

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Thank you, Mr. President.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, this morning, to accommodate a number of requests by Senators, there will be a period for morning business until the hour of 12 noon. Following morning business, the Senate will proceed to executive session in order to consider the International Natural Rubber Treaty Agreement under the parameters of a previous unanimous-consent agreement. I understand that a rollcall vote will not be necessary on that treaty and that some of the debate time probably will be yielded back.

Following the disposition of that treaty, the Senate may be asked to turn to consideration of any of the following matters: the pipeline safety bill, with only one nongermane issue remaining unresolved; the work force development conference report—we attempted to reach a time agreement on that one, but have been unsuccessful; we will keep working on that—the debate on the veto message to accompany the partial-birth abortion bill override, the NIH reauthorization bill, or any other items that can be cleared for action.

The Senate may also be asked to begin consideration of the continuing resolution, if an agreement can be reached as to how to proceed on that. I continue to say that I would be glad to begin the debate and allow amendments to be offered as long as there is some order to it as to what we can expect to happen and when it would be completed. But just to start down the trail without any end in sight, without any certainty as to how we proceed, I do not believe is in the best interest of the Senate. We will continue to work on that. I hope we will be able to begin that appropriations bill today.

We do have the end of the fiscal year next week, on Monday as a matter of fact. It is imperative that we finish the work on that bill as quickly as possible.

I note that there are very important negotiations underway now to wrap up, not only the amounts in that continuing resolution, but also language that would be included. We are hoping we will be able to take up the illegal immigration bill also in some form before we go out for the year.

Senators should be alerted that rollcall votes are expected to occur throughout the day, but we do not have any agreed-to time right now as to when that might happen.

One final cautionary note. I do not feel a sense of urgency yet. I think Senators are still feeling, well, we can agree later. Time is running out. Example A is NIH reauthorization. Everybody says they want it, but we continue to not be able to bring it up. Today is the last day for NIH. If we do

not get an agreement, I am going to call it up, somebody is going to have to come over here and object, and a very, very important piece of legislation that everybody knows we should pass will be gone for the year, because beyond today—Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday—we are going to be involved in the partial-birth abortion ban debate and a vote tomorrow, and we are going to be involved in the continuing resolution, the DOD appropriations conference report, and the illegal immigration reform bill. There will not be any time for any other chitchat, even 1 hour on these other issues.

So for those of you who are interested in parks, those of you interested in NIH, those of you who think pipeline safety is something we should do—by the way, that legislation needs to be done before the end of the month also or we are going to have a lot of expiring laws on our hands. I hope the Senators will get serious. I have my doubt that they are serious. But I also have my limits in what I can do working with the Democratic leader because we have people coming and saying, “Well, can we just have 6 hours? 4 hours? 1 hour?” They are all gone. Today is the day. Do it today or it will be gone for the year.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GREGG). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 12 noon, with Senators permitted to speak for not to exceed 5 minutes each.

Senator THOMAS from Wyoming is recognized for a period of 30 minutes.

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you, Mr. President.

ELECTION TIME IS DECISION TIME

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, several of us want to continue our discussions of the upcoming election, discussions that have to do with the issues that are involved. It is election time. Of course, as evidenced by what the leader said today, the time is short. It is election time, and it is decision time. This is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Therefore, there is a responsibility for all of us, as voters, of course, to participate in the election, to participate as informed voters.

If we are to have self-government, then the decisions and the direction that this country takes must be the result of the composite wisdom of voters. That time has arrived.

It seems almost a paradox that in a time when technically we have more

information available to us than we have ever had in history—imagine 100 years ago how much we knew in Wyoming about what was going on in Washington. Very little. If we did, it was much after the event had happened. Now we know instantly, of course. The paradox is that it seems to me it is more difficult for us as voters now to kind of weed out among all the stuff that is out there as to what the real issues are. Whether it is the fault of the media, whether it is the idea of the media picking out the emotional things, whether it is the idea of professional campaign planners who spin and intentionally blur the issues, whether it is a Congress and an administration that seek to make the choices less clear, I do not know. Perhaps it is a combination of each of those.

