

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I want to make a few remarks concerning the Senator from Iowa's comments and his three amendment. First, I oppose his VISA program amendment. The amendment would require Maritime Security Fleet Program [MSFP] contractors to participate in Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreements [VISA]. This change is unnecessary. The bill already requires MSFP participants to enter into Emergency Preparedness Agreements [EPA]. EPA is the same as the VISA program, with several improvements suggested and supported by the Defense Department. The Senator's amendment would limit the Department of Defense's ability to access all of a contractor's assets. This would handcuff DOD's ability to tailor commercial sealift assets to meet DOD's sealift needs. The DOD helped write this bill. The bill provides the flexibility DOD wants. Further, it would impose additional restrictions that are not found in the bill or even in the existing VISA program that is voluntary today. This amendment simply does not make sense—it would impose additional costs on moving government goods. It would cost taxpayers more, not less. I hope my colleagues will join me in opposing this amendment.

Second, I oppose his lobbying and campaign contribution amendment. The amendment would prohibit the use of funds provided to Maritime Security Fleet Program [MSFP] contractors from being used to fund lobbying or public education efforts or campaign contributions. This amendment is unnecessary and unfairly singles out one industry with which the Government enters contracts.

Current Government contracting and Federal election campaign laws prohibit the use of Government funds for these purposes. The Byrd amendment, 31 U.S.C. 1352, generally prohibits recipients of Federal contracts, grants, loans, and cooperative agreements from using appropriated funds for lobbying the executive or legislative branches of the Federal Government in connection with a specific contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement. There is absolutely no legal basis for restricting the lawful activities of the employees of the recipients, as suggested by the Senator from Iowa. A logical extension of this suggestion would be to restrict the lawful activities of the contractor's fuel supplier or ice cream vendor. Any attempt to change current lobbying and campaign contribution restrictions should be broader in scope so as to treat all such recipients of Federal funds in a similar and fair manner. I intend to move to table this amendment.

Finally, Mr. President, as I said earlier, I am opposed to the Senator from Iowa's amendment on rates. All of these amendments are designed to kill the bill. They are killer amendments. I intend to move to table the Senator's amendment on rates. The managers of the bill will also move to table the sec-

ond degree amendment to that amendment that has been proposed by the other Senator from Iowa. The second degree amendment is just as objectionable as the underlying one.

Mr. INOUE. There is no further business?

Mr. STEVENS. Have we had an adjournment order yet?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair has not been informed of that.

Mr. STEVENS. I suggest the absence of a quorum. I will take care of that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GORTON). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I now ask on behalf of the leader there be a period for the transaction of morning business with statements limited to 5 minutes each with the exception of the following: Senator DASCHLE or his designee, 45 minutes; Senator COVERDELL or his designee, 45 minutes; and Senator MURKOWSKI, 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

A SAFETY NET

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, we understand on our side that we are drawing near the most intense period of the 1996 elections, but we feel very strongly that we should set the politics aside for the election process, and here on the floor of the Senate and in the Halls of Congress create a safety net from politics for our soldiers in Iraq and in Bosnia or wherever they may be, for our disaster victims that have just suffered the ravages of the hurricane coming out of the Caribbean in the Atlantic and tearing its way through North Carolina and other regions of our country, and, obviously, for our children and our seniors.

In other words, Mr. President, this is a time to put the people first, the people's business first, to not raise anxiety among the Nation but go ahead and get our business done, get the politics out of these Halls, out of the city, and let those questions be settled by the American people in the actual election process. Once again, we should create a safety net from the political era for our soldiers in Iraq, our disaster victims in the United States, our children, and our seniors.

Mr. President, in that regard, I commend the leaders on our side, the Speaker of the House, Speaker GINGRICH, and the Senate majority leader, TRENT LOTT of Mississippi. Yesterday, they came before the American people, having met with the Republican leadership of the Appropriations Committee, and released the following statement:

We have already made substantial progress on appropriations bills for the 1997 fiscal year, with action completed or virtually completed on nine separate bills. We are committed to reaching an agreement with the administration on the remaining bills and completing congressional action by September 27th.

It is clear that Senate Democrats are using delaying tactics and political stunts designed more for the upcoming election than for the completion of the people's business. We have approached the consideration of these bills in good faith, but we have been met at every turn by gridlock, apparently coordinated by the White House. We refuse to be a part of this game. We believe Congress should complete its business and adjourn.

