

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I believe there has been a unanimous-consent request that has been acted upon relative to the continued business of this body. I wonder if I may ask unanimous consent that I may make a statement not lasting more than 5 or 6 minutes on section 609 which I think is the issue before this body.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, 10 minutes has been reserved for the distinguished majority leader and also 10 minutes for the distinguished Senator from West Virginia. So within that framework, I would not object.

Mr. BYRD. How much time does the Senator need?

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Five minutes will suffice.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes of my time to the Senator.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank my friend, the senior Senator from West Virginia.

DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND STATE, THE JUDICIARY, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the conference report.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, this bill has a section, section 609, which I feel jeopardizes the new chapter in relations between the United States and Vietnam which began last July. With President Clinton's announcement at that time that he was prepared to establish full diplomatic relations with the Government of Vietnam, and with the subsequent steps to open an embassy and begin trade discussions over the last few months, the two-decade long campaign to obtain the fullest possible accounting of MIA's in Southeast Asia truly entered a new stage and a more positive phase. That progress I think is threatened by this section and I wish to go on record as opposing it.

I understand the objective of the authors of the amendment. They want, as I do, to resolve the issue of accountability of the MIA's, and they believe this is the best way to achieve that objective. And while I agree with the objective, I disagree with the means which they have proposed.

I supported the President's decision to establish relations. I have been over there a number of times. And I continue to believe, and evidence supports it, that increased access to Vietnam, not reduced access, leads to increased progress on the accountability issue.

Resolving the fate of our MIA's has been and will remain the highest single priority of our Government. Under no circumstances should it be any different. This Nation owes that to the men and women and the families of the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice for this country and for freedom.

In 1986, I was chairman of the Veterans' Committee, and I was appalled to learn at that time that we had no

firsthand information about the fate of the POW/MIA's because we had no access to the Vietnamese Government records or to the Government or to the military archives or to the prisons. We could not travel to crash sites. We had no opportunity to interview Vietnamese individuals or officials.

That has changed now. The American Joint Task Force, the JTF-FA personnel located in Hanoi now have access to Vietnam's Government and to its military archives and prisons. They are free to travel to crash sites and interview Vietnamese citizens and officials.

As a result of these and other positive developments, the overall number of MIA's in Vietnam has been reduced significantly through a painstaking identification process. Most of the missing involve men lost over water and other circumstances where survival and identification is doubtful.

Most, if not all, of the progress has come since 1991 when President Bush established the office in Hanoi devoted to resolving the fate of the MIA's and supported further activity by President Clinton. Opening this office ended almost two decades of isolation, a policy which, in my opinion, failed to meet our goals.

In 1993, opponents of ending our isolationist policy argued that lifting the trade embargo would mean an end to Vietnamese cooperation. Well, this was not the case. As the Pentagon assessment from the Presidential delegation's trip to Vietnam earlier this year notes, the records offered are "the most detailed and informative reports" provided so far by the Government of Vietnam on missing Americans.

So let me state firmly here that while we have made progress, we should not be satisfied, and we should continue to push for greater and greater results. But there are limits to the results we can obtain by potentially—potentially—turning to a failed policy which remains rooted in the past and is dominated by the principle of isolation. We have reached those limits. It is now time to continue a policy of full engagement with access and involvement.

Being represented in Vietnam does not mean forgetting our MIA's. Having an embassy there does not mean that we agree with the policies of the Government of Vietnam. But it does help us promote basic American values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the marketplace.

When Americans go abroad or export their products, we export an idea and an ideal. We export the very ideas that America went to fight for in Vietnam. Moreover, diplomatic relations give us greater latitude toward the carrot-and-stick approach. So do economic relations, as evidenced by the administration's trade team which recently visited Vietnam for the first time after relations were established.

Retaining diplomatic relations will also advance other important U.S.

goals. A prosperous, stable and friendly Vietnam integrated into the international community will serve as an important impediment to Chinese expansionism. Normalization should offer new opportunities for the United States to promote respect for human rights in Vietnam.

