

The Senate Votes Overwhelmingly to Override 9/11 Bill Veto

The U.S. Senate voted 97-1 Wednesday to override President Obama's veto of the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, a bipartisan bill meant to offer the families of victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to sue the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia over its potential involvement.

The lone vote against the bill was Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), although he gave no reason for the vote. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) has already said she supports the measure and expects it to pass the House when it is brought up.

Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) has not yet announced when a vote will occur. It faces a much more uncertain fate there, due in large part to opposition from House Armed Services Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-Texas), who said he is concerned about the bill's potential long-term consequences.

CIA Director John Brennan and Secretary of Defense Ash Carter have both publicly stated their opposition to an override, saying it will have a negative impact upon the CIA and U.S. military if other countries take reciprocal action. Senators who had been on the fence about the bill said they ultimately voted for the override because they believed Congress could effectively deal with any reciprocal acts.

The JASTA vote fell against the backdrop of continued negotiations over federal funding to help the citizens of Flint, Michigan, with their contaminated water system. During debate on JASTA, Reid announced there had been a break in those negotiations—suggesting he may have tried to filibuster the bill to get a concession—a break that was later confirmed

by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.).

A vote on funding for Flint is now expected to occur during a lame-duck session following Nov. 8 general election. That had been a sticking point in getting a vote on a continuing resolution to fund the government beyond Friday—a bill that McConnell said would be on its way to the House later in the day Wednesday.