

## Press Releases

### **Press Release of Senator Wyden**

#### **Resolution to End Secret Holds Overwhelmingly Passes the Senate**

Thursday, January 27, 2011

**Washington, D.C.** – A ten year, bipartisan effort to end the practice of allowing senators to place secret holds on legislation or nominations before the U.S. Senate met success today, with Senate passage of a binding resolution that will require public disclosure, in The Congressional Record, within two legislative days of an objection being made by any senator to Senate action on legislation or nominations. The reform effort was initiated more than 10 years ago by Senators Ron Wyden and Chuck Grassley. Senators Claire McCaskill and Susan Collins joined their effort, and helped to secure passage of today's binding resolution by a vote of 92-4.

**"As my long-time partner in this effort, Senator Grassley, can attest our campaign to end secret holds has almost become the longest running battle since the Trojan War, but today we've won an important victory for open government,"** Wyden said. **"The transparency and accountability in this resolution will ensure that the public's business will be done in public; that bills and nominations are not swept under the rug never again to see the light of day; and that the special interests cannot secretly block important legislation or nominations by finding one senator willing to covertly upend legislation they don't like."**

**"Passage of this resolution is a victory for accountability. It will establish transparency with the significant power each senator holds to stop legislation and nominations. That's an important right of senators, but it ought to be exercised in the light of day. Disclosure will be good for the legislative process and this reform will be meaningful in helping to make the public's business public,"** Grassley said.

**"Today's vote was an important step forward in the fight to reform the way Washington does business. No longer will senators be able to hold up legislation anonymously. From now on, they're going to have to own it,"** McCaskill said. **"We've been sent here to do the people's business and the American people deserve greater transparency and accountability."**

**"Ending the use of secret holds will help assure the American people that the decisions we make are decisions of integrity, in which their interests are put first,"** said Collins. **"Placing a hold on a nominee is a legitimate use of Senate rules and can be used to provide additional time to seek answers to important questions and address concerns. If Members of Congress are acting in the best interests of their constituents, then they should not hesitate to make public their reasons for placing a particular hold."**

Since their reform effort began, Wyden and Grassley have practiced public disclosure of their own holds by putting a statement in The Congressional Record. Numerous amendments, bills and pledges have been attempted or adopted in the years leading up to today. A 1997 amendment to an appropriations bill to end the practice was removed during conference with the House of Representatives and pledges have been secured from the leadership in both caucuses to end the practice, but those pledges have not been kept. A bill to force public disclosure of holds after three legislative days passed the Senate in 2006, but it was altered in conference to require six days before disclosure after it was included as an amendment to the "Honest Leadership and Open Government Act" of 2007. The cause for ending secret holds was boosted by a letter written by McCaskill last year calling for the end of the practice and signed by 68 senators.

The resolution relieves the problems with the current holds policy by requiring that notice of a hold be triggered the minute an objection to proceed is made. Under current rules the disclosure period is triggered only after legislation has been formally brought up on the floor. The resolution also prohibits the current practice of revolving holds whereby senators avoid having to disclose their holds by handing them off to other senators. Under the new rules, either the name of the objecting senator or the senator objecting on his or her behalf will be automatically published within two days of a hold being placed.