

that, along with the Senator from Kentucky, Senator MCCONNELL, and others. It is still our hope maybe we can resolve that today if possible.

I guess the point I want to make is, there is a 3:15 p.m. meeting at the White House with budget negotiators. I will certainly update the Senate as to the progress following that meeting. What we have agreed to do after each meeting is issue a joint statement so it will not upset anybody and somehow get it off track.

It is my view that the American people want us to reach an agreement on a balanced budget regardless of party, and I am talking about people outside the Capitol, people out in the real world, like some would say. I have had an opportunity to meet with some of those people in North Carolina and Iowa in the past week. I think they want us to do this for the right reason, not that it is a game, or not that it is Republicans versus Democrats, but that it would, if we could get a balanced budget agreement, if the President was on board and it did pass the Congress, then we believe, based on experts, that interest rates would drop 2 percent, for example. That is 2 percent on a college loan, 2 percent on a car loan, 2 percent on a farm loan or home loan, and that would be in the interest of all Americans, certainly regardless of party or regardless of philosophy.

So that is why I think there is a good-faith effort on the part of the President and on the part of the leadership, Republican and Democratic leadership in the House and Senate, and we will proceed this afternoon at 3:15. We are prepared to stay through the weekend, if necessary. Sooner or later we have to reach out and make some of the tough decisions on Medicare and taxes, but, in my view, if we are serious about this, we can do it, or if we cannot reach an agreement, we ought to disagree and Congress can do what Congress feels must be done and the President can do what the President thinks must be done.

Having said that, I will also advise my colleagues hopefully in the next couple of hours what I anticipate the program to be for next week. We do start a new session of Congress on Wednesday of next week. I guess we have been in like this before a couple of times.

I am advised we would come in at 11:55 next Wednesday, adjourn sine die, and then at noon, 5 minutes later, start the new session. But I will give all the other details. I am not certain how many of my colleagues will be present at that time.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— H.R. 1643

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, based on what I said earlier, I now ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1643 regarding MFN status for Bulgaria, and that the Sen-

ate now proceed to its immediate consideration; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of H.R. 2099, HUD-VA, H.R. 1977, Interior, and H.R. 2076, State, Justice, Commerce, as vetoed by the President, be inserted, the bill be advanced to third reading and passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, all without any further action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I ask that the unanimous-consent request be modified to provide for a substitute amendment which would reopen the Government and keep it open until January 30. Absent such a modification, I object.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I reserve the right to object. I will just state to my friend from Vermont that we both share the same feeling about returning employees to work. But if we can, as I indicated earlier, get these bills down to the President, agree with the President any problems he has with these bills will be resolved in the budget agreement, then these employees will be back to work until the end of the fiscal year. So it would be permanent, it would not be a 30-day continuing resolution. That would leave, as I said, the District of Columbia, which is now under a continuing resolution, and Labor-HHS, if I can convince my colleagues to let us bring that up, and then foreign ops where there is only one difference holding up that very important piece of legislation. I would be constrained to object on that basis.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the majority leader's original unanimous-consent request?

Mr. LEAHY. Reserving the right to object further. I will note that I share the distinguished majority leader's—one of the finest majority leaders this Senate has had—desire to go back, but I cannot agree to a unanimous-consent to, in effect, override vetoes of the President by unanimous consent. So I do object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I had not thought of that, but I think that probably would be something to think about. These are separate bills, not the ones vetoed by the President. It would be new bills. They would be identical to the ones he vetoed. But the one additional ingredient here is that we are on these budget negotiations, and we are serious about it—the President is, I am, the Speaker is, Senator DASCHLE and Congressman GEPHARDT are.

I know on the Interior bill, for example, there are only about three reasons the President said he vetoed that bill. Those are all the parts and all the things we are hearing about on the nightly news. We ought to be able to resolve that. Maybe we can come back later and try, instead of these three at once, maybe sending down one we might be able to work out. We would

do this only with the agreement of the President. So we are not trying to do anything here that the President would not sign off on, and I intend to raise that at our 3:15 meeting and tell him in good faith that if he would let us send down these one or two bills, we are prepared to resolve differences as part of the budget agreement.

I thank my colleague from Vermont. Maybe we can revisit this in a different form later today.

Mr. LEAHY. If the distinguished majority leader would yield, Mr. President, I share his concern and desire to put the Government back to work. This is not a thing that is helping anybody. They should be back. I wish him well in his meetings with the President. I have felt, if I might state frankly, that if the issue to be resolved in this budget impasse was left to this Chamber, Republicans and Democrats could come together with the President. It would mean that we would not have a Clinton budget, a Dole budget, a Leahy budget, but we might have the best of all of them and we would have a balanced budget.

I have been in negotiations and conference committees with the distinguished majority leader on everything from agriculture to foreign policy to finance and tax matters. I know that while he is a strong and tough bargainer, I know he also wants the Government to operate. I believe there is the possibility to do this and I hope we might.

ORDER FOR RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I will make one more unanimous-consent request.

I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senators LEAHY, DORGAN, and NICKLES—unless there are others wishing to speak—the Senate would stand in recess subject to the call of the chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I wonder if I might make a comment. I understand the purpose of both objections. The majority leader, I know, recognizes that the passage of a clean CR would mean that everyone would go back to work immediately. It is true that it would be only as long as the CR lasted, but it would end the shutdown.

I understand the circumstances which required the Senator from Kansas to object to that at this point. I wish them well in the discussions with the President this afternoon. In the event this were to go on for several more days, can the majority leader foresee circumstances under which a clean CR might be accomplished so that all Federal workers might go back to work immediately?

