

Three Senators Make The Anti-Science Hall Of Fame

By *Nicholas Staropoli* — September 15, 2015



If you have ever had the displeasure of sitting through all 3+ hours of

the movie *Titanic* there's an iconic moment (no not [that](#) ^[1] one) where the panic of the situation has set in and [then, inexplicably, the band starts playing](#) ^[2]. Passengers are running around in full panic mode while a bunch of guys in tuxedos try to pacify them with an auditory placebo.

This is how I see the supplement industry.

Americans are obsessed with their health and run around in a panic in search of some magic pill/supplement/vitamin/mineral that will be the key to a longer/healthier/smarter life. There is no shortage of media attention for such pills. Today, the media is all over a study on how [vitamin D improves cognition](#) ^[3]. So if fish oil and acai berries did not work you can try something new but be aware that tomorrow they will be onto something else while you will be the same. In fact, the net result is always the same: the public's trust in science is harmed while [Big Supplement](#) ^[4] (who profit off *actual* placebos as opposed to an auditory one) rake in the cash. Why won't the government, which seems to find ways to meddle in almost all aspects of American lives, do anything? Because of the tireless work of **three anti-science senators**.

Tom Harkin (D-IA): Senator Harkin co-authored the 1994 [Dietary Supplement Health & Education Act \(DSHEA\)](#) ^[5] which basically gave the supplement industry a "get out of jail free card." Harkin created this in response to a 1990 bill titled the Nutrition Labeling & Education Act, which the FDA threatened to use to hold the supplements industry to the same standard as medications (what a crazy idea). DSHEA is responsible for that label on all supplements that says "This statement has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease." As long as the product bears that disclaimer somewhere, according to DSHEA, the manufacturer is free to make whatever ludicrous, unsubstantiated claims they like. Harkin retired in January, a moment one supplement mouthpiece [likened to the retirement of Derek Jeter](#) ^[6] from the Yankees. To nonsense purveyors, Harkin was their Hall of Fame clutch hitter.

Orinn Hatch (R-UT): Though Harkin is most famous among supplement shills, for DSHEA and for legitimizing them by creating National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine under the NIH, Senator Hatch is now the best friend of Big-Supplement. Along with co-authoring DSHEA, Hatch has profited significantly in the past two decades from the industry. His home state of Utah

is the [Silicon Valley](#) [7] of the supplement industry and Hatch is a pro at bringing home the pork. For his hard work at keeping the government out of the industry [Hatch has received millions](#) [7] in campaign donations and many members of his family have been given cushy industry jobs. A lawyer for Big-Supplement called Hatch their "natural ally."

William Proxmire (D-WI): Proxmire makes our Anti-Science Hall Of Fame because the man who took over Joe McCarthy's seat authored what [Real Clear Science's Ross Pomeroy](#) [8] recently called "the most anti-science piece of legislation ever." In 1976, Senator Proxmire proposed (which was subsequently passed) an amendment to the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act called the Vitamin-Mineral Amendment. This bill removed any power the FDA had for regulating the supplement industry. It made it illegal for the FDA to ever put any restrictions on the amounts or combinations of drugs in the supplements without proof the supplement was dangerous.

Thanks to Proxmire, [the FDA is helpless unless someone can show us the dead bodies.](#) [9]

A government that needs to micromanage [Happy Meals](#) [10] and [salt counts](#) [11] on school menus is helpless to protect the public from supplements with powerful stimulants [or enough dangerous chemicals "to kill Godzilla"](#) [12], as phrased by Dr. Josh Bloom?

Some regulation is a good thing. To have otherwise would lead to a false sense of security which can delay people from seeking the real medical help they need.

Public perception seems to be moving towards supporting regulating these products, and two of the three Anti-Science Hall of Famers have retired. Only the 81 year old Hatch remains and he has hinted he may be done after his [current term is up in 2018](#) [13]. However, just like on the sinking Titanic, waiting around to act will not end well.

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[1]

<https://www.google.com/search?q=iconic+moment+for+titanic&espv=2&biw=1625&bih=776&tbm=>

[2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-qRDg9WS7fk&noredirect=1>

[3] <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/09/14/440254669/cognitive-decline-moves-faster-in-people-with-low-vitamin-d>

[4] <http://www.msnbc.com/rachel-maddow-show/investigation-prompts-new-scrutiny-dietary-supplements>

[5] http://www.uspharmacist.com/content/d/consult_your_pharmacist/c/11002/

[6] <http://www.naturalproductsinsider.com/articles/2013/04/sen-harkin-s-departure-like-losing-yankees-derek.aspx>

[7] <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/21/us/politics/21hatch.html>

[8] http://www.realclearscience.com/blog/2015/09/the_proxmire_amendment_may_be_the_most_anti-science_law_ever_passed_its_still_in_effect_today.html

[9] <http://acsh.org/2015/09/supplement-makers-cant-ignore-dead-bodies/>

[10] <http://acsh.org/2015/08/expect-only-frowns-if-silly-happy-meal-law-passes/>

[11] <http://acsh.org/2015/09/dont-expect-health-benefits-from-nycs-new-salt-law/>

[12] <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/should-kratom-be-legal/source=acsh.org>

[13] <http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/senate-races/215899-hatch-will-retire-in-2018-if-he-wins-reelection>