Given the Democrats' strategy to tie up the Senate floor, House and Senate leaders have decided that the Defense appropriations conference report will be the vehicle for final consideration of all uncompleted appropriation issues. The remaining issues will be resolved through bipartisan negotiations between congressional leaders and the White House.

In addition to reaching agreement with the administration on shared priorities like education and antiterrorism, we are determined to ensure that we quickly provide critical funding for our troops, for coping with recent disasters, and for those who are fighting the critical war on drugs.

While we are committed to reaching an agreement with the administration, we are concerned that we have not yet received complete information on their requests for additional spending. We look forward to active negotiations over the next days leading to final legislation that will complete the work of the Congress and stay within the limits of this year's budget.

Again, it is our goal to put a safety net under our troops, our disaster victims, our children, our seniors, and all the families that represents across our land.

Mr. President, on the other side, White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta has admitted that some Democrats would like to force Republicans to stay in Washington longer. That sounds like it is designed strictly for political purposes. Now the other side uses a slogan, "Putting Families First," but if the White House allows these Democrats to force extended legislative days here and confusion and chaos, moving you to a point you would have Government gridlock, they are engaged in politics at the ultimate.

Mr. President, I am reminded that last year was a very difficult period here between the Congress and the President. The President likes to blame the fact that Government came to a close on the Republican Congress. He tends to forget, Mr. President, that he vetoed appropriations bill after appropriations bill. At least, Mr. President, at that time, we were fighting over an absolute core issue in America, whether or not to balance the budget, something that virtually 80 percent of the American people are wanting and demanding—very substantive.

Of late, Mr. President, we have heard—and I will read from an editorial in the Washington Times—that shut-down may have had more to do with politics than substance, too. Everybody

is aware of the trials and tribulations of Dick Morris, former confidant of the President of the United States, but this woman that apparently shared a relationship with him, Sherry Rowlands, said, "He asked if I would like some cognac, and we talked about how it tasted and then we talked about the Government shutdown, and that he said he planned this for 5 months ahead of time to show the President as a leader with no weakness."

So now we have suggestions that that tumultuous period in the Congress may have, indeed, been nothing more than a political plan to increase one's fortunes in the political polls. Well, that may or may not be the case. We will be, sometime, adjudicating that. But we certainly know, Mr. President, that at this point the interests of the American people are that we conclude this fundamental decision, that we don't create new anxiety in the country, that we come to terms and settle our differences, that we protect our troops, that we protect our disaster victims, our children, our seniors, and all the families associated with that. Let the political stuff get settled out across the land in the elections. Don't put the people last. Put them first. Let's get this business done and do it in such a way that the American people can be comforted, and that all these systems upon which they depend will continue without interruption.

Mr. President, we have been joined by my good colleague, the distinguished Senator from Tennessee. I yield up to 5 or 10 minutes, as he may need, to comment on this issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Mr. THOMPSON. I thank my good friend from Georgia, who expresses some very valid concerns, and I share those concerns.

Mr. President, as we approach the end of this session of Congress, I think it is imperative that we get our priorities in order.

The elections are only 6 weeks away. As we all know, this is a highly charged time. There is much at stake. And right now, there are some vague rumblings out there that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle may wish to use this tension to partisan advantage.

Mr. President, I submit that the leadership has gone the extra mile toward accommodating the concerns of the party in the minority. This consideration of interests is as it should be.

But I also want to make it clear that if this session stretches out, it will largely be for political reasons—and caused by the minority in the Senate.

It appears entirely possible that some of my colleagues are prepared to stall the final legislation we are now considering in order to play raw politics.

First off, I believe that the Members of this body should be above that sort of thing. The American people are cyn-

ical enough about the character of the Congress without its Members handing them more ammunition. We need to raise the level of discourse here.

Second, we should keep in mind that we are not talking about trivial matters. We are here to conduct the people's business. To hold up the work of the Senate for partisan advantage is outrageous. And I will tell you something else, the folks back home will see through it. The people who elected us know pious posturing when they see it.

If there is a stall to keep us in session, the people are going to figure out who's doing it, and pretty fast.

It is one thing to work through honest differences of opinion. It is quite another to offer trifling, divisive amendments and stalling tactics at the end of an election-year session to wring out every last political advantage.

I call on my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to put this sort of maneuvering aside, so that we can finish the business that the people elected us to conduct.

To prevent playing politics with the lives of Americans, and to prevent even the charge that anyone might be playing politics, we must make certain that the President has legislation on his desk that finishes out the business we need to close in this term.