Finally, competitive United States businesses which have entered into the Vietnamese market after the lifting of the trade embargo will have greater success with the full faith and confidence of the United States Government behind it. The amendment in question could jeopardize all this progress and put us back where we were several years ago, which is nowhere. Now I understand that the President plans to veto this bill for a variety of reasons, including because of this amendment. As the administration has told us, it "regrets the inclusion of extraneous language in the bill related to the presence of United States Government facilities in Vietnam." As a result, I expect that the bill will come back to us, to the conference committee, to be considered again. I hope at that time this section will be removed, or at least modified in a way which will not stop progress down the road which has already led to many positive results.

Mr. President. Let me conclude by repeating what I said last July when we first moved toward establishing relations with Vietnam, when I said that I hope that step will continue this country's healing process. I think now, as I thought then, that the time has come to treat Vietnam as a country—and not as a war.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair. And I again want to thank my good friend from West Virginia for his accommodation. I wish him a good day.

Mr. BYRD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, both the chairman and the ranking member of the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations Subcommittee deserve a great deal of credit for the many months of hard work—and it is hard work—that they have put into the fiscal year 1996 Commerce-Justice-State appropriations bill.

This is the first time that the distinguished Senator from New Hampshire [Mr. GREGG], has chaired the appropriations conference. He did so very ably. I congratulate Senator GREGG on his success and keeping his mind on track throughout the conference on this very important, complex appropriations bill.

I wish to recognize the outstanding efforts of the distinguished ranking member of the subcommittee, Senator HOLLINGS, on this bill. On November 9, 1966, a new Member came into this Senate. And for these 29 years and 28 days it has been my good fortune to serve with FRITZ HOLLINGS. He is a man of sterling character. He is absolutely

fearless. He is a man of great courage with supreme dedication to his work. He is smart, and he does what he thinks is best. It is the right thing to do.

It has been a pleasure for me to work with Senator HOLLINGS on the Appropriations Committee these many years. He has been a fine subcommittee chairman, has always been most cooperative with me in the years that I was chairman. I could always depend on him to carry his part of the load, and then some. His knowledge and expertise in all areas of the Commerce-Justice-State Subcommittee's jurisdiction are well known and unequaled in the Senate.

For two decades he has served on the Commerce-Justice-State Appropriations Subcommittee, served with great distinction, and has worked tirelessly throughout his years of service as a member of that subcommittee and as its chairman to ensure that the many important programs and activities that are funded by the subcommittee received fair treatment and equitable treatment, often at times of severe budgetary constraints.

I understand that the President has indicated he will veto this conference report for a number of reasons. I can assure all Senators that such a veto will in no way reflect upon the outstanding work of the chairman and ranking member, Senator GREGG and Senator HOLLINGS. The Senate and the American people are in their debt.

It is with great pleasure that I take this moment to express my deep appreciation to Senator HOLLINGS, a man whose heart is as stout as the Irish oak and as pure as the lakes of Killarney.

I also want to compliment the staff. He has an excellent staff, and so does Senator GREGG, the staff of the subcommittee; Mr. David Taylor and Mr. Scott Corwin for the majority; Mr. Scott Gudes for the minority. There is no better—no better—along with Lula Edwards and Emelie East. They deserve our gratitude and our thanks.

Now, Mr. President, we pass out a lot of encomiums in this body. But I try to be reserved in doing so. I want to close with just these words. I salute Senator HOLLINGS, my old friend of these 29 years and 28 days.

When a man does a deed that you greatly admire,
Do not leave a kind word unsaid
For fear to do so might make him vain
Or cause him to lose his head;
But reach out your hand and tell him, "Well done,"

And see how his gratitude swells.
It is not the flowers we strew on the grave;
It's the word to the living that tells.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. HOLLINGS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. HOLLINGS. My good friend, the distinguished Senator, has been so generous. I hasten to add I am not leaving. It would be most appropriate here for me to tell of my admiration in one sense, but then they would say it is tit for tat.

