

too much leeway when it comes to even taking a product off the shelf or putting a warning label on the shelf. It turns out that with this administration, the Bush administration, they have appointed people to the Consumer Product Safety Commission who have been leaning more toward the makers of toys and products and away from protecting consumers. There was a gentleman—a former attorney general of New Mexico named Harold Stratton. He came on and, frankly, reassured the National Association of Manufacturers that they didn't have to worry about this Consumer Product Safety Commission getting out of hand. He appointed a Mr. Mullan as the agency's general counsel, who time and again seemed to find reasons not to recall defective products and give those making them a little more time to make more money off of something that may be a little dangerous. The commission didn't do too much in terms of helping consumers.

Today, it is a commission that limps along because it doesn't have the three commissioners it needs to operate. It only has two. Promulgating new rules and coming up with new initiatives is hampered because they don't have enough people to do it. Had the Bush administration tried to fill the vacancy? Who did they send? A person who, unfortunately, had a resume that showed he was following on in the tradition of Mr. Stratton and Mr. Mullan. He was a person with a background on the manufacturing side and not the consumer side.

This is an agency for consumers that we have to count on. So when the administration doesn't fill the vacancy, it creates a problem in the administration. I have been disappointed by the Consumer Product Safety Commission recently. Mattel today has a third toy recall. They are recalling millions of toys because of lead paint and other dangers. Bob Eckert, the CEO of Mattel, made a special trip to meet with me in Chicago over the break. I respect him. He understands that if his company is going to succeed, parents have to trust the products they buy with the name Mattel on the box. He gave me his assurance—proven by today's press release—that they are going to pull every unsafe and dangerous toy off of the shelf that his company had anything to do with.

You might ask yourself, why do we have lead paint coming in on toys from China? Let's get down to basics. It is not because lead paint is cheaper in China. No. It is because the workers who are making the toys are paid about \$75 or \$80 a month. It is because those workers have no idea what those toys are all about. They never see these in the world they live in. They don't have any idea what America is about. They may not have any concept of what we consider to be safe and healthy. They are being told to make this toy, paint it, and move it down the line. The companies have a responsi-

bility to watch these workers and have certain standards, but the bottom line is this: When we go to the lowest cost workers in the world to make our products, we should not be surprised when oftentimes those products are unsafe, unhealthy, and defective. With the Chinese, the list of products they send to us that are unsafe goes far beyond those that are the jurisdiction of the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The Food and Drug Administration looks at food products, such as pet food and other food products, imported from all over the world, and each month they report to Americans which countries are sending the most dangerous food products to America. Guess which country ranks No. 1 or No. 2 every single month? China. Same issue. Time and again, we find that the Chinese are not living up to standards we expect in America.

When I think back to this barbecue I attended, most American families think the Senate and the House, Congress and the President are protecting them, that we are doing our job. When 1 out of every 100 shipments coming into this country is inspected, when we have some ports where the volume of imports overwhelm the one or two inspectors on the job, then, frankly, we are not keeping faith with the American people, and that is the reality.

I say to my colleagues in the Senate that we have voted for expanding global trade, and I think we must. America cannot get rich doing business just among ourselves and doing one another's laundry, but we never voted to compromise the health and safety of American families, and we shouldn't now.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission has to accept its responsibility to be more forward thinking, to use their statutory authority to protect people, particularly children. Families who walk into toy stores in America should not have to play Chinese roulette when they are buying toys for Christmas, and that is the reality today. It is time for the Consumer Product Safety Commission to use their statutory authority effectively. It is time for the President to fill the vacancy on that Commission with a person who is truly a consumer advocate. It is time for Congress to put the resources into the Consumer Product Safety Commission so it can start doing the job it promised it would do when it was created almost 40 years ago. Until then, we are going to have to rely on importers, manufacturers, and retailers in America to restore the confidence of American families in the toys they will buy for this holiday season.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). Morning business is now closed.

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AND VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2642, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2642) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am pleased to resume consideration of the fiscal year 2008 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and related agencies appropriations bill.

To recap the essentials which I discussed yesterday, the bill provides \$109.2 billion in funding, including \$44.5 billion in mandatory spending and \$43 billion in discretionary funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Overall discretionary funding in the bill totals \$64.7 billion. That is a \$4 billion increase over the President's budget request. Most of the increased funding is targeted at expanding and improving veterans health care, which is an essential requirement for our obligation to the veterans, and also it recognizes that as generations of veterans are aging, those veterans from Korea and World War II and the Vietnam conflict, we also have a new era of veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq, and this money is essential.

This bill represents a landmark commitment to our troops and their families and our Nation's veterans by investing in urgently needed military construction projects and in expanding health care services to our veterans.

For the Department of Veterans Affairs, the bill includes \$29 billion for direct medical services for veterans. This level of funding is equal to the amount requested by the veterans service organizations in the independent budget. Each year, our veterans service organizations prepare an independent budget, not based upon what the administration thinks they can afford but what veterans need. This is one of the few times we have been able to meet that objective of the veterans service organizations within their independent budget. It will allow the Department to increase its resources for both physical and mental health care for veterans, and it will give the Department the resources it needs to expand research and treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorders. At a time when scores of veterans are returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with these often invisible wounds, this increased funding in this regard is urgently needed. It has been estimated that perhaps 30 percent of those who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan have received either traumatic brain injuries or have post-traumatic stress or both, and we have to be able to respond to those concerns.

The bill also includes needed funding for military construction of facilities