There are several basic issues we must address before we adjourn. I am certain that when we keep in mind how important it is to conduct the people's business with the dignity it commands, that we will find it in ourselves to work our way through these pending matters to a swift and proper outcome.

Right now, we have troops in Bosnia and the Middle East. These men and women are out there on our behalf, and they deserve our unyielding support. Let us make sure they have whatever they need, and let's do that immediately.

At home, even as we vigorously debate the Federal role in domestic affairs, we need to uphold the commitment we now have to maintain those services we have promised—and to do so at the levels to which we are committed. This is of vital importance, most especially to our veterans, students, senior citizens, and their families.

As Senators, we are obliged to set the highest moral example, and in that, we must keep our word to the people who elected us.

While we may disagree on the very best way to implement solutions to the problems we face, I trust that we do not disagree that some action is vital to keeping our country strong, and to enabling the Nation to conduct business. We have a basic obligation to the people who elected us, to maintain the services of the Federal Government at a high level of efficiency and responsiveness.

We can do this if we put our minds to it. All that is required is that we decide to finish the people's business, and work toward agreement on the outstanding issues we face.

This Congress has achieved a great deal. We should be proud. We've passed many reforms which will not only save money for the taxpayers, but that also will make Government more efficient and more positive in the lives of Americans.

We have passed the line-item veto. We have passed the Congressional Accountability Act. We have ended unfunded mandates. And these are just a few of the achievements we have to show for our efforts when we agree to get the job done.

Let us end this session of Congress on a high note by doing what we were elected to do. Let us work out our differences and pass legislation along to the President that will keep this country open for business.

I hope that as we move through these legislative decisions, that we keep in mind that we cannot jeopardize the important elements of our Government that enable this Nation to be strong, safe, and free.

We want to preserve the safety of our troops. We want to preserve the ability of the Nation to conduct its business, and to maintain the services that our children, our families, and our seniors have come to depend on. Let us not play politics with these matters.

Traditionally, the Members of this body have come together for the best interests of the Nation. This Congress has been up to that task, and I am certain that it still is. My colleagues on both sides of the aisle are strong enough in their resolve, and they care enough about the way we conduct our lives in America, that we can all come together to find agreement on the Nation's business.

Let us concentrate on where we agree, not where we differ.

Let us focus on the issues that bring us together, not those that take us apart.

Let us find a way to work together, and get this job done.

I trust that we can find a common path as we have in the past, and in cooperation with the White House, to reach a consensus without delay.

But make no mistake, the majority has done its part. If we are detained in Washington to keep Congress in session, it will not be over differences in ideas or for honest disagreements. We have met our colleagues more than halfway. It's time to wrap things up, and we ought to be doing that right now.

The people's business should be above partisan posturing, and I sincerely hope that we can maintain a level of effort and dignity—commensurate with the history of the Senate—so that we can complete our work on a high note as we finish out the 104th Congress.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I appreciate very much the Senator from Tennessee making himself available for a very cogent statement on this subject. I know he is trying to get home. I appreciate his taking time to visit

with us about this very important matter of getting the people's business done, getting a safety net here so we can lower the anxiousness of what gridlock will produce in our country at this time.

As I said a little earlier, we are now speculating about whether the last gridlock that occurred in the country was an actual political plan. I am made uncomfortable when the White House Chief of Staff admits that some Democrats would like to force Republicans to stay in Washington longer. This article, which appears in the National Journal Congressional Daily, says:

Some Democrats, Thursday, warned that finishing the funding bills may not be as easy as Republican members are saying. Senate minority leader Daschle warned there may be pitfalls in trying to pass the bill.

Well, what we are hearing is that you are laying a political strategy because it is thought to be politically useful to have the Congress appear to be tied up in knots. But I would like to step back from that and just remind my colleagues on the other side of the aisle that, currently, because of decisions that the President of the United States has made, there are 15,000 American soldiers, men and women, in Bosnia. There are 1,500 of them in Croatia.

There are 29,500 American armed services men and women in the gulf. There are 200,000 U.S. troops on duty abroad. There are 54,000 involved in 13 operations around the globe while 146,000 are stationed at permanent bases abroad. We have literally—quick math—over 50,000 in harm's way today. And the prospect of this kind of posturing is completely out of place. It leaves everyone of the families here at home in support of these troops wondering, and it increases their worry.

