



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on July 2, 2012

Senator Paul Wants Senate to Actually Read Bill Before Voting

“Congress has a 10% approval rating and one of the reasons is that we don’t even obey our own rules.” With those words Senator Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) opened a [powerful declamation against the Senate’s](#) habits of hiding things in bills “in the dead of night” and voting on them without giving members of that body (or the people) enough time to read them and know what they’re voting on.



“Not one member of the Senate will read this bill before we vote on it,” Paul said, holding up a copy of a 600-page behemoth that contained provisions dealing with everything from highways to student loans to federal flood insurance.

Paul indicated that he received the bill just hours before he would be asked to vote on it and that there were things added at the last minute that no one would know about and that would become law in direct violation of the senate rule.

Paul referred specifically to [Rule 28, Paragraph 9](#) of the Senate that requires every bill to be post online for at least 48 hours before a vote is taken.

The Senator from Kentucky is not new to this fight. Last March, in order to reinforce that rule, [Paul proposed a bill](#) that would mandate that senators be given one day to read bill for every 20 pages of text.

Upon submitting that bill, Paul said:

“In keeping with my pledge to increase transparency and accessibility in the U.S. Senate, I am proud to introduce this rule change today. Too often in Congress, legislation is shoved through without hearings, amendments or debate. If we are to answer to the American people, it is imperative we pay close attention to the legislation we consider to ensure it is in concert with the Constitution and purview of the Senate’s authority.”

It’s been over a year since that bill was introduced and apparently, nothing has changed.

Just a day before his speech on the Senate floor regarding the reading of bills (or the not reading of them), [Senator Paul introduced S. 3359](#), “A bill to end the practice of including more than one subject in a single bill by requiring that each bill enacted by Congress be limited to only one subject....” This bill is currently working its way through the Senate Rules and Administration Committee.

As for why a bill would be so full of seemingly disparate legislation and why a majority of the Senate would be in such a hurry to get it passed, Senator Paul mentions that the portion of the bill dealing with highway spending had to be voted on because the previous authorization was set to expire. The portion dealing with student loan interest rates was coming down to the wire, as well, and members were



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anxious to get these matters out of the way before it was too late.

Paul doesn't buy that excuse, however. "They [supporters of the bill] say that we have to do something or government will shut down in three days. Well what were they doing for the previous three months?" Paul asked his colleagues.

One particular bit of legislative legerdemain that received special attention from Senator Paul was the idea that money from student loan interest would be used to fund Obamacare. He points out that if the rates are lowered as provided for in the bill, the funding for Obamacare would have to come from somewhere else – probably pensions.

"Raise your hand if you think it's a good idea to underfund pensions more," Paul said. "Over half of the pensions in this country are technically insolvent because they don't have enough money to pay for them," he added.

When the vote on the bill was about to be taken, Senator Paul and others raised a point of order asking the Senate parliamentarian to rule on whether the Senate rules were being violated by rushing a bill through to a vote without giving it the requisite resting period. Despite Senator Paul's noble effort, the Senate voted 72-22 to waive the 48-hour rule.

Senator Paul was not surprised. In his speech, Paul described the attitude of those in the majority whom he predicted would override the rule and push forward with the vote: "We are the majority and we deem it so."

The Senate ultimately passed the highway-flood-student loan bill, but failed to get it to President Obama's desk in time to beat the expiration. Accordingly, an extension on both the highway spending bill and the student loan interest rate bill was passed by both houses of Congress giving them enough time to get the bill ready for President Obama's signature.

Photo: Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) speaks on Capitol Hill in Washington, Oct. 19, 2011: AP Images



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