

# Sen. Warren blasts drug approval bill as 'extortion'

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Elizabeth Warren delivered a ferocious attack Monday on congressional Republicans and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell over a medical research bill, and put fellow Democrats on the spot by pushing them to oppose a measure she said “is corrupt, and it is very, very dangerous.”

As Congress began the final stretch of its post-election session, Warren said the 996-page measure — a top priority for GOP leaders and backed by the biomedical industry — was riddled with provisions that she called “a bunch of special giveaways” to big pharmaceutical companies.

“They didn’t send us here to whimper, whine or grovel,” she said on the Senate floor about Democrats, using the populist rhetoric that has given her one of her party’s highest profiles. “They sent us here to say no to efforts to sell Congress to the highest bidder.”

All but taunting her own party, Warren, D-Mass., said, “Republicans will control this government, but they cannot hand that control over to big corporations unless Democrats roll over and allow them to do so.”

She said the research bill would “legalize fraud” by reducing the scientific evidence the government needs to approve existing drugs for new uses. She said it would “cover up bribery” by exempting medical companies from publicly reporting some payments they make to doctors.

Those provisions, she said, outweighed the “tiny fig leaf” of additional money the bill provides for biomedical research and combatting abuse of addictive opioid drugs.

“I cannot vote for this bill. I will fight it because I know the difference between compromise and extortion,” said Warren, who some mention as a potential 2020 presidential contender.

Warren’s comments came with Democrats in the early stages of decoding their lesson from this month’s elections. Hillary Clinton shockingly lost her White House bid to Republican Donald Trump and Democrats remained in the House and Senate minority, making only small gains in each chamber.

Warren is expected to try tugging her party toward more progressive policies, while some more moderate Democrats are emphasizing the need to appeal to the type of working-class white voters who helped Trump win Midwestern states carried in recent elections by Democrats.

The House plans to vote on the research legislation Wednesday, with Senate consideration expected next week.

The measure calls for spending \$6.3 billion over the next decade, including \$4.8 billion for research at the National Institutes of Health. There is also \$1 billion for grants to states for drug abuse prevention and research, and \$500 million for the Food and Drug Administration to accelerate drug and medical device approval processes.

To pay for that, the bill would cut a public health fund in President Barack Obama’s health care law, reduce some payments made by Medicaid and Medicare and sell oil held in the government’s strategic petroleum reserve.

Warren said the bill benefits a Republican donor who backs contentious therapies that are supposed to regenerate cells. She did not name the donor during her speech but said McConnell, R-Ky., has accepted contributions from him.

A McConnell spokesman declined to comment.

No. 2 Senate GOP leader John Cornyn of Texas, on the Senate floor as Warren spoke, criticized her for making “a political speech” and launching “personal attacks” on senators and called her comments “beneath the dignity of the United States Senate.”



In this Oct. 24, 2016 photo, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass. speaks at a rally for Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton at St. Anselm College in Manchester, N.H.

# Trade body says Boeing was offered illegal tax breaks in U.S.

GENEVA (AP) — A World Trade Organization panel on Monday ruled that Washington state offered billions in illegal tax breaks to plane maker Boeing, and that the U.S. government must take action to end the plans within months.

The European Union, which backs Boeing’s EU-based rival, Airbus, claimed it as a landmark victory in the longstanding battle between the two companies that dominate the global market for airplanes.

The ruling is but a part of a wider squabble involving accusations between the U.S. government and the

28-nation EU over support for Boeing and Airbus dating back to 2004.

Monday’s decision found that the support Washington state promised to give Boeing from 2024 to 2040 amounted to “prohibited” subsidies. The support offered by Washington came on condition that Boeing keeps the production of the wings of the wide-bodied 777x plane in the state, excluding foreign competition.

Boeing has extensive plants around Seattle and the EU says the subsidies would have amounted to \$8.7 billion. EU Trade Commis-

sioner Cecilia Malmstrom said the WTO ruled against \$5.7 billion of the measures.

The case could have some implications for President-elect Donald Trump’s ambitions to support U.S. business first and foremost. Rejecting some of the EU claims, the WTO found that only one of seven tax incentives provided by Washington state amounted to illegal subsidies for wings for the wide-body jet. In essence, the “prohibited subsidy” involved the reduction of business tax rate on the condition that the wings were produced domestically within the United States.

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