I remember in 1990 my good friend and colleague, former President Bush, confronted with a Congress that was exacting and demanding tax increases, and priorities that were not his but he had 1.5 million of America's men and women in the gulf, and simply would not accept allowing our Government to come to a gridlock. He would not accept it. It may have been the decision that ultimately lead to his failed election. But he was not going to leave those American men and women overseas at risk. He was not going to do it. So he accepted the Congress—that was controlled by the other side of the aisle—he accepted it, and he paid an enormous price for it because people thought that he had reneged on a pledge. But he first and foremost stood behind those men and women in uniform in harm's way. We do not have as many, fortunately, in harm's way today. But we have 50,000. I think it is just as incumbent upon this Congress and this President to get that safety net under these men and women, and remove the anxiety and get the politics out of here. Get it done. Let them feel secure and move on.

I could read a long litany as we move from troops. We often hear the Fami-

lies First agenda about children as if they were the only legislators that were concerned about children. I would like to remind them that in the legislation that we are calling upon to get settled we have 20,000 families in crisis who would not know where to turn for help for temporary child care, for crisis nurses that serve thousands of families with children who have disabilities, or serious illnesses. And the families that are under stress—including families affected by HIV, homelessness, violence, and family crisis in drugs and alcohol—over 20,000 families were served in the last 2 years alone. For these families are we going to put them first, as they are asking, or last, to fulfill a political objective?

Will you shut down 2,000 school districts who benefit from impact aid, or put in question the financing of all of those systems? Impact aid provides financial assistance to school districts for the cost of educating children when enrollments and the availability of revenues from local sources have been adversely affected by the presence of Federal activity. That means military impact by and large across our country.

Mr. President, the list goes on. You could cite the issues and problems that will be compounded ad infinitum as you go through this huge appropriations process that we are saying we should just announce to the entire country is going to be settled; lower the stress; our troops don't have to worry; the systems are going to stay intact and we are going to take politics out of the Halls of Congress, and we are going to put them in the election where they properly belong.

Mr. President, I have been quoting this National Journal rather extensively. It is interesting reading. I notice that my good friend, the Senator from Connecticut, Senator DODD, who is chairman of the Democratic National Committee, suggested that our party wants to go home because they realize—we realize—that this Congress, the 104th Congress, is a "disaster." I just could not leave that unchallenged. I remind my good friend from Connecticut that in the last Congress, the 103d Congress, it was dominated by two massive events:

First, the passage by one vote in the House and the Senate, at their encouragement and by the President's demand, of the largest tax increase in American history;

Second, by the suggestion that we should grow Government to the largest level it had ever been, and that we should put in place for America a Government-run health system, which would have meant for the first time that over 50 percent of the U.S. economy would be run by the Government and not by our private sector and citizens.

Those are the two most singular marking events of the last Congress.

Now we come to this Congress that the Senator from Connecticut characterizes as a "disaster." We have had no

tax increase. We have had not expanded the Government. As a matter of fact, we have saved the American taxpayers in this Congress \$53 billion in the last 2 years, marking the first time in 25 years that Congress has reversed the trend to increase discretionary spending; in other words, the first time we have responded to the American people's request that we get spending under control.

We adopted a tax—an adoption tax credit. We secured tax relief for small business. We passed the line-item veto after a 200-year debate. We made Congress—you and I—live under the same laws as the rest of America. We passed legislation that would stop unfunded Federal mandates. We passed, after years of debate, welfare reform. We passed tax deductions for long-term care expenses. We passed targeted health care reform, lobbying reform, food safety, safe drinking water and Everglades restoration.

And the list really is much longer.

More importantly, we secured at least an interim transition in our President, Mr. President, because in his State of the Union he said that the era of big Government is over. I would call that a rather substantive success.

The agenda in this city has been changed. The era of big Government is over. Welfare reform is in place. Health care reform is in place. We are not raising taxes. We are saving taxpayers billions upon billions of dollars.

Mr. President, I think this is exactly the kind of change that America has been asking for.

I am going to conclude, Mr. President, by simply saying that I think it is incumbent upon all of us—both sides of the aisle, given the nature of this political season, and the intensity of it, to come to terms—to get a safety net under our troops, our families that are victims of disaster, our children, and our seniors. Take the elections and our differences out of these halls and into the elections themselves.

With that, I yield back any time remaining under my designation.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE CLINTON RECORD

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to share a few moments with my colleagues on actions taken by the Clinton administration this week. We have had discussions concerning the appropriateness of the President withdrawing about 1.8 million acres in Utah under the authority of the Antiquities Act of 1906.

I ask the Chair and my colleagues, is this really the creation of a national