

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

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess from 12:30 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

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

FAA REAUTHORIZATION BILL

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I would yield the floor, but I don't see anyone else here.

I would like to comment on the FAA reauthorization bill. I had a couple of amendments to it, and I want to mention that both of my amendments have now been accepted. I feel very good about that. I think we are currently considering a bill that is very necessary to go ahead and get passed.

I again commend Senator THUNE and Senator NELSON for working yesterday to get through a number of important amendments that were approved by the Senate. Included in the group was an amendment I offered that would direct the FAA to establish rules to allow critical infrastructure owners and operators to use unmanned aircraft systems to carry out federally mandated patrols and to perform emergency response and preparation activities. This is one I feel very strongly about because there is a lot of controversy around drones, but we do know there are some things that have to be done—pipelines, for example. It is just as easy for a drone to do it, and it can be done in all kinds of weather.

This amendment would apply to energy infrastructure, such as oil and gas and renewable electric energy. It would apply to power utilities and telecommunications networks. It would apply to roads and bridges and water supply systems operators.

This amendment provides needed congressional direction to the FAA where there is a clear and articulable need, and I am glad it was accepted yesterday. I thank Senators BOOKER, HEITKAMP, WHITEHOUSE, MORAN, and KING for cosponsoring this amendment with me.

I want to turn to a provision that is in the base text of the FAA bill that is of particular importance to Oklahoma but impacts the entire aviation community—the commercial, military, and general aviators—and that is because it impacts air traffic controllers.

The FAA bill, which is the bill we are considering right now, includes a provision to encourage the hiring and retention of high-quality air traffic controller instructors. This is particularly important to me because the FAA Academy, which is where all the air traffic controllers are trained, is located in Oklahoma City. These instructors, who are required to have prior experience as air traffic controllers, are discouraged from working full time due to existing government regulations be-

cause they are former air traffic controllers. Without full-time instructors, we need four times as many part-time instructors to provide the needed instruction time to train for the next generation of controllers to manage the air traffic at our control towers, so that means the FAA must bear four times the cost of training new instructors. I am glad this bill will remove the government regulations that discourage full-time instructors. I thank my colleagues for working with me to address this problem.

Another one—and this is very significant. This is volunteer pilot protection. Last week I offered an amendment for consideration that supports volunteer pilots. This is a Good Samaritan law for pilots. Across the country, there are a lot of volunteer pilots. I myself have done this. I have been an active commercial pilot for 60 years. I can remember several times—once going down to an island just north of Caracas, Venezuela, that had been wiped out by a hurricane. I found 10 pilots to take down with me, medical supplies, food, and all of that.

During that time, if something had happened, even though he was a Good Samaritan—he was doing it at his own expense—he could have been sued for any number of exposures that are out there.

People are generous with their time and provide at no cost air transportation to someone in need of specialized medical treatment. We have done that before too. This amendment would provide those volunteer pilots limited liability protection as long as they follow appropriate procedures, as long as they have the required flight experience and maintain insurance. My amendment would not eliminate liability but would limit it in certain circumstances. Furthermore, volunteer pilots who do not meet all requirements or who are guilty of gross negligence or intentional misconduct don't have any protections. Furthermore, the pilots are required to maintain liability insurance to qualify for the protection.

In the 1997 Volunteer Protection Act, Congress recognized that the willingness of volunteers to offer their services is deterred by a potential for liability actions against them. I think that makes common sense. I think we all understand that. This amendment remains true to congressional intent and removes a disincentive that keeps pilots from volunteering to fly financially needy medical patients, humanitarian and charitable efforts, or other flights of compassion to save lives and to provide great benefit to the public.

Pilots are not going to get more reckless or choose to act more dangerously because they have liability protection. Pilots are already at risk, and they are a risk-adverse group because every time they fly, they take their own life in their hands—regardless of why they are flying. These pilots are acting out of the goodness of their hearts and willingness to help.

