

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD
FROM SENATE FLOOR DEBATE ON HR 3326, 2010 DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL
Oct. 6, 2009

Vote on Amendment No. 2596

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 2596 offered by the Senator from Missouri, Mr. *Bond*.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, the January report of the Governmental Accountability Office said the Air Force had a couple of major challenges in sustaining the air sovereignty alert capabilities; that is, the air structure that keeps our homeland safe.

They say the Air Force has not developed plans because it is focused on other priorities. Retiring these planes would result in a lack of aircraft to meet the vital ASA mission. And 16 of the 18 sites across the Nation are manned by Air National Guard.

Senator *Leahy* and I, as co-chairs, have introduced this amendment, which is supported by the Guard, which says that we do not retire any more fourth-generation aircraft until the Secretary tells the Congress how it is going to ensure the capability of the ASA mission.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I rise in support of the amendment offered by Senator BOND to temporarily suspend the retirement of tactical aircraft by the U.S. Air Force.

For months, Senator BOND and I as co-chairs of the Senate National Guard Caucus have repeatedly questioned Air Force and Department of Defense leadership about what it was doing to address a looming shortfall in available aircraft for Air National Guard Units. The Air Force acknowledges this issue and I know has spent a great deal of time studying options on how to address the shortfall.

But, after numerous requests at hearings and briefings for a concrete plan, at the start of the fiscal year 2010 today, we still do not have a plan.

That is why Senator BOND and I have proposed an amendment that temporarily suspends the retirement of tactical aircraft until the Secretary of the Air Force provides Congress with a roadmap that resolves the looming tactical aircraft shortfall.

I hope this amendment prompts the Air Force to conclude its deliberations so that our National Guard and Reserves never get to point where there are units that have the best trained pilots and technicians in the world but there are no aircraft on the tarmac.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. INOUE. I have no opposition to this amendment, nor am I aware of anyone on our side who opposes this. I am prepared for a voice vote.

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The result was announced--yeas 91, nays 7