



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JULY 7, 2016

No. 109

Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.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, draw near and walk with us today. Lead our Senators beside still waters and restore their souls. Comfort them with Your grace as they strive to keep America strong. Use them to make our Nation a less dangerous place to live.

May our lawmakers find fellowship with You as they seek Your guidance and rely on Your wisdom. Direct their steps, providing them with confidence for every contingency. Make them more than conquerors in all of life's alternating and fluctuating intricacies. Fill them with reverential awe as they comprehend their accountability to You.

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 (Mr. JOHNSON). The majority leader is recognized.

ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Democratic leader, who has been leading a partisan filibuster of anti-Zika funding for over a week, said this about anti-Zika funding yesterday:

There's no excuse for inaction and partisanship. We can't afford to waste another day, a week, another month.

Maybe Democrats are finally ready to end their partisan attack on women's health. I certainly hope so, and, as I have said many times, they will have that opportunity soon.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, far too many Americans know the toll the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic is taking on our families, our communities, and each of our States.

Anti-drug groups certainly know the toll this crisis is taking. Nearly 200 groups dealing with this crisis in their communities called for action in a letter to Congress just this week. They wrote to endorse the conference report for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act.

Let me share what they wrote:

We commend the conferees for the final bill and are calling on Congress for quick action to send this to the President's desk for signature.

The report is truly a comprehensive response to the opioid epidemic, which includes critical policy changes and new resources. The report also acknowledges that the six pillars of a comprehensive response are each of equal import and interdependent as a whole, including prevention, treatment, recovery support, criminal justice reform, overdose reversal, and law enforcement. Only through a comprehensive response can we reverse current trends and provide individuals and families impacted by addiction with the services they need.

As you know, 129 Americans die each day as a result of drug overdose and this epidemic affects the public health and safety in every community across this country. This bill is the critical response we need.

These are groups such as the Vermont Recovery Network, the Free Heroin's Hold in Minnesota, Kent County Memorial Hospital in Rhode Island, and Voices of Hope, in my home State of Kentucky, among dozens and

dozens more. Many have seen the impact of this epidemic firsthand. They know the difference this legislation could make, and they are calling for us to send this bill to the President as soon as possible.

There is no reason our Democratic colleagues shouldn't support this conference report now as well, especially given their support for CARA when the Senate voted 94 to 1 to pass it.

The senior Senator from Vermont called the bill "historic" and said he was "proud to be a cosponsor."

The senior Senator from Ohio has commended colleagues for "coming together in a bipartisan way" and "taking action on the opioid epidemic that is devastating communities across our country."

Just last week, the senior Senator from Washington penned an op-ed praising the progress on addressing the epidemic. She wrote: "I'm proud to be working with Republicans and Democrats to conference legislation, the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), which would offer cities and states stronger tools to confront opioid addiction."

It is understandable why she should be proud. The Trilogy Recovery Community, an organization in Washington State that has joined the chorus of those calling for passage of the CARA conference report, would certainly agree.

The conference report the Senate will soon consider can make a difference for the American people. It is the product of years of hard work, and it is very similar to the CARA bill that already passed the Senate with no Democratic opposition. Now is the time to finalize it, as the nearly 200 groups that fight this epidemic in our States are advocating, because this issue is just too important to be caught up in partisan politics.

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



Printed on recycled paper.

S4839

FOOD PRICES AND LABELING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, yesterday, the top Republican and the top Democrat from the Agriculture Committee came to the floor to talk about the compromise bill that would protect middle-class families from unnecessary and unfair higher food prices while also ensuring access to more information about the food they purchase.

Chairman ROBERTS said this bipartisan bill will benefit consumers “by greatly increasing the amount of food information at their fingertips” while avoiding “devastating increases in the price of food.”

Ranking Member STABENOW noted that it will “prevent a confusing patchwork of 50 different labeling requirements in 50 different States,” and it “recognize[s] the scientific consensus that biotechnology is safe.”

It is the result of bipartisan work to address an issue that could negatively harm consumers and producers. We could actually pass it today.

SANCTUARY CITY POLICY
LEGISLATION

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we all know that so-called sanctuary city policies are extreme. They undermine the safety of our communities. They can inflict incredible pain on innocent victims and their families. President Obama’s own Secretary of Homeland Security has called such policies “not acceptable” and “counterproductive to public safety.”

Yet Democrats voted to block two proposals that would have worked to prevent so-called sanctuary city policies from existing in the first place and would have enhanced penalties to keep more criminals off our streets when cities refuse to do away with such policies.

