

OPENING STATEMENT OF SEN. McCASKILL

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This committee has two very important missions: to make government function better for the American people and to protect our homeland. I think there are some very good and important bills on this markup that achieve both of those goals. I just want to highlight a few here.

First I want to acknowledge the great work of Senators McCain and Tester to reauthorize the firefighter grant programs. I was pleased to work with them on this to include some additional help for the firefighter community to ensure that FEMA is providing the community sufficient training opportunities in grants administration. This is especially critical for the thousands of volunteer fire departments across the country that cannot afford dedicated personnel trained in grant writing and grant management. As a former arson prosecutor, I know there is no better friend in the world to have than a firefighter, and I know how critical these grant programs are to the firefighter community. I look forward to swift passage of this bill by the full Senate and then by the House so that our nation's first responders don't have to live with any needless uncertainty about the future of this program.

I was also very pleased to work with the chairman on the Department of Homeland Security Blue Campaign Authorization Act, DHS's coordinated effort to combat human trafficking. There is nothing we do in this body that is more important than protecting people living in this country. Senator Portman and I worked together last year to uncover some serious human trafficking issues in this country, and the Blue Campaign is an important piece of this fight. I want to thank the Chairman for his hard work on this bill.

I also want to thank Senator Lankford for working with me on the Federal Agency Customer Experience Act. This is one of those low hanging fruit ideas that just makes sense. Our simple bill makes it a whole lot easier for agencies to get customer feedback from the public. I hope agencies will take advantage of the opportunity to really hear directly from constituents just as we do in our town halls, phone calls and emails. I know hearing from my constituents certainly makes me better at my job.

But I also want to express some concern about this agenda. Last Congress, in October 2015, this committee had a markup focused on regulatory reform ideas. In your opening statement, you said, "It is a priority of mine to ensure that this committee is taking a look at **bipartisan** ways to reduce the regulatory burden and improve the quality of the regulatory process."

I couldn't agree more with that statement. The regulatory process can be overly burdensome, take too long, and too often, agencies have duplicative, overlapping, or sometimes even contradictory regulations. One example is a Department of Agriculture rule that required animal owners who use their animals for research or exhibition purposes to register with the USDA and develop disaster plans for the animals. The USDA, in their infinite wisdom interpreted the rule to apply to magicians who pull rabbits out of their hats at kids birthday parties. I mean it is absurd. This poor magician from Missouri had to register his rabbit with the USDA and write up an emergency plan in case a natural disaster struck!

And this committee worked together last Congress to pass a number of bipartisan regulatory reforms. For example, Senator Portman and I worked to pass the Federal Permitting Improvement Act, a regulatory reform bill that will make the federal permitting process smoother and more transparent, so we can get big infrastructure projects moving faster and put people back to work rebuilding their communities. President Obama signed that into law and I look forward to working with Senator Portman to make sure it's implemented well.

We also passed the Early Participation in Regulations Act and the Smarter Regulations Act on a bipartisan basis. So there are ways we can work together to make real, meaningful improvement to the regulatory process.

But several of the bills on this markup have a lot of work to do before they should be considered by this committee. In fact, 2 of the bills on this markup, and possibly 3, are likely to be completely partisan votes. To me that means that these bills are not ready for committee consideration, and it's unfortunate that we're using our time today on messaging bills.

In fact, last Congress, this Committee had a completely partisan vote on exactly one bill the entire 2 years. And today alone we could have 3. I think that erodes our bipartisan tradition, and I hope that is not the way that this committee is headed over the next 18 months because messaging bills are not going to fix the regulatory burden for American businesses.

Mr. Chairman, if you truly want to work on a bipartisan basis to ease the regulatory burden, I think we can put our heads together and find areas of agreement. There are ideas in some of these partisan bills that I support, and that have, in the past, been supported by Members of this committee on both sides of aisle. So I have been working on draft legislation that pulls together some of these reforms that I hope could gain broader bipartisan support. My hope is to have this legislation ready very soon to serve as a basis for truly bipartisan regulatory reform bill.

In addition, I want to point out that there is a more direct way to improve people's lives than these partisan bills ever would. Let's actually roll up our sleeves and do the hard work of identifying existing regulations that can and should be cut or revised. I know the current Administration has made a point of talking about their efforts in this area, but previous administrations have already done some good, albeit largely unnoticed work in easing the regulatory burden. During the last administration, for example, the regulatory review achieved an estimated \$28 billion in net 5-year savings.

I think we can do the same. This is something that could have a direct effect on every small business and family farm in this country, and I would like to work together with you to make the regulatory process better.

Thank you.