

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT, FEDERAL RIGHTS, AND AGENCY ACTION

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Oversight, Federal Rights, and Agency Action, be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate, on March 27, 2014, at 3 p.m., in room SD-226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, to conduct a hearing entitled "Access to Justice for Those Who Serve."

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Kristopher Sharp, a fellow in Senator MURRAY's office, be granted floor privileges for the remainder of today's session.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that privileges of the floor be granted to Hope Jarkowski, a member of Senator CRAPO's staff.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION DISCHARGED

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session and the commerce committee be discharged from further consideration of PN1059; that the nomination be confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination; that any related statements be printed in the Record; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nomination considered and confirmed is as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

KATHRYN B. THOMSON, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMING TO UKRAINE AND NEIGHBORING REGIONS

Mr. KING. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2183, introduced earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2183) entitled "United States International Programming to Ukraine and Neighboring Regions."

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senate has been asked to take up and pass by unanimous consent House legislation on U.S. international programming to Ukraine and neighboring regions. This House bill directs the Broadcasting Board of Governors to increase programming in the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Ukrainian, Balkan, Russian, and Tatar language services, and authorizes up to an additional \$10,000,000 in fiscal year 2014 for this purpose.

We all support Ukraine's democracy and territorial integrity, and want to provide credible news and information to people in Ukraine whose access to uncensored information has been blocked by the Russian Government. I intend to ensure that current programming for Ukraine, Russia, and neighboring regions is not reduced in fiscal year 2014. But I want to remind Senators, as well as Members of the House of Representatives, that the Congress already enacted the fiscal year 2014 funding level for U.S. international broadcasting to Ukraine and other regions of the world.

The House bill we are adopting today does not appropriate additional funds. Nor does it provide offsets for the cost of additional broadcasting to Ukraine, Russia or the other regions specified. As drafted it is an unfunded mandate, which as a practical matter has no effect unless we are to reduce broadcasting to other critical countries or regions, such as Burma and Tibet, which I doubt Senators of either party would support.

Consequently, this bill should be interpreted as authorizing funds to be appropriated for the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to Ukraine and neighboring countries, consistent with the role of the House authorizing committee from which it originated. As Chairman of the Department of State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee that funds international broadcasting programs, I will work with the Broadcasting Board of Governors to ensure that additional funds are appropriated for these language services in fiscal year 2015 to enable them to sustain and strengthen critical broadcasts and programming to Ukraine, Russia, and neighboring regions.

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

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

The bill (S. 2183) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 2183

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS AND DECLARATIONS.

(a) Congress finds and declares the following:

(1) The Russian Government has deliberately blocked the Ukrainian people's access to uncensored sources of information and has provided alternative news and information that is both inaccurate and inflammatory;

(2) United States international programming exists to advance the United States interests and values by presenting accurate and comprehensive news and information, which is the foundation for democratic governance;

(3) The opinions and views of the Ukrainian people, especially those people located in the eastern regions and Crimea, are not being accurately represented in Russian dominated mass media;

(4) Russian forces have seized more than five television stations in Crimea and taken over transmissions, switching to a 24/7 Russian propaganda format; this increase in programming augments the already robust pro-Russian programming to Ukraine;

(5) United States international programming has the potential to combat this anti-democratic propaganda.

(b) PROGRAMMING.—Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Incorporated, and the Voice of America service to Ukraine and neighboring regions shall—

(1) provide news and information that is accessible, credible, and accurate;

(2) emphasize investigative and analytical journalism to highlight inconsistencies and misinformation provided by Russian or pro-Russian media outlets;

(3) prioritize programming to areas where access to uncensored sources of information is limited or non-existent, especially populations serviced by Russian supported media outlets;

(4) increase the number of reporters and organizational presence in eastern Ukraine, especially in Crimea;

(5) promote democratic processes, respect for human rights, freedom of the press, and territorial sovereignty; and

(6) take necessary preparatory steps to continue and increase programming and content that promotes democracy and government transparency in Russia.

(c) PROGRAMMING SURGE.—RFE/RL, Incorporated, and Voice of America programming to Ukraine and neighboring regions shall—

(1) prioritize programming to eastern Ukraine, including Crimea, and Moldova, and to ethnic and linguistic Russian populations, as well as to Tatar minorities;

(2) prioritize news and information that directly contributes to the target audiences' understanding of political and economic developments in Ukraine and Moldova, including countering misinformation that may originate from other news outlets, especially Russian supported news outlets;

(3) provide programming content 24 hours a day, seven days a week to target populations, using all available and effective distribution outlets, including—

(A) at least 8 weekly hours of total original television and video content in Ukrainian, Russian, and Tatar languages, not inclusive of live video streaming coverage of breaking news, to be distributed on satellite, digital, and through regional television affiliates by the Voice of America; and

(B) at least 14 weekly hours the total audio content in Ukrainian, Russian, and Tatar languages to be distributed on satellite, digital, and through regional radio affiliates of RFE/RL, Incorporated;