

Why do these votes matter?

1. Planned Parenthood Defunding

House Concurrent Resolution 36 would have directed the House clerk to insert a section in the enrollment of H.R. 1473 (Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011) that would prohibit the use of any funding in the bill for Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood is the nation's largest abortion provider and government should not subsidize the killing of innocent human life. Moreover, under the Constitution, the federal government should not be subsidizing any private entity in the marketplace.

2. Patriot Act (Firearms Purchase Records)

During consideration of the Patriot Act extension bill (S. 990), Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who opposes the Patriot Act on constitutional grounds, offered an amendment that would have banned the use of Patriot Act searches for American citizens' firearms records without the Fourth Amendment's protections of probable cause, warrants, and particularity. Gun Owners of America, which supported this amendment, warned: "Without Paul's exemption, it is possible that the BATFE could go to a secret (FISA) court, and, in a one-party (ex parte) proceeding, obtain an order to produce every 4473 [firearms transaction record] in the country, ostensibly because a 'terrorism investigation' requires it. If such an action were taken, the government would have a list of every gun buyer in the country going back decades."

Paul's amendment would have prevented the Patriot Act from being used to violate the rights of gun owners.

3. Trade Promotion Authority

During consideration of the trade-preferences bill, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) introduced an amendment to reinstitute trade promotion authority through 2013 for the purpose of expediting approval of trade bills. The authority, which was called "fast track" when initially instituted, had expired in 2007. The fast-track procedure requires that Congress must not amend or filibuster trade agreements submitted to them by the President, and must either approve or disapprove of the agreements within 90 days of submission.

Trade promotion authority limits the ability of Congress to deliberate and legislate. Moreover, treaties should need a two-thirds majority vote in the Senate for approval.

4. Congressional Term Limits

During consideration of a bill to ban congressional insider trading (S. 2038), Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) offered an amendment "To express the sense of the Senate that the Senate should pass a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution that limits the number of terms a Member of Congress may serve." However, Roger Sherman stated at the 1787 Constitutional Convention: "Frequent elections are necessary to preserve the good behavior of rulers. They also tend to give permanency to the Government, by preserving that good behavior, because it ensures their re-election." Sherman's statement contains the essence of the argument against term limits, which is that the best incentive for an elected official to represent the interests of his constituents is the possibility of reelection.

Congressional term limits would decrease the accountability of Congressmen to their constituents by increasing the number of lame-duck Congressmen serving in each congressional session.

5. Oil and Gas Development; Keystone XL Pipeline

During consideration of S. 1813, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) offered an amendment to open up part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and natural-gas development, expand lease sales for offshore drilling, and approve the Keystone oil pipeline.

The federal government should allow entrepreneurs to develop energy resource, rather than deny access to the resources.

6. Farm Bill

The Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012 (S. 3240) would authorize federal farm and food assistance programs for five years. The programs include crop subsidies, food stamps, and foreign food aid. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the programs authorized by the bill would cost \$969 billion if implemented over the next 10 years.

Federal agricultural subsidies and food aid are unconstitutional.