

(b) TRAVEL EXPENSES.—Each member of the Centennial Commission shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in accordance with the applicable provisions of title 5, United States Code.

(c) STAFF.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Chair of the Centennial Commission shall, in consultation with the members of the Centennial Commission, appoint an executive director and such other additional personnel as may be necessary to enable the Centennial Commission to perform its duties.

(2) COMPENSATION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subparagraph (B), the Chair of the Centennial Commission may fix the compensation of the executive director and any other personnel appointed under paragraph (1).

(B) LIMITATION.—The Chair of the Centennial Commission may not fix the compensation of the executive director or other personnel appointed under paragraph (1) at a rate that exceeds the rate of payable for level IV of the Executive Schedule under section 5315 of title 5, United States Code.

(C) WORK LOCATION.—If the city government for Kansas City, Missouri, and the Liberty Memorial Association make space available in the building in which the America's National World War I Museum is located, the executive director of the Centennial Commission and other personnel appointed under paragraph (1) shall work in such building to the extent practical.

(d) DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES.—Upon request of the Centennial Commission, the head of any Federal department or agency may detail, on a reimbursable basis, any employee of that department or agency to the Centennial Commission to assist it in carrying out its duties under this Act.

(e) PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AND INTERMITTENT SERVICES.—The Chair of the Centennial Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services under section 3109(b) of title 5, United States Code.

(f) SOURCE OF FUNDS.—Gifts, bequests, and devises of services or property, both real and personal, received by the Centennial Commission under section 6(g) shall be the only source of funds to cover the costs incurred by the Centennial Commission under this section.

SEC. 8. TERMINATION OF CENTENNIAL COMMISSION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Centennial Commission shall terminate on the earlier of—

(1) the date that is 30 days after the date the completion of the activities under this Act honoring the centennial observation of World War I; or

(2) July 28, 2019.

(b) APPLICATION OF FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in paragraph (2), the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall apply to the activities of the Centennial Commission under this Act.

(2) EXCEPTION.—Section 14(a)(2) of such Act shall not apply to the Centennial Commission.

SEC. 9. PROHIBITION ON OBLIGATION OF FEDERAL FUNDS.

No Federal funds may be obligated to carry out this Act.

SA 3434. Mr. REID (for Mr. VITTER (for himself and Mr. BROWN of Ohio)) proposed an amendment to the bill S. 3709, to require a Government Accountability Office examination of transactions between large financial institutions and the Federal Government, and for other purposes.

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

SECTION 1. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE STUDY OF TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN LARGE FINANCIAL COMPANIES AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

(a) DEFINITIONS.—For purposes of this Act—

(1) the term “covered institution” means any bank holding company having more than \$500,000,000,000 in consolidated assets; and

(2) the term “economic benefit” means the difference between actual loans terms offered, debt or equity prices, or asset values and a reasonable estimate of what such terms, prices, or values might have been, as determined by examining actual values of comparable transaction in the private markets or by estimating the values of comparable transactions priced to properly reflect associated risk.

(b) GAO STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United States (in this section referred to as the “Comptroller”) shall conduct a study of covered institutions, such as—

(1) the favorable pricing of the debt of such institutions, relative to their risk profile resulting from the perception that such institutions will receive Government support in the event of any financial stress;

(2) any favorable funding or economic treatment resulting from an increase in the credit rating for covered institutions, as a result of express, implied, or perceived Government support;

(3) any economic benefit to covered institutions resulting from the ownership of, or affiliation with, an insured depository institution;

(4) any economic benefit resulting from the status of covered institutions as a bank holding company, including access to Federal deposit insurance and the discount window of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System before the date of enactment of this Act;

(5) any economic benefit received through extraordinary Government actions taken, such as—

(A) actions by the Department of the Treasury—

(i) under the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, such as—

(I) asset purchases by the United States Government;

(II) capital injections from the United States Government; or

(III) housing programs; or

(ii) by the purchase of the mortgage backed securities of the Federal National Mortgage Association and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (in this Act referred to as “government-sponsored enterprises”), in order to lower interest rates, and the value of such securities in the absence of such purchases;

