

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 15 minutes.

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I want to inform my colleagues and the American people about some progress that has been made on a very important bipartisan piece of legislation, plus what a couple other committees are doing along the same line of keeping healthcare costs down—that we are making progress to reduce the price of prescription medicine for the American people.

I have been tilling the fields of legislative policy long enough to know that we have our work cut out for us. The ranking member and I of the Finance Committee started out 6 months ago to cultivate a bipartisan consensus for much needed reforms. We knew that we had a long row ahead. Our efforts to reduce drug prices face big-time opposition from Big Pharma.

As we worked side by side in a Republican and Democratic way, we planted the seeds to grow a strong bipartisan coalition—one strong enough, I believe, to withstand the influence of moneyed special interests.

Now, it should be no surprise to anybody that Big Pharma and other stakeholders in the drug supply chain are working six ways from Sunday to throw sand in our gears. We know they will continue to fight us during the August work period.

As a lifelong farmer from Iowa, I learned a long time ago that the fruits of one's labor will not be worth a hill of beans without proper groundwork. For months, we have been tilling the soil and fertilizing the legislative fields to bear fruit at harvest time. We have teamed up with leadership of other key committees of jurisdiction.

Together with the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Health Committee, Senators LAMAR ALEXANDER and PATTY MURRAY, and the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senators LINDSEY GRAHAM and DIANNE FEINSTEIN, the Senate has a real opportunity this Congress to deliver meaningful reforms that would yield real savings for what Americans spend on healthcare.

Both the Health and the Judiciary Committees have advanced legislative packages that help address drug prices, including bills I have sponsored, such as the CREATES Act, the Stop STALLING Act, and the Prescription Pricing for the People Act.

Since January, the Finance Committee, which I chair, and Senator WYDEN is the ranking member, has held a series of hearings to examine the vulnerabilities in the drug supply chain that are ripe for abuse. We don't have the answers to all the problems, but it is really crystal clear that a strong dose of transparency is desperately needed to shed light on a convoluted

pricing system when dealing with prescription drugs.

From the drug manufacturer to the patient's medicine cabinet, the drug supply chain is shrouded in secrecy and is exceedingly complex. This opaque pricing system has allowed exorbitant price hikes to climb higher and higher and higher, with no end in sight.

Don't forget, the taxpayers of the United States foot the bill for the lion's share of prescription drugs through Medicare and Medicaid.

The woolly drug supply chain allows taxpayers to be fleeced year after year. We need to let the sunshine in to help root out their abusive practices. Secrecy in the supply chain has grown into a noxious weed, damaging our free market ecosystem.

Transparency is needed to help rein in unsustainable costs threatening the fiscal viability of Medicaid and Medicare. Seniors, individuals with disability, and low-income Americans depend on these programs for lifesaving medicine and innovative cures.

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee approved the bipartisan Prescription Drug Price Reduction Act. The carefully sown Grassley-Wyden bill limits seniors' out-of-pocket costs without limiting access to lifesaving cures Americans expect. It injects reasonable incentives in government prescription drug programs for drug manufacturers and insurers to keep prices low. Pharmaceutical companies and insurers need to have more skin in the game to keep prices down. It also fixes flawed policies that distort free market principles to lower the lid on spending.

We all know in the town meetings and other places we go that Americans have spoken very loudly on this subject. They want high prescription drug prices addressed. Furthermore, Americans want Congress to act and to act now.

The Senate Finance, HELP, and Judiciary Committees have acted. Now it is time to get the job done.

As my fellow lawmakers go home over the August recess, I encourage each of you to share the good news with your constituents. Americans are fed up with sticker shock at the pharmacy counter. We have the opportunity to deliver a badly needed legislative remedy.

First, we have to drain the swampy special interests blocking the path to victory. The moneyed players in the drug supply chain will use the August recess to unleash a public relations blitz against our bipartisan efforts. You can bet the farm that Big Pharma, hospitals, and pharmacy benefit managers will whip themselves into a real frenzy to kill these bipartisan reforms.

Let's remember why we started down this path in the first place. It is simply democracy working, representative government working.

Americans are demanding relief at the prescription counter. We hear it from our constituents in our town meetings, in our letters, in our emails,

and in the phone calls we get. Unchecked drug prices are putting Medicare and Medicaid in financial peril. The payment structure is unmoored from fiscal reality, and the American taxpayer is on the hook. Congress has a real opportunity to do something about the spiraling of drug prices.

For my colleagues who are on the fence about our bipartisan proposal—and there is nothing wrong with being on the fence because you have plenty of time to become acquainted with an issue you hear from your constituents all the time and to become acquainted with our solution—here are a series of questions I want you to ask yourself: Do Americans want us to act to reduce runaway drug prices? Do Americans want to keep access to breakthrough drug therapies and innovation? Do older Americans want protection from coverage gaps and out-of-pocket costs? Do people with disabilities and poor and elderly Americans who depend on Medicaid deserve access to innovative cures and next-generation therapies?

The answer to all of these questions, I think, is a resounding yes.

