

Statement for Business Meeting

Chairman Joe Lieberman

June 27, 2012

Good morning. We have six items of business on our agenda this morning, none of which is controversial, so I hope we can move them expeditiously.

I will state for the record that we intended to take up the measure that would provide budget autonomy for the District of Columbia, which has bipartisan support, and it ought to because it would end a relic from a previous era.

It's almost as if we continue to act as a colonial power over the District - an independent, capitol city, a federal city. Some might say it's a city-state, but in any case under the existing laws, the District's budget has to come to us for approval.

Senator Paul had filed some amendments, to be specific, on abortion and gun control, which of course, is his right. But the leadership of the District and their representation in the House, Delegate Norton, decided that, given a choice of the D.C. Autonomy Bill with one of those amendments attached to it, they would choose not to take the risk at this time.

We're going to continue to try to negotiate. I hope we can resist the ability to pass laws for the District, which is something we wouldn't do for any of our states. We would rant and rave if anyone tried to do it for our states. So hopefully we can reconcile that one way or another either in the committee or on the floor before long.

Our agenda today reflects this Committee's attention to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government and to ensuring that federal agencies abide by the highest ethical standards.

The first piece of legislation we will consider is the Federal Real Property Asset Management Reform Act, S.2178, a bill introduced by Senator Carper to streamline the process by which the government disposes of federal property. The bill also would require certain changes to reduce property mismanagement. Senator Carper will have a substitute amendment, making some very minor changes.

We will also take up the Hatch Act Modernization Act, S.2170, which would eliminate a provision in the Hatch Act that bars state and local government employees from running for partisan elected office. The bill would also modify the penalty structure to allow a range of penalties for federal employees. And it would categorize D.C. government employees as state and local employees instead of federal employees, as they are now designated. Senator Akaka introduced this bill, and I am proud to join him as an original co-sponsor.

The Veterans Skills to Jobs Act of 2012, S. 2239, is also on the agenda today. Introduced by Senator Nelson of Florida, this bill directs agency heads to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for Federal licenses. This is a bill that would assist thousands of veterans in finding a job in a tough job market.

Among the other pieces of legislation we will consider are the End Trafficking in Government Contracting Act, S. 2234, to prevent human trafficking by government contractors, and the Jaime Zapata Border Security Enforcement Task Force, H.R. 914, in honor of an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent murdered by members of a Mexican drug cartel.

Each of these bills would help improve government's performance, a necessary goal at all times but even more essential during periods of economic weakness. I appreciate your support for these measures.

Senator Collins?