(B) actions by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System prior to the date of enactment of this Act, such as—

(i) providing loans to financial institutions through the Term Auction Facility; and

(ii) assistance through programs under section 13(3) of the Federal Reserve Act prior to the date of enactment of this Act, such as—

(I) lending through the Commercial Paper Funding Facility;

(II) securities lending to primary dealers through the Primary Dealer Credit Facility and the Term Securities Lending Facility;

(III) lending to institutions through the Term Asset-Backed Securities Loan Facility; or

(IV) purchasing assets through the Maiden Lane facility; and

(C) actions by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, such as—

(i) guaranteeing debt or deposits through the Temporary Liquidity Guarantee Program; or

(ii) pricing of assessments related to any such guarantees; and

(6) any extraordinary assistance provided to American Insurance Group, but ultimately received by one of the covered institutions; and

(7) any Government actions that resulted in the payment or nonpayment of credit default swap contracts entered into by a covered institution.

SEC. 2. REPORT TO CONGRESS.

Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller shall submit a report to Congress detailing the findings of the Comptroller in the study conducted under this Act. Such report shall be made electronically available to the public, except that any proprietary, sensitive, or confidential information shall be redacted in any release to the public.

SEC. 3. RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.

Nothing in this Act may be construed to provide authority inconsistent with, or to otherwise affect, section 714 of title 31 United States Code.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate following a vote on the Senate Floor on December 21, 2012.

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

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that LTCs Todd Ladwig and Victor Glover, Navy fellows in my office, be allowed floor privileges for the duration of the debate on the conference report of H.R. 4310, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2013.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that CDR Jeff Bennett be allowed permission to occupy the floor.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—FISA AMENDMENTS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that with respect to the consideration of the FISA bill, the text for each of the amendments in order under the previous agreement is at the desk.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations: Calendar Nos. 834,

835, 877; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

THE JUDICIARY

Matthew W. Brann, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

Malachy Edward Mannion, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Pennsylvania.

Jon S. Tigar, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of California.

NOMINATION DISCHARGED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Veterans' Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of following nomination: PN 2024; 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; and 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:

THE JUDICIARY

William S. Greenberg, of New Jersey, to be a Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims for the term of fifteen years, vice a new position created by Public Law 100-389, approved October 10, 2008.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, over the last four years, Senate Republicans have chosen to depart dramatically from Senate traditions in their efforts to delay and obstruct President Obama's judicial nominations.

For example, until 2009, Senators deferred to the President and to home State Senators on district court nominees. During the 8 years that George W. Bush served as President, only 5 of his district court nominees received any opposition on the floor. In just 4 years, Senate Republicans have voted against 39 of President Obama's district court nominees, and the Majority Leader has been forced to file cloture on 20 of them.

Federal district court judges are the trial court judges who hear cases from litigants across the country and preside over Federal criminal trials, applying the law to facts and helping settle legal disputes. They handle the vast majority of the caseload of the Federal courts and are critical to making sure

our Federal courts remain available to provide a fair hearing for all Americans. Nominations to fill these critical positions, whether made by a Democratic or Republican President, have always been considered with deference to the home State Senators who know the nominees and their States best, and have been confirmed quickly with that support. Never before in the 37 years I have been in the Senate have I seen anything like what has happened in the last 4 years. Never before in the Senate's history have we seen district court nominees blocked for months and opposed for no good reason. Many are needlessly stalled and then confirmed virtually unanimously with no explanation for the obstruction. Senate Republicans have politicized even these traditionally non-partisan positions. This is harmful to our Federal courts and the American people.

Until 2009, Senators who filibustered circuit court nominees generally had reasons to do so, and were willing to explain those reasons. When Senate Democrats filibustered President Bush's controversial circuit court nominees, it was over substantive concerns about the nominees' records and Republicans' disregard for the rights of Democratic Senators. When we opposed Janice Rogers Brown, it was because of her long record on the California Supreme Court of deciding cases based on extreme views, and having argued that Social Security was unconstitutional. When we opposed Priscilla Owen, it was because her rulings on the Texas Supreme Court were so extreme that they drew the condemnation of even the conservative judges on that court.