Fortunately, accidents are infrequent, and anecdotally I am told that in the past 10 to 15 years, there have been perhaps five or six lawsuits involving volunteer pilots and volunteer pilot organizations. So the problem isn't that that is actually going to happen, but it is the fact that there is a deterrent there to discourage people from doing what they want to do, what a Good Samaritan does. The volunteer pilot organizations that work to coordinate volunteer pilots do not need to maintain databases of lawsuits and the results of lawsuits precisely because they are so infrequent. If there were a lot of accidents and resulting law suits, I think it is fair to say the FAA, NTSB, and volunteer pilot organizations themselves would be investigating whether volunteer pilot activity was a safe activity to begin with.

The larger concern for volunteer pilot organizations is that pilots will not volunteer for fear of being involved in a lawsuit, which would then prevent a needy service from being provided. So it is more about what the lawyers say the potential could be, and that has a direct impact on recruitment for volunteer pilots. Looking ahead, if a pilot were ever successfully sued and his or her assets were at risk, it would be too late to act to prevent a mass exodus of volunteer pilots.

This amendment is about making sure there continues to be volunteers who are willing to provide much-needed assistance. The amendment is not agreed to yet, but it recognizes the value of volunteer pilots and their contribution to the public good. I urge my colleagues to be supportive of this effort.

In conclusion, I thank Senator THUNE for his leadership, as well as Senator NELSON, for bringing this bill to the floor. I look forward to a robust amendment process.

In fact, I encourage anyone who has an amendment to come down, present his amendment, and talk about it. One of the problems we had during the highway bill was not being able to get Members to bring their amendments down, and it ended up delaying the bill for several weeks, which was totally unnecessary. I also encourage the House to take up and pass this bill.

With that, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FLAKE). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Ms. HIRONO pertaining to the introduction of S. 2784 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Ms. HIRONO. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

NATIONAL EQUAL PAY DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Hawaii for her leadership on this issue, and I will be yielding the floor to the lead sponsor of today's effort.

Our Nation is built on the belief that anyone who works hard should have the opportunity to achieve the American dream. Yet there are women across this country who are doing the same job as their male colleagues and being paid less. That is why today, on National Equal Pay Day, I stand with my fellow Senators to renew our efforts to ensure equal pay for equal work.

Fifty years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act, women still only earn 79 cents on every dollar paid to a man. This wage gap is even worse for women of color. African-American women who work full time make only 60 cents for every dollar paid to white males. Hispanic women earn only 55 cents.

Women are paid less even when factors such as age, education, occupation, and work hours are taken into consideration. In nearly every occupation in our country, women's median earnings are less than their male competitors. It is no different for women in my State of Illinois. The median earning for Illinois women is \$10,000 less than the median earning for men. While African-American women in Illinois make slightly more than the national average, Hispanic women are paid even less—48 cents on the dollar. Think about that. Hispanic women are making less than half the earnings of their male coworkers who have similar levels of education and do the same job. This isn't right, and it isn't fair.

The gender wage gap translates into nearly \$11,000 less in median earnings for women each year and over \$430,000 in lost wages over a lifetime. Now that women are the sole or primary breadwinners in 4 out of 10 families, this means less money for food, housing, and education. It is no wonder the poverty rate for female heads of households continues to be disproportionately high.

This disparity follows women into their retirement since retirement savings and Social Security are based on income earned. In Illinois, the average weekly Social Security benefit for female retirees is 77.3 percent of the average for Illinois males per week. While female retirees receive less, on average, compared to men under Social Security, women tend to live longer and spend more on medical care, forcing them to do more with less.

What would happen if we closed this wage gap? Amazing things. Sixty percent of women would earn more if they were paid the same wages as their male counterparts, nearly two-thirds of single working mothers would receive a pay increase, and the poverty rate for women would be cut in half. It would mean fewer families in poverty and fewer families would need safety net programs. Equal pay for equal work

would also mean women and their families would have more to spend on basic goods and services, and that is good for our economy.

