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Announcer: The Week in Congress, recorded on April 12th, 1956.

Mr. Kelly: From Washington, DC, transcribed, United States Senator J. Allen Frear reports again to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Ladies and gentlemen, Senator Frear.

Senator Frear: Thank you, Mr. Kelly. In the very near future, the Senate Banking and Currency Subcommittee, of which I am privileged to serve as chairman, will meet to discuss a legislative matter whose background and history is familiar to Americans everywhere. Nearly six years ago, when the Red forces of North Korea slashed across the 38th Parallel in their predawn attack against the Republic of Korea, the Congress of the United States had before it in various stages of consideration a volume of pending legislation designed and intended for use in connection with a peacetime economy. But the sudden and unprovoked onslaught against the free world by the forces of international Communism required, within a short time, almost a complete reversal of our nation’s productive efforts from one of peaceful pursuits to extensive wartime mobilization.

The new impetus of our economy with its major emphasis on national defense began in the very same committee with the same basic legislation on which our subcommittee will again begin work very shortly. I refer, of course, to the historic provisions of the Defense Production Act of 1950 which, after lengthy debate and discussion by the Senate and House banking committees, and later by the full membership of the two houses of Congress, was signed into law by the President so that legal authority would exist to marshal our economic resources against the distant aggressor. At the time of its original enactment, the Defense Production Act gave the President sweeping powers with which to help gear our industrial output into those channels of production which were needed the most. It also covered a multitude of related activities such as Federal control of various types of procurement, stockpiling of strategic goods, and in general, a rather full measure of Federal authority over many heretofore unrestrained peacetime activity. With the passing of time, the Korean Conflict finally ended, and for the time being, at least, this country has returned to an era of peace. However, because of experiences gained both in the Korean War and in earlier conflicts, and because of our continued and compelling need for maintaining an adequate and balanced position of national defense, the Congress in conjunction with the Office
of Defense Mobilization and other government agencies undertakes to ensure that we shall constantly have on hand a sufficient quantity of all scarce items, plus the authority to secure additional supplies in the event of another national emergency. For this purpose and others, Congress has extended, in modified form, the Defense Production Act to the present time. And in our subcommittee hearing later this month, we shall again review the existing provisions of the act as it is presently written and decide how best to extend or enlarge its scope or authority. It is, to me, of particular significance that we are considering an extension of the defense production act at another rather difficult time in world affairs. The deepening crisis in the Middle East and disturbing rumors concerning the possible use of American troops brings to the minds of all fresh concern and anxiety over events which could occur in the near future. I mentioned a moment ago that in its original enactment, the Defense Production Act included broad authority for the application of Federal controls. Some talk is heard that this provision of the earlier bill should again be at least discussed in light of present affairs. At the moment, I would undertake no opinion on so serious a question because, like most everyone else, I share the abiding hope that the dispute in the Middle East will not result in the involvement of American forces. Nevertheless, the seeds of conflict, once sewn, can grow and spread if left unchecked. This nation, in its role of leader of the free world, must exercise its peaceful influence in the cause of international understanding, and in so doing, we must at the same time remain strong and alert ourselves. Thus, this year’s consideration of the defense production act with all that it can and may imply assumes an aspect of growing importance. We earnestly trust that necessity will require no more than an extension of its routine provision. We will know more, however, when the ranking officials of our defense mobilization program and other members of the Congress have expressed themselves as they are expected to do as we take up this legislation in the subcommittee within the next few days.

Mr. Kelly: From the nation’s capital, you have heard United States Senator J. Allen Frear in his regular report to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs.

[End 07:06]