I have served under Senator BYRD as leader; I have served under him as our chairman. He is the one remaining in the U.S. Senate who maintains the decorum, the dignity, the civility that is so fundamental to the good working of this body. So to hear from him on this occasion—I join with him in congratulating our distinguished chairman of the subcommittee for his difficult and hard work. I have apologized in the sense of not being able to vote for the bill, but I think that is understood in the light of the constraints and what has been contained therein.

But let me genuinely thank my good friend. You make some good friends in this service here. And there is none better than my friend, BOB BYRD, the Senator from West Virginia, and I really thank him.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Senator.

Mr. GREGG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. I also wish to thank the Senator from West Virginia, who has been of tremendous assistance to this committee, obviously. I was sort of dropped into this committee out of the clear blue, and with the help of the Senator from South Carolina, the Senator from West Virginia, Members on our side have been able to struggle through the effort. I think we have produced a bill that is, if not supported by the other side, hopefully at least respected by the other side.

I also wish to thank Senator HATCH, who was very helpful in this undertaking, and Senator HELMS, and especially the staff on both sides of the aisle who have already been mentioned, of course, Scott Gudes and Emelie East, and David Taylor and Scott Corwin, Lula Edwards, and Vasiliki Alexopoulos on our side. They worked incredible hours, just overwhelming hours, under tremendous intensity. I do not know really how they do it.

It is extremely impressive. I think what they all deserve is a good vacation in New Hampshire, and I hope they come. We would love to have them come up and relax.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for about 8 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair. I thank my colleagues.

Mr. President, I rise to express my deep concern about the current state of funding for the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program [LIHEAP]. In the State of Minnesota last year there were about 110,000 households—over

300,000 men, women and children—who receive energy assistance. They received an average energy assistance benefit of about \$360 per heating season.

That was last year. This year, given the huge cuts in LIHEAP funding already enacted, that grant is expected to be about \$200, even though for these households during the heating season, the overall cost of their heating bill is somewhere between \$1,800 and \$2,000.

Last year, we funded this program at a little over \$1.3 billion. We had a rescissions package which contained a cut of \$319 million. On the Senate side, the appropriators proposed to fund this program at \$900 million, and on the House side, it has been zeroed out.

In this bloodless debate that we too often have about the budget, I think sometimes we are completely disconnected from people's lives. That's why I would like to talk about what is going on in Minnesota right now, and what is going on in other cold-weather States. I speak about this with some sense of urgency. Last year, Minnesota received about \$50 million in heating assistance. This year, we have received so far, after the last continuing resolution, about \$9 million. Usually by this time, we have received about \$20-\$25 million.

The energy assistance program, I say to my colleagues who are not from cold-weather States, is really not a year-long program. It is effectively a 6-month program. You need to allocate the heating money now during the cold-weather months. It is truly an example of a program where you cannot do it over a 1-year period of time. You need to get the assistance to people now when they need it.

What we have going on right now with the way we have been funding this program that we are forcing people to freeze on the installment plan. That has to change. I hope there will be a change in the third continuing resolution which we'll likely have before this body next week.

Let me put my colleagues on notice: This will not be the last time I am going to speak about the Energy Assistance Program here on the floor. I intend to raise the alarm until something gets done on it.

It may be—and people may have a hard time understanding this—it may be that in Washington, DC, when it is 30 or 40 or 50 degrees, in my State of Minnesota, it can be 10 degrees below zero, and in some parts of the State, those are exactly the kinds of temperature with which we have been faced.

I want to give a couple of examples, just a few examples, of what this actually means to people who rely on LIHEAP benefits.

Nancy Watson is 55 years old. She is disabled. She lives in Clear Lake, MN. Her income is from SSI and medical assistance. It is \$529 a month. She received her grant of \$81 this year for energy assistance, and she does not know what she is going to do for the rest of the year.