Nevertheless, you and I have a responsibility to choose. On my way back Sunday, I had a book I have been intending to read about the Constitution. I was struck by the idea that the Constitution, and more particularly the Bill of Rights, was designed exclusively to limit the powers of Government. You do not find in the Bill of Rights, the Government will do this, the Government shall do this, the Government shall provide that. It says, the Government “shall not.”

The great concern of our forefathers was to make sure that we limit the central Government, limit the power of central Government. Still, it seems to me, in our own way, in our own judgment, that is the choice we make. How do we see the Government? What do we think the role of the Federal Government is? Is it to provide all the little nice things we would like to have happen personally in our lives? Every day is a new program for something that is probably pretty nice. Is that the role? Or is the role more one of insuring freedom, insuring opportunity, insuring an environment in which the private sector can function, providing for strong local government, State and county?

These are the decisions, and I know my prejudices are pretty well arranged. I seek to have a Federal Government that is the protector of those things, rather than a provider of those things. Obviously, there are things that are appropriate for the Federal Government to do—in interstate commerce, in defense and those kind of things. Those are the decisions that we will make. I hope each of us is prepared to do that.

I happen to think we have begun to do some of those things in the last 2 years in this Congress, and, in fact, this has been one of the most effective Congresses we have had for a very long time. Unfortunately, our minority leader does not agree with that. He was quoted as saying this has not been a productive Congress. I am sorry to hear him say that. I do not agree. We will talk about a number of things that have been done, things I believe move us more into the direction of a smaller Federal Government, a less expensive Federal Government, a less regulated society.

Lower taxes: In the 104th Congress, the Republicans passed a \$245 billion tax cut, including a \$500 child tax credit to move toward allowing families to spend their own money, to allow families to provide for their children. Unfortunately, it was vetoed by the President.

Lower spending: This Congress has cut spending \$9.3 billion in 1995, and \$23 billion in 1996 was eliminated from 270 programs. That is good. I think that is a real movement. The administration claims to have reduced the size of Government. Indeed they have—they claim, 200,000. The fact is that most was from the base closures, civilian employees of defense; the other was the termination of the savings and loan. Nevertheless, it reduced employees, and that is good.

Balanced budget: How many times before the last 2 years did you hear people talking about balancing the budget? Not very much. It has not been balanced in 40 years. Now, suddenly, everyone is for it. The discussion is not, do you balance the budget; the discussion is, how do you do that? Unfortunately, the balanced budget amendment to the Constitution was defeated here. Nevertheless, we now are on the road to a balanced budget.

Ending welfare as we know it: We have done that, something that has not been done for a very long time, providing the States more opportunity to do something about the entitlement aspect of welfare. Everybody wants to help people who need help. The question is, how do we help them to help themselves? That is what we have sought to do. It took three times to get it passed. Nevertheless, it is a success.

Market-based health reform: Portability, availability, limited medical savings account, the end to preexisting condition exclusions, combat fraud and waste in health care. A success.

Here is an interesting one, ensuring access to higher education. This Congress increased student loan volume by 50 percent, from \$24 billion to \$36 billion in 2002. Unfortunately, it was vetoed as part of the balanced budget amendment.

Farm programs: Many of us have been involved in farm programs for a very long time. Most everyone has said we need to move toward market orientation, toward the marketplace. Finally, we have done that over a period of 7 years. Agriculture is moving toward a market-oriented economy. It needs to be done. Finally, it is done.

We helped to end lawsuit abuse. Securities litigation was passed. Unfortunately, it was vetoed. Telecommunications was passed. A deregulation of telecommunications which give us some of the kind of new opportunities to communicate that we have never had.

Unfunded mandates is something that local governments have been talking about for a very long time. Unfunded mandates reforms were passed this time.

Regulatory reform: Unfortunately, the real broad one was killed. I think it should have been passed. A lesser one was passed.