Mr. DOLE. Well, I am not certain there will be a CR, but something has

to be done. That is my view. I cannot speak for all of my colleagues in the House and Senate. But I think there is some recognition—there are a couple of concerns that people have. First of all, as I have said before, the employees are sort of the pawns in this game. This is a struggle for whatever we hope will happen over the next 7 years. It is very important. But to somebody out there who is not working and only lives from paycheck to paycheck, it is not a very happy choice, and they should be paid, even though some are saying, "Well, you are paying people for not working." My view is that if it was voluntary on their part, you should not, but it is involuntary. They cannot go to work. Some tried, in Baltimore, to show up for work and they were told to go home. That is a long answer, I guess, to saying there has to be some way around this. That is why I thought, yesterday, that maybe the appropriations bills—if the President would consent to that—then we can probably figure out a way to get Labor-HHS out of here. We have one little provision—and the Senator from Vermont knows more about it than I do—on the foreign ops bill. I will work with the Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, if the majority leader is still on the floor, I hope that he realizes—I am sure he does—that there are many of us—I would say the majority of both Democrats and Republicans—who do want to come together on this issue and get it here in the Senate and get this finished. He mentioned the foreign ops bill, which is one where the distinguished Senator from Kentucky [Mr. McCONNELL] and I had the bill on the floor. We had, I believe, 193 items in disagreement with the other body. We settled 192 of the 193, and I think it is unfortunate that it is held up.

It is beginning to create a problem in the Middle East peace process with the Camp David countries. I think that is of some significance. I know all of us on the floor support the help we give those countries, especially at this critical time. I hope we might work that out. I think we can go through dozens of other issues, where it seems that the solution is so close and so within our grasp. Frankly, Mr. President, I wish the majority leader, the Speaker, and the President all the best in their negotiations, and the distinguished Democratic leaders in both the House and the Senate, who will join with them.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 12:30 p.m. with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

THE PRESIDENT'S VETO MESSAGES

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I want to make a comment to the majority leader. He mentioned during his comments that he would encourage the President to sign the three bills he has vetoed and would be willing to work with him to work out some of the problems that he had. I have a copy of the President's veto message on the Interior bill. I have reviewed all of these. In most cases, the differences are very small. I cannot help but think that the majority leader and the President could work out the differences. There are a couple items dealing with dollars, but a very insignificant amount as far as the total. This is a \$12 billion bill. The differences in dollars is very small.

A few issues maybe need to be clarified as far the administration and so on. There is no reason why this bill should not be signed. I know there was a front page article in the Washington Post today. I know there is a lot of concern about visitors not being able to visit parks and museums. There is no reason whatsoever that this bill should not be signed.

So I encourage the majority leader in his meeting with the President to see if we cannot make a couple small changes in the Interior bill, as well as the Commerce, State, Justice, and the VA-HUD bill, which would relieve a lot of the problems and anxiety for a lot of people all across the country, not just the employees, but also constituents that would like to have access to the parks and to the museums.

So I compliment the majority leader for taking that effort to the President. Hopefully, he will concur, and maybe we can at least resolve the conflict on three of these major items.

Mr. LEAHY addressed the Chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The acting Democratic leader is recognized.

HELPING VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, there are some things, however, that are getting through. The Senate, in one of its final votes before adjourning for Christmas, passed legislation aimed at more than doubling the assistance that my State and others will have in hand to help victims of domestic crime and terrorism.

I mention this, Mr. President, because I think of the years I spent as a prosecutor and I remember so many times we spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to prosecute a perpetrator, especially of a violent crime, both in the prosecution and in the incarceration, but the victim was usually the forgotten person. The victim got no assistance, the victim got no help, the victim was left to fend for himself or herself.

What we have done now is raise to half a million dollars in a special victims fund for Vermont, under the Vic-

tims of Crime Act and under an amendment that I propose, that will help these people. I think this makes a great deal of sense because the money comes not from the taxpayers, the money comes from the criminals. The assessments and the fines to the criminal will go into this fund.

Again, as a former prosecutor, I believe we should bring strong and effective prosecution as quickly as possible in these serious crimes. We have seen what happened in places like Oklahoma City. Let us not forget the victims. When we are setting out the punishment for the perpetrator of the crime, when we add fines and assessments, the money which can go to help victims all the better. In my experience, the victim is usually the person forgotten. All attention is on the criminal. This way, we will keep the attention on those convicted of violent crimes, but we will make them pay into a fund to help the victims.

I think it is much better. I think victims must be treated with dignity and assisted and compensated for their suffering. Who better to pay for the restitution than the perpetrators of those crimes themselves? I thank the Members of the Senate who have joined with that.

THE BUDGET

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we have talked about the budget. I have listened to the distinguished majority leader. I am absolutely convinced that if the distinguished Republican leader and the distinguished Democrat leader in this body could sit down with the President that we could reach those areas of compromise.

We have to understand that no matter what the issue is here, when there are many, many differing views, that nobody wins totally. We do not pass a Gingrich budget or a Dole budget or a Daschle budget, a Clinton budget or a Leahy budget, but we can pass a budget for this country and one that will bring us to a balanced budget but will also allow at least bipartisan cooperation on issues like education, environment, medical care for the elderly, and so forth.

I was concerned in the other body when I hear some say, "Well, let's lock everybody in a room and throw the key away until this is settled." I say to those same people, why did you not stay here last weekend and do it? Why did you not stay and turn the key on your own doors and stay here?

They are claiming over there in the other body that this is for a more efficient Government. This is the least efficient way to run a government, let alone a business—send everybody home so no work is being done, but then people are being told they will be paid for their lost time. They should be paid because it was not through their fault, but the American taxpayer is not being paid for lost services.

These Federal workers want to go back to work, they want to help run