

made to satisfy any legitimate congressional oversight interest, and despite the lack of any basis to charge contemptuous conduct, the House persists in its efforts to pressure and sanction.

This effort and the lack of balance it signals do not bode well for the House's other tasks.

I recall, as well, that it was not too many months ago in this same Congress that Republican leaders in the House were urging that impeachment be used as a device to intimidate federal judges when they rendered decisions that a Republican Member did not like. Impeachment should not be used as a partisan, ideological bludgeon in any context. That is not the proper use of this important constitutional authority. Such comments, at a minimum, complicate the task at hand.

Nor is it reassuring to read accounts of meetings, on the other side of the aisle, in this body, where partisan litmus tests on this matter are being applied to those chairing committees in the Senate.

There are few matters of such possible significance that may come before Congress as the matter of a President's fitness to serve.

The people of the United States elected William Jefferson Clinton to the Presidency in 1992 and reelected him in 1996. He and the Vice President are the only people serving anywhere in the Nation in any office who were elected by the entire country.

Under our Constitution, the Senate is charged with the ultimate responsibility to act as the jury in connection with any charges that the House were to deem worthy of impeachment.

Never in our history as a country has the Senate convicted a President of an impeachable offense. Only in the tumultuous times following the Civil War has the Senate been through the ordeal of a Presidential impeachment trial.

Mr. President, I am honored to have been elected by the people of Vermont to serve as their United States Senator. In our history, only 20 other Vermonters have had the privilege to hold the seat I now have representing our State. I am proud to serve as the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee. I appreciate my limited role in the Senate and in our government. I cannot take lightly being asked to judge whether a President, elected by the people of the United States, ought to be removed from office by an act of the Congress of the United States.

Now, the search for blame is a practiced congressional skill. It always bears fruit—sometimes bitter fruit. But the acceptance of our own solemn responsibility is more difficult. We must discharge our duties by serving the national interest, not by appealing to partisan or even public passions.

Let our actions not compound the Nation's anguish, harm the common good, nor further shake the public's

faith in our institutions of self-government. These institutions have served this country well for over 200 years, in accordance with our Constitution, which has been a guidepost for that time. Our Constitution has survived because good men and women have stood up when needed to make sure it survives.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and I yield back the remainder of my time.

WENDELL H. FORD NATIONAL AIR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1998

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. LAUTENBERG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 3227

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, can you tell me how much time is available?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senator TORRICELLI controls 30 minutes as a proponent of his amendment.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. On Senator TORRICELLI's time, I yield myself as much time as I need, which will probably be less than 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise as a cosponsor of the pending amendment, offered by my friend and colleague from New Jersey, Senator TORRICELLI. The amendment, called the Quiet Communities Act, will reestablish the Environmental Protection Agency's appropriate role in noise abatement.

This amendment simply reactivates an office in the EPA—the Office of Noise Abatement and Control—that was unfunded in 1981 at the request of the Reagan administration. The Office of Noise Abatement and Control will coordinate Federal noise abatement activities, develop noise standards, provide technical assistance to local communities, and promote research and education on the impacts of noise pollution.

This office will be a resource to the millions of Americans who are affected by noise pollution, and particularly aircraft noise.

Those of us who are in the New York-New Jersey region know only too well what effect aircraft noise has on our communities. It is a serious problem for populations across our country who are constantly harassed by airplane noise, truck noise, construction noise, and other noise, when they can never find peace in their own homes. In our region, with the several airports we have operating—La Guardia and Kennedy and Newark, and others—it is a constant. We have to find ways to deal with it.

Just like air and water pollution, noise pollution is an environmental

health issue. People who are tormented by noise pollution experience a range of health problems, such as hearing loss, stress, high blood pressure, sleep deprivation, distraction, and lost productivity. Aircraft noise is especially detrimental to human health.

Some studies indicate that persistent exposure to high levels of aircraft noise is linked to hypertension, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal problems, among other disorders.

Noise pollution is particularly troublesome in parts of the State of New Jersey.

New Jersey is the most densely populated State in the Nation, and millions of New Jerseyans live close to major transportation centers that generate significant levels of noise in their neighborhoods. For example, aircraft approaching and departing from Newark International Airport are guided along flight paths routed over residential neighborhoods, patterns which disrupt families and disturb the community's quality of life. Communities affected by aircraft noise have been living with the pain for over 10 years and they must find relief.

Unfortunately, the Federal Aviation Administration, which is charged with the responsibility of monitoring aircraft noise, has not adequately addressed the noise problems in New Jersey, and when attempted, its approach toward these problems is often flawed.

For example the FAA's current threshold of 65 decibels Day-Night Level—or DNL—that the FAA indicates is compatible with residential use is often criticized as problematic and, in the opinion of the National Resources Defense Council, significantly underestimates the level at which many people are affected by aircraft noise.

The fact that this fundamental threshold is controversial and the science behind it is disputed points to the fact that more research is needed on these issues.

Mr. President, citizens living near airports have few resources at their disposal to find out more about the effects of air noise on their health and their environment.

The Office of Noise Abatement and Control used to be one resource, and it has been dormant for too long.

Simply put, Mr. President, noise pollution, and particularly aircraft noise, is a serious environmental health issue that deserves attention from the primary Federal agency whose responsibility is environmental protection—the EPA.

Unfortunately, Mr. President, that was not the view in 1981. But now we have an opportunity to correct this mistake by adopting this amendment.

Besides reactivating the Office of Noise Abatement and Control, the bill authorizes funding of \$5 million a year for the first 2 years and \$8 million a year for the subsequent years to fund Office's activities.

According to the National Institutes of Health, more than 20 million Americans are exposed on a regular basis to