Senator TOOMEY offered one of them, the Stop Dangerous Sanctuary Cities Act, which he described this way:

My legislation stands for the simple proposition that the safety of the American people matters. The life of Kate Steinle matters. Protecting our neighborhoods from violent criminals and terrorists matters.

Senator TOOMEY’s bill would have ensured more fairness for citizens and governments that do the right thing. It would have supported police officers, who risk everything for our safety, and it enjoyed critical support from several law enforcement organizations.

Democrats again chose partisan politics over making a difference for the American people.

I know Senator TOOMEY won’t be deterred. I know he will continue his work to do something about this issue. He has been an outspoken leader against the dangerous and extreme policies of sanctuary cities for some time now. I thank him for his leadership on this issue and his tireless work to advance this measure.

I also recognize Senator CRUZ for his legislation, Kate’s Law, which would have helped protect the public even

when jurisdictions continue to follow so-called sanctuary city policies by putting more dangerous criminals behind bars and off our streets.

These measures would have sought to prevent the kind of pain that Kate’s family has been forced to endure, a pain that no family should have to experience.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY
LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION,
OPIOID CRISIS, AND ZIKA VIRUS
FUNDING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, my friend the Republican leader talks about playing politics. There is no better example of that than what has taken place this week.

Everyone knows the innate problems with what was tried on sanctuary cities and on the so-called Kate’s Law. Everyone knows they are just a political message that means nothing for comprehensive immigration reform or immigration reform of any kind. So that is why those matters were brought up.

It is obvious we have a Senator in Pennsylvania, a Republican incumbent, who is in deep trouble politically, and that is why they tried to jam us with that. There is no better example than what is going on with this opioid matter that is sweeping the country.

I came to the floor 15 minutes ago. In another half hour there will be another two people who die from opioids in America, all over the country. To show how disingenuous and political the majority is on opioids, one need only look to Tennessee. In Tennessee, Knoxville chief of police David Rausch knocks Congress over opioid funding.

My friend talks about the authorization that shot through here. Of course it came through the Senate pretty easily—because it was an authorization. There is no money there. That is why you have the chief of police from a place such as Knoxville, TN, who is saying: Shame on you for not giving us money. We can’t do anything. All you are doing is authorizing more programs that cost more resources. In the police department we can’t do it all. Rausch said:

It’s absolutely disappointing that Congress didn’t move today on funding. Unfortunately, today Congress did not do their job.

He is right. He said:

That’s the message it sends to our communities. If they’re not getting treated, they die.

That is the way it is.

We are having a conference report come to us that gives no resources. That is why you have people all over the country, and Rausch went to the White House with 20 other law enforcement leaders from across the country to talk about this. They came for one reason and one reason only—to get money so they can do something to stop this terrible thing that is going on in America today.

But, again, just like Zika, it is all for show—no money.

The threat of Zika continues to rise. Republicans are intent on wasting time with their partisan and deeply unserious conference report. They will force yet another failed vote on this cynical legislation and then pack their bags for the longest Senate vacation since 1954. The Senate will not pass this Republican conference report. President Obama will not sign it. This reckless exercise will leave the public health experts and officials no closer to getting the funding they need to help combat this horrible epidemic.

As we speak, there are more than 2,900 people in the United States and our territories with Zika. Nearly 500 pregnant women are showing evidence of infection by the Zika virus. At least seven babies have been born in the United States with Zika-related birth defects. We all know what they are—little heads, skulls caved in, brains that are small. And it is only going to get worse unless we act.

There is a path forward toward a bipartisan solution combating this terrible virus if Republicans are willing to do something. In May, the Senate passed a bipartisan compromise to address the Zika crisis. It had money in it—real money. It got 89 votes, which is an unimaginable margin for many pieces of legislation. Only the most conservative, conservative rightwing Members of this body voted against it. So maybe that is not a plus for my Republican friends. Maybe they want to be a part of that. You don’t receive anything from the Koch brothers if you are not way over there.

The bill we approved with 89 votes wasn’t perfect. I didn’t like it because I thought there should be more money. We asked for \$1.9 billion, but with 89 votes, we got \$1.1 billion in funding, which is short of what we feel is needed. It is not sufficient, but at least it is a step in the right direction.

When our country is faced with an emergency, the American people should be able to turn to us—Congress—to act. They expect us to put politics aside. We have already done that in the Senate—we Democrats. The Senate bill, while imperfect, was not riddled with toxic, partisan provisions. We need to get the compromise to the President’s desk.

Today I call upon Speaker RYAN to bring the Senate-passed Zika bill to us