On the other hand, Senate Republicans have filibustered and delayed nearly all of President Obama's circuit court nominees even when those nominees have the support of their Republican home State Senators. Take the examples of Judge Robert Bacharach and William Kayatta, two consensus circuit nominees who have the support of their Republican home State Senators. Both these nominees received the ABA Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary's highest possible rating, that of unanimously "Well Qualified." They have strong bipartisan support, and unimpeachable credentials, and there is no reason why they should not have been confirmed months ago. Republicans continue to stall them without final confirmation votes approximately 8 months after they were considered and approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The irony and dangerous new development is that neither of these nominees faces any real Republican opposition. Senator COBURN, one of Judge Bacharach's home State Senators, has said: "[Judge Bacharach] has no opposition in the Senate. . . . There's no reason why he shouldn't be confirmed." Still, Senate Republicans refuse to allow for a vote on his nomination. The same also applies to Richard Taranto, who was reported more than eight

months ago to a vacancy on the Federal Circuit by voice vote and faces no Republican opposition. This also applies to William Kayatta of Maine, who was reported nearly eight months ago and has the support of his two home State Republican Senators.

It makes no sense for Senate Republicans to continue filibustering these nominations, but it fits with their track record over the last 4 years. Senate Republicans used to insist that the filibustering of judicial nominations was unconstitutional. The Constitution has not changed but as soon as President Obama was elected they reversed course and filibustered President Obama's very first judicial nomination. Judge David Hamilton of Indiana was a widely-respected 15-year veteran of the Federal bench nominated to the Seventh Circuit and was supported by Senator DICK LUGAR, the longest-serving Republican in the Senate. They delayed his confirmation for 7 months. Senate Republicans then proceeded to obstruct and delay just about every circuit court nominee of this President, filibustering 10 of them. They delayed confirmation of Judge Albert Diaz of North Carolina to the Fourth Circuit for 11 months. They delayed confirmation of Judge Jane Stranch of Tennessee to the Sixth Circuit for 10 months. They delayed confirmation of Judge Ray Lohier of New York to the Second Circuit for 7 months. They delayed confirmation of Judge Scott Matheson of Utah to the Tenth Circuit and Judge James Wynn, Jr. of North Carolina to the Fourth Circuit for 6 months. They delayed confirmation of Judge Andre Davis of Maryland to the Fourth Circuit, Judge Henry Floyd of South Carolina to the Fourth Circuit, Judge Stephanie Thacker of West Virginia to the Fourth Circuit, and Judge Jacqueline Nguyen of California to the Ninth Circuit for 5 months. They delayed confirmation of Judge Adalberto Jordan of Florida to the Eleventh Circuit, Judge Beverly Martin of Georgia to the Eleventh Circuit, Judge Mary Murguia of Arizona to the Ninth Circuit, Judge Bernice Donald of Tennessee to the Sixth Circuit, Judge Barbara Keenan of Virginia to the Fourth Circuit, Judge Thomas Vanaskie of Pennsylvania to the Third Circuit, Judge Joseph Greenaway of New Jersey to the Third Circuit, Judge Denny Chin of New York to the Second Circuit, and Judge Chris Dronney of Connecticut to the Second Circuit for 4 months. They delayed confirmation of Judge Paul Watford of California to the Ninth Circuit, Judge Andrew Hurwitz of Arizona to the Ninth Circuit, Judge Morgan Christen of Alaska to the Ninth Circuit, Judge Stephen Higginson of Louisiana to the Fifth Circuit, Judge Gerard Lynch of New York to the Second Circuit, Judge Susan Carney of Connecticut to the Second Circuit, and Judge Kathleen O'Malley of Ohio to the Federal Circuit for 3 months.

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service has reported that the