

NAYS—31

Alexander	Daines	Risch
Ayotte	Enzi	Roberts
Barrasso	Hatch	Rounds
Blunt	Heitkamp	Scott
Boozman	Hoeven	Sessions
Capito	Kirk	Shelby
Cassidy	Lankford	Sullivan
Collins	Lee	Tester
Corker	McConnell	Thune
Cornyn	Moran	
Cotton	Murkowski	

NOT VOTING—13

Boxer	Heller	Rubio
Crapo	Inhofe	Vitter
Cruz	Johnson	Warner
Gardner	Leahy	
Graham	Paul	

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

MOTION TO INSTRUCT

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I have a motion to instruct at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Connecticut [Mr. BLUMENTHAL] moves that the managers on the part of the Senate at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the House amendment to the bill H.R. 22 be instructed to insist upon the inclusion of the rail safety provisions contained in the amendment passed by the Senate on July 30, 2015, including the authorization of grants for the installation of positive train control.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will be 4 minutes of debate equally divided.

The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, in recent years all of our constituents have seen a scourge in rail accidents. There have been similar accidents all around the country. This motion insists that the Senate's provisions be included in this conference and in what comes out of the conference committee, including the authorization of grants for the installation of positive train control.

This summer, with the leadership of the committee chairman, Senator THUNE, and the ranking member, BILL NELSON, who are both champions of rail safety, in this instance it resulted in some very key reforms, and the Senate passed the DRIVE Act which is not perfect—troublesome in some highway safety elements—but forward thinking on rail safety. It includes funding for PTC, redundant signal protection, improved inspection practices, and a followup on the FRA's deep dive investigation. Along with cameras and grade crossing, these provisions help to advance the cause of rail safety.

The House has done nothing. The House bill is completely and abjectly lacking on rail safety, and therefore this motion instructs our conferees to insist on the Senate's provisions. I know that our conferees will be extremely sympathetic and supportive, but in order to simply to express our views, I ask unanimous consent that this measure be approved and that the motion be taken on a voice vote.

I ask unanimous consent that all remaining time be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question occurs on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The Presiding Officer appointed Mr. INHOFE, Mr. THUNE, Mr. HATCH, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Mrs. FISCHER, Mr. BARRASSO, Mr. CORNYN, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BROWN, Mr. NELSON, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. SCHUMER conferees on the part of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for up to 15 minutes.

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

VETERANS DAY AND LEGISLATION SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS AND TROOPS

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I am honored to represent nearly 500,000 Missouri veterans in the Senate. Tomorrow, on Veterans Day, we pause to reflect on the countless contributions and sacrifices that the men and women who serve in uniform and have served in uniform have made to our country. I hope we will all use this opportunity to recommit ourselves not only to appreciate their service but to be sure that the commitments our government has made to them are commitments that we move forward on and that they are commitments that we look at the time, place, and the veterans being served and decide when they need to be changed. I think one of the things we have done in the last year to create more choices and more competition for veterans is an important step in that direction.

When I introduced the Excellence in Mental Health Act with Senator STABENOW, one of our biggest support groups for that act, which not only would treat behavioral health care like all other health care but would also create more opportunities to access behavioral health care, were the younger veterans. The Iraq and Iran veterans and the veterans from Afghanistan wanted to have more choices and were big supporters of not just traditional VA services but other services as well.

I am pleased that the bill today steps forward in important ways and does things for veterans. The bill we just voted on, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill, actually reached a record level of funding for veterans services. It increases veterans services by \$7.9 billion

over last year's levels, and it appropriates \$1 billion more than the President asked for.

It was also a bipartisan vote for lots of reasons. There should be no more of a bipartisan cause among all the funding bills than a bill that takes care of veterans and provides the facilities for those who are serving and for their families' needs. This is an important matter for us to address, and this is a great week for us to do it.

This bill provides specific funding for women veterans. I was at a women's veterans clinic in St. Louis recently. This bill includes additional care for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. It provides treatment for the kinds of traumatic brain injuries that veterans often leave the military with today, which they did not have post-9/11 and post the cowardly devices that are used to attack our people in the service.

It increases veterans funding in areas such as health care, benefit claims processing, medical research, and technology upgrades. It also includes funding for construction and renovation of projects that ensure military readiness and improve the quality of life for military families.

As GEN Ray Odierno, the recently retired Chief of Staff of the Army, has said, our military families are the strength of the military. Senator GILLIBRAND and I recently introduced a bill—The Military Families Stability Act—that allows us to do new things. It allows families for educational or professional reasons to stay longer or leave earlier, depending on when the person serving gets transferred. If there is a month of school left or a professional matter that the spouse needs to be a part of and needs to finish a job quickly or go to a job early, why wouldn't we want to allow that to happen through legislation? This legislation looks at military families' needs, among the other things it looks at.

Because of the dissatisfaction that many of our veterans appropriately have with the Veterans' Administration, this bill includes necessary reforms such as protection for whistleblowers, the kind of protection that construction oversight managers need, and it assesses some new measures for construction oversight so that we don't have these facilities costing more than they should cost.

Frankly, if we look at competitive alternatives that veterans should have available to them, it is probably a good time to think about how we could make that program work better—rather than to continue to invest more money in facilities that they have to drive by—with better locations to get to that would give them that choice.

This bill has been ready for months now. I was disappointed the Democrats blocked consideration of this bill earlier this year, but I am pleased that we finally got to a bill that everybody could vote for. It actually shows how shortsighted the lack of willingness was to let us do our work, to bring this