Farmers are smart enough to make hay while the Sun shines. Let's apply that time-tested farm lesson in the Congress. Don't bail out on the opportunity to make a meaningful difference for the people whom we are elected to serve. Too many Americans are rationing or skipping doses because they can't afford their prescription medicines.

I will finish as I started out by saying, on behalf of Senator WYDEN, Senator ALEXANDER, Senator MURRAY, Senator GRAHAM, Senator FEINSTEIN, and others, I suggest to our colleagues that this is our Goldilocks moment. Let's not let it be a gridlock moment. Our legislative reforms are not too far right and not too far left. That is what makes our bipartisan remedy to lower prescription drug prices just exactly right for the American people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, following disposition of the Jordan nomination, the Senate vote on the motions to invoke cloture on the following nominations in the order listed: Executive Calendar Nos. 205, 231, 232, 233, 326, 327, 345, 350, 352, and 364, and then up to 10 minutes of debate under the control of Senator MENENDEZ prior to the vote on cloture on Calendar No. 402. I further ask consent that if cloture is invoked, the confirmation votes on the nominations be at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader. Finally, I ask consent that the cloture motions on the following nominations be withdrawn: Executive Calendar Nos. 48, 55, 344, 346, 351, and 394, and the Senate vote on the

nominations at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3877

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, as in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the cloture motion on the motion to proceed to H.R. 3877 be withdrawn and that at a time to be determined by the majority leader in consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3877. I further ask consent that notwithstanding rule XXII, if cloture is filed on H.R. 3877, there be up to 2 hours of debate, equally divided between the leaders or their designees. I ask consent that the only amendment in order be Paul amendment No. 932 and that following the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate vote on the amendment with a 60-affirmative-vote threshold needed for adoption. Finally, I ask consent that following the disposition of the Paul amendment, the Senate vote on the motion to invoke cloture and that if cloture is invoked, all postcloture time be considered expired.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON SEAN D. JORDAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired on the Jordan nomination.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Jordan nomination?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 34, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 241 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Alexander	Blunt	Burr
Barrasso	Boozman	Capito
Blackburn	Braun	Collins

Cornyn	Inhofe
Cotton	Johnson
Cramer	Jones
Crapo	Kennedy
Cruz	Lankford
Daines	Lee
Enzi	Manchin
Ernst	McConnell
Fischer	McSally
Gardner	Moran
Graham	Murkowski
Grassley	Paul
Hawley	Perdue
Hoeven	Portman
Hyde-Smith	Risch

NAYS—34

Baldwin	Hassan	Schatz
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Menendez	Tester
Casey	Merkley	Udall
Coons	Murphy	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murray	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Peters	Wyden
Durbin	Reed	
Feinstein	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—12

Bennet	Harris	Markey
Booker	Isakson	Sanders
Cassidy	Kaine	Warner
Gillibrand	Klobuchar	Warren

The nomination was confirmed. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the remaining votes in the series be 10 minutes in length.

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

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Mark T. Pittman, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, John Hoeven, Rob Portman, Dan Sullivan, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Thune, Roy Blunt.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Mark T. Pittman, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Texas, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY) and the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

Roberts
Romney
Rounds
Rubio
Sasse
Scott (FL)
Scott (SC)
Shelby
Sinema
Sullivan
Thune
Tillis
Toomey
Wicker
Young

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. BOOKER), the Senator from New York (Mrs. GILLIBRAND), the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. KAINE), the Senator from Minnesota (Ms. KLOBUCHAR), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Ms. WARREN) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 54, nays 34, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 242 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Blackburn	Grassley	Risch
Blunt	Hawley	Roberts
Boozman	Hoeven	Romney
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Burr	Inhofe	Rubio
Capito	Johnson	Sasse
Collins	Jones	Scott (FL)
Cornyn	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cotton	Lankford	Shelby
Cramer	Lee	Sinema
Crapo	Manchin	Sullivan
Cruz	McConnell	Thune
Daines	McSally	Tillis
Enzi	Moran	Toomey
Ernst	Murkowski	Wicker
Fischer	Paul	Young

NAYS—34

Baldwin	Hassan	Schatz
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Schumer
Brown	Hirono	Shaheen
Cantwell	King	Smith
Cardin	Leahy	Stabenow
Carper	Menendez	Tester
Casey	Merkley	Udall
Coons	Murphy	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murray	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Peters	Wyden
Durbin	Reed	
Feinstein	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—12

Bennet	Harris	Markey
Booker	Isakson	Sanders
Cassidy	Kaine	Warner
Gillibrand	Klobuchar	Warren

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 54, the nays are 34. The motion is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Jeffrey Vincent Brown, of Texas, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Texas.

Mitch McConnell, John Boozman, John Cornyn, Mike Crapo, Pat Roberts, Mike Rounds, Thom Tillis, Roger F. Wicker, Cindy Hyde-Smith, Kevin Cramer, John Hoeven, Rob Portman, Dan Sullivan, Chuck Grassley, Richard Burr, John Thune, Roy Blunt.