Mr. President, we have done a lot of things this time. Line-item veto: A line-item veto in 40 years has not been done. This Congress passed a line-item veto.

Congressional accountability: People in this place, now, have to live under the same rules in their offices and in their conduct, the same as everybody else, in the laws they pass for others.

Reduce congressional funding, small business regulatory reform, gift ban.

Mr. President, I think this has been an extremely successful Congress. The choice with respect to the election is, do we want to continue in this direction, or do we want to go back to where we have been for 40 years in continuing to grow with the kind of Lyndon Johnson programs we have had? That is the choice. It is really the choice.

I think, in addition, and perhaps as important as anything, this Congress has changed the culture of Washington. For the first time, I think, in a very long time—certainly for the first time since I have been here in 6 years—the Congress really took a look at programs that exist and said, do they need to continue to exist? If so, can they be done more efficiently? Could they be done more efficiently by the States or local government? These are the kind of things that need to be examined constantly.

I have a bill that I hope gets consideration next year which would give us a biannual budget so we do not each year spend all of our time on appropriations bills. As you can see by the leader's comments this morning, we are still working on them, and we will not get them done at all this year. We do that every year. I hope, as most States do, we can go to a biannual budget. It is better for agencies. Then we can spend the last year with oversight, looking at programs, to see if indeed this is a better way to do it.

There are a great many things we can do, a great many things we have done. Mr. President, my whole point is, in this election, we make some choices. It is not always easy. It is not always easy to determine where the choices lie, of course. We see all the advertisements, and sometimes you wonder where they are. But I think we have a responsibility to ask, to seek, to point out where these things are. Where do you stand on the balanced budget amendment? Where do you stand on less Government rather than more? Where do you stand on less taxes rather than more? I think those are the basic issues that you and I need to decide. I urge we all do that.

There are other issues, of course. The issue of character, I think, is one. I think we have to ask ourselves, what do we expect of leaders in terms of character? As we look back, character has been an important factor, has been a key factor, and continues to be.

Mr. President, we have some choices. The choices, frankly, are rather clear. We can go back where we were or we can continue the kinds of things that have been done in this Congress in the last 2 years, and it does need an opportunity to continue. You can't change 40 years of history and turn things around in 2 years. Despite the difficulties, it is my view that this Congress has done exceptionally well and will go down in history as one who has sought to turn the direction of this country. I hope that we continue to do that.

I yield the floor.

Mr. INHOFE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

THE POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF CONGRESS

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, we hear so many negative things, and it is kind of enjoyable to talk about what has been accomplished sometimes. The Senator from Wyoming has been very articulate in expressing those positive things. I remember in 1987 when I was first elected to the other body. We had as our class project at that time to repeal the earnings test. I have always felt there is nothing more un-American than to tell the people in America that once you reach a certain age, you have to become nonproductive, and if you are not nonproductive, then we are going to take away some of your Social Security. Well, we tried for about 10 years to get that done, and it was not until we had a Republican Congress that we were able to have a major reform. We haven't totally repealed it, but we will phase into a position where we actually will be telling the people of America that you are not going to be punished if you decide to be productive past a certain age.

Many years ago, I was the mayor of a major city in America, Tulsa, OK, and every time I go and talk to mayors now, I say, "Tell us what the major problem facing your city has been." They don't say it's crime in the streets and welfare. They say it's unfunded mandates. I can remember so well as the mayor of the city of Tulsa when the Federal Government would come and tell us certain things that we had to do, and if we didn't do it, they are going to be taking money away from us, or if we did it, we would have to pay for it ourselves. Consequently, it would be up to us to allow Congress in Washington, with all of the lofty attitudes that they seem to portray here, to say that we have done these wonderful things for the people of America, and to say that some political subdivision underneath them—the cities, or counties, or States—had to pay for them.

We passed an unfunded mandates bill where we are not going to be faced with that anymore. I would like for it to have been retroactive, but it could not have been. So that has been resolved. It is a major reform, and it was done by this Congress. I am very, very proud of