach for Zika. Preventing the spread of Zika is a priority for all of us, and I am pleased the Senate has approved a compromise provision to focus resources on

this important health issue. We have now begun discussions on how best to resolve the differences between the House and the Senate and get a bill to the President.

LEGISLATION COMBATING SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND HELPING ITS VICTIMS

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, on an important issue the Senate will address today, the Republican-led Senate believes in the importance of combating sexual assault and providing key protections for the victims of these heinous crimes. In less than 18 months, we have already passed many different measures to help victims and to help stop these crimes. We passed the Amy and Vicky act, which will help the victims of child pornography to get restitution from those who profit from their pain. And because we know the pain doesn't end when these images are produced, it can help victims find the closure they need and deserve too.

We passed an important measure championed by Senator TOOMEY, who worked with Senator ALEXANDER to include in the K-12 education reform bill a requirement that States put laws and policies in place to help ensure schools are no longer able to ship child predators to other school districts.

We passed a measure from Senator PORTMAN, who worked with Senator McCASKILL to hold an infamous child sex-trafficking company in contempt and force it to turn over critical information—information that is needed for their bipartisan human trafficking investigation to continue.

And, of course, we passed the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act. The victims of modern slavery deserve justice, and they deserve a voice, which is why—after years of previous inaction—the new Republican-led Senate made it a priority to pass this important anti-slavery bill. Of course, it is now law.

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



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This week we have two more opportunities to protect victims. The first, contained in a provision within the National Defense Authorization Act, is the End Modern Slavery Initiative Act. This effort would address human trafficking beyond our borders with tools to help end the scourge of modern slavery worldwide. I thank Senator CORKER for his work on this measure.

The second, the Adam Walsh Reauthorization Act, will bolster efforts to prevent future sexual assault crimes and help victims receive justice. We will pass that one today.

One group dedicated to combating trafficking noted its strong support for this “vital” legislation, which it calls “essential to the fight against child sex trafficking.” The Adam Walsh Reauthorization Act has also received the support of the Nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization, RAINN, along with organizations such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

I have been involved with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children since its inception and have had the privilege of working closely with the organization over the years. Protecting children and bringing justice to victims have been top priorities of mine for many years. I have long worked with John Walsh, Adam’s father, to advance efforts to do so. I supported the original Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act in 2006 in order to enhance law enforcement’s ability to track sexual offenders and improve its information-sharing capabilities and to support resources to aid in the apprehension of fugitives who commit these offenses. It is an important law, but the authorization for it expired in 2011.

It was disheartening to watch reauthorization legislation languish in the Senate and in the Judiciary Committee for years, but then Chairman GRASSLEY came along. Not only did he work to reauthorize the bill, he worked to make it stronger, with additional rights and protections for victims of sexual assault and human trafficking crimes.

As he has done with other priorities, Chairman GRASSLEY realized the urgency of moving this reauthorization forward and then worked diligently to advance it. It is just another example of his efforts to put the Judiciary Committee to work for the American people.

Under a new chairman, the Judiciary Committee has reported out some 30 bills and has seen more than a dozen signed into law. Time and again, the committee has taken on important issues and worked toward real solutions for our country. We saw a great example of that recently with Chairman GRASSLEY’s efforts to help combat the heroin and prescription opioid epidemic that is hurting so many communities across our country. States like mine have been especially impacted by this drug crisis. I appreciated the

steadfast commitment of colleagues like Chairman GRASSLEY, along with key Senators like PORTMAN and AYOTTE, to address the issue and ensure Senate passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act.

Chairman GRASSLEY has worked hard to pass other pieces of legislation as well, such as a law to protect American innovation in the 21st century, for instance, and the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act that I mentioned earlier. Without Chairman GRASSLEY’s commitment in committee and Senator CORNYN’s relentless efforts on the floor, that important trafficking bill would not have become law. So it is clear that Senator GRASSLEY has led the Judiciary Committee with a renewed focus on providing hope and providing a voice to those in need. We have just the latest examples of his commitment in the bill before us today.

I commend Chairman GRASSLEY for his strong leadership, and I urge my colleagues to join me today in supporting this important legislation.

TRIBUTE TO MARVIN SIMMS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, on one final matter, I want to close by saying a few words about Marvin Simms, who will be retiring from the Senate Recording Studio this month after three decades of service.

Marvin was one of about a dozen original staffers brought on to help shoot the first ever live, gavel-to-gavel broadcast of the Senate floor. He has since become a real pro at capturing the best angles of this Chamber. For Marvin, getting there meant studying up on Senate procedure and teaching himself to instantly recognize a rotating cast of 100 different names and faces, an impressive feat in itself. His career includes a number of historical milestones, from Presidential inaugurations and gold medal ceremonies to Supreme Court nominations and the occasional all-night filibuster. I am told he is now looking forward to having a little more time to focus on his family.

On behalf of the entire Senate family, I thank Marvin for his many years of dedicated public service and wish him well in his retirement.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

ZIKA VIRUS

Mr. REID. Madam President, last Friday, as he should, President Obama gave the Nation an update on the fight against Zika, this virus that has become such a difficult issue to face.

Here are the facts, as outlined by President Obama and reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention: As we speak, there are more than 500 confirmed cases of Zika in the continental United States. There are at least 800 confirmed cases of infection in Puerto Rico, and most experts believe the actual number is significantly higher. There are 279 pregnant women in the continental United States and territories who are being monitored for possible Zika infection. We have yet to confirm any local transmission from Zika-carrying mosquitoes in the continental United States.

Remember, we have had an unseasonably cold spring. That means that a mosquito with Zika has not yet infected anyone on the mainland. But the public health experts tell us that is going to change as soon as it warms up, and it is nearing the warmup time now. It is only when the warm weather hits that the mosquitoes become active, and they really become active. These pests are capable of transmitting Zika and are in 39 States. Residents of our Nation’s most populated cities—such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston—could be at risk of infection.

This map says it all. There are some places where there is only one type of mosquito, and, of course, the worst is the blue, as shown on the map. But there are places where there is a mixture of mosquitoes.

There are two kinds of mosquitoes that cause a problem. It is spread to people primarily through the body of an infected mosquito. But look where it goes—from Maine to Texas, even reaching into Northern California, Las Vegas, and we see red up there, in Boulder, CO. So it is a concern, a real concern.

For pregnant women, contracting Zika could mean devastating birth defects for their children, as we know, with these tiny little heads and underdeveloped brains and collapsed skulls.

For others, the dangers of Zika range from possible nervous system disorders and potential paralysis to minor symptoms such as rashes and fever like the flu. This is the threat that Republicans in Congress have been ignoring for many months now.

Back in February—we are fast approaching June. In February, President Obama sent an emergency appropriations request to Congress for almost \$2 billion—\$1.9 billion is the exact figure—to fight Zika. It wasn’t some number that he picked out of a hat. This is a figure that researchers, public health experts, and doctors explicitly requested, and \$1.9 billion is what our country needs. That is the number that I support and Democrats support. Anything less than that is simply not enough.

Republicans did nothing in response to the President’s request, letting weeks and weeks go by as the number of infected Americans grew. Because of Republicans’ refusal to allocate Zika funding, President Obama had to act. He did the only thing he could do: He used \$510 million in Ebola money to fight the spread of Zika.