So what do we have to do to close this wage gap? We can pass the Paycheck Fairness Act introduced by my colleague Senator MIKULSKI and my friend and colleague Senator MURRAY. Employers still maintain policies that punish employees who voluntarily share salary information with coworkers. This makes it nearly impossible for employees to find out whether they are being paid fairly.

This bill would provide women the same remedies for pay discrimination as people who are subjected to discrimination based on race and national origin. It would also close loopholes in current law that still permit retaliation against workers who disclose their wages.

The Paycheck Fairness Act would build on the success of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which clarified the 180-day statute of limitations for filing a lawsuit on pay discrimination that resets with each affected paycheck. This was the first bill signed into law by President Obama in 2009. The Senator from Maryland remembers that day because President Obama signed the bill, took the first pen that he used to sign it, and handed it to the Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Yes.

Mr. DURBIN. I remember that because I stood there and thought: That is entirely appropriate that a Senator who has dedicated her life to this kind of fairness and equality for women at work would receive the first pen from the first bill signed into law by this new President.

My Republican colleagues: Why aren't you with us on this issue? Don't you agree that your daughter should be paid the same as your son for doing the same work? It is a basic issue of fairness. It shouldn't have anything to do with party labels, so we invite you to join us. This should not be a partisan issue at all. Certainly for women at work, it is not partisan. It is just a matter of fairness. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I come to the floor to join my colleagues in calling for equal pay for equal work for women.

I just left the President of the United States. He is right up the street at the Sewall-Belmont House. This is the home of the National Woman's Party in which so much organizing and strategizing took place to get women the right to vote. The President is there to declare that building a national monument to commemorate the tremendous work that was involved in getting suffrage, under the Antiquities Act, and that is his right to create that.

It is not only the building we want to preserve. It is not only the records of

the battle for suffrage that we want to preserve and be able to display. It is what it stands for: the fact that women are included fully in our society.

We had to fight every single day in every single way to be able to advance ourselves. Even when the men were in Philadelphia writing the Constitution, thinking great thoughts and doing great deeds, Abigail Adams was back in New England running the family farm, keeping the family together, and she wrote John a letter saying: Don't forget the ladies because if you do, we will ferment our own revolution.

In our country, we call revolutions social movements where ordinary people organize and mobilize to accomplish great deeds to move democracy forward. It took us over 150 years to get the right to vote in 1920. We are coming up on the anniversary of suffrage, but it is not only that we got the right to vote, it is what that right to vote means. We wanted to be able to participate fully in our society. We wanted to be able to exercise our voice in terms of choosing leaders who will choose the right policies. Along the way, we have been advocating those policies.

In 1963, working with the President, who was committed to civil rights, Lyndon Johnson, the equal pay for equal work act was passed as part of a great step forward in three major civil rights bills. We thought we had settled the issue, but, no, 50 years later we have only gained 19 cents—19 cents. At that rate, it will take us until 2058 to get equal pay for equal work. That is not the way it should be. We need to make sure we eliminate the barriers and impediments that allow this to keep happening.

When we women fight for equal pay, we are often sidelined, reldined, pink-slipped, harassed, or intimidated. We are often confronted with: Why are you doing this? And then we are often harassed for doing it.

People may say: Senator BARB, didn't you take care of that when you passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009. The Lilly Ledbetter legislation, of which I am so proud, has kept the courthouse doors open by changing the statute of limitations, but now we need to pass legislation to end the loopholes that are often strangleholds on women getting equal pay in the first place.

I have legislation pending called the Paycheck Fairness Act. That Paycheck Fairness Act does three things. First of all, it stops retaliation for even sharing pay information in the workplace. Right now, if you ask, you are forbidden to tell, or get fired. If you ask, you are forbidden to tell, or get fired, or if you are a man working side by side with a woman and you want her to know that as a nurse, as a computer software engineer, what your pay is, and there is an opportunity, she could get fired and he could get fired. This is wrong.

We also want to stop employers from using any reason to pay women less,