

Statement of

# The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator  
Vermont  
May 11, 2005

Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy,  
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee  
Executive Business Meeting on S. 852,  
The FAIR Act of 2005  
May 11, 2005

I am pleased to join the Chairman at this second mark up of our bipartisan legislation to address the serious problem of asbestos-related disease, the FAIR Act of 2005, S. 852. I expect that we will make significant progress today toward this bipartisan measure. At our last meeting we heard amendments from both sides of the aisle and made some improvements to the legislation by accepting about seven amendments and the Managers' Package by voice vote.

In speaking about recent progress, I believe it is important to remember how far we have come in this process. Proposals to solve the asbestos problem have been around for years without any congressional solution. I remember almost three years ago when I convened the first asbestos hearing and began the process that we are continuing here today. Many in this room might be surprised to learn that the total size of the funding proposed at that time was \$94 billion. Today, in S. 852, it is \$140 billion. That is a significant increase in funding and that is only one of the major differences from the early proposals when compared to the bipartisan bill we are considering today.

Since that time, the Judiciary Committee has held dozens of hearings, mark ups and negotiating sessions. All of the different stakeholders have been heard and have actively participated in the process. We have worked hard to draft a true compromise in this complex area.

I thank Chairman Specter, Senator Feinstein, Senator Hatch, and others for working so hard with me on this bipartisan legislation. I believe that the time is now for movement on this bipartisan solution and I hope that we can get this measure to the floor today.