

has 15 minutes under a unanimous consent as agreement?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that Senator FEINGOLD be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes as in morning business.

Mr. INHOFE. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I do not believe I will object but I would like, for clarification purposes—I intended to speak right after the Senator from Nevada. Would the 10 minutes be included as part of his 15 minutes?

Mr. REID. No. The unanimous consent was to give him 10 minutes. I did not say when it would be, but it would be as in morning business.

Mr. INHOFE. I would not object if I would be allowed to speak for 5 minutes prior to that.

Mr. REID. I ask that be part of the unanimous-consent request.

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

THANKING FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as I indicated last week, one of my concerns is how people feel about Government. We hear so much negativism that it seems that nothing good ever happens in Government. Whenever I return to Nevada, and especially when I go to the elementary and secondary schools, and universities, I always tell those young people that Government has done good things for people and continues to do good things for people.

What I want to do is, certainly, not whitewash what Government has done or is doing, because we all know we can do better and could have done better in the past. What I want to do, on a periodic basis, is talk about some of the things that are happening in Government that are good.

Every summer, communities up and down the east coast keep a wary eye out for the hurricane season and the havoc that hurricanes wreak. It is hard for me to comprehend the devastation that has taken place in the State of Florida, as an example.

Here in Washington, we only have to look back a few weeks to the chaos caused by Hurricane Fran. But just getting a little bit of that vicious storm, the Potomac overflowed its banks, we have roads that were washed out, and people all across Virginia have soaked basements. Commuting became very difficult.

Out in the western part of the United States, we have problems that are also created by nature. It happens almost on a yearly basis, and that, Mr. President, is the calamity of wildfires. I am sure people from the East have difficulty understanding how these fires will rage over thousands and sometimes millions of acres of land. They are very difficult to stop. The dry hot

weather, mixed with the brittle underbrush, makes millions of acres nothing more than tinderboxes waiting for a flash of lightning, or a careless act by a human being.

So far this year in 1996, almost 6 million acres have been consumed by fires across the United States. About 90,000 fires have started. Firefighters have managed to quell most all the fires. Those they have been unable to defeat are in the hundreds.

The manpower required to battle Mother Nature is mindboggling. Mr. President, 25,000 firefighters worked this summer to save communities from these wild raging fires. On August 30, it reached its peak; that is, the battle of man against nature, when 22,000 men and women in 1 day were on the fire lines trying to control these fires.

The efforts of these firefighters are coordinated through a Government agency called the National Interagency Fire Center, which is based in Boise, ID. This agency was established 31 years ago as a cooperative project with the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service.

When a fire breaks out, local firefighters usually can handle it, but if they cannot, it is then that they call the National Interagency Fire Center, in effect, asking for help. Then the Fire Center calls in resources from the Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Forest Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or any combination thereof. As ground and air crews battle these fires, the National Interagency Fire Center—experts in fire ecology, fire behavior—work with the National Weather Service personnel to plan strategies for fighting these raging fires while keeping an eye, of course, on changing weather patterns. These fires become so intense, Mr. President, that they, on occasion, create their own weather.

As we all know, firefighting is a dangerous and unglamorous business. But fighting wildfires is more grueling than most can imagine.

There are different types of firefighters. There are the major league firefighters and there are firefighters who are referred to as type 2 crews.

What are type 1 crews? They consist, first of all, of smokejumpers. When the fire breaks out and the National Interagency Fire Center is called, usually who they send in first are these very courageous, well-trained men and women who are smokejumpers.

There are only 400 of them in the United States, but they do so much. They are chosen for their incredible physical and mental stamina. These elite crews parachute into areas that are otherwise inaccessible. They carry with them packs that can weigh over 80 pounds. They jump from these airplanes with packs, as I indicated, weighing over 80 pounds. In the packs, they have firefighting equipment, and they have food and water, enough to last them for up to 3 days.

They are the first line of defense most of the time in stopping one of these fires. When they are in the middle of one of these infernos, they push on and go for as many as 3 days without sleeping.

We also have as first line fire crews people who rappel into an area off helicopters. Helicopter firefighting is something that is relatively new, but these helicopters also take these people into very remote areas. Once they have reached their destination, these brave people rappel down to the fire and begin their work.

They, too, carry huge packs. There are 400 smokejumpers. There are only 200 of these so-called heli-rappellers working for the Forest Service.

Hotshots are also part of the type 1 crews. These firefighters, part of an elite ground crew, are working the front lines of fires that have raged out of control. Many times we have the smokejumpers come in, we have the heli-rappellers come in and then if a fire cannot be contained, you have these hotshots come in and work the front lines of fires that have raged out of control.

Mr. President, very recently, I called a man at one of the hospitals in Nevada. He was at the university medical center. He was there because it is the best and perhaps the only intensive care facility for people who are badly burned in all of the State of Nevada. He was transported about 400 miles from a fire that he had been fighting. He had to be transported because Dave Webb, the man who I called on the telephone, had been badly burned in a fire near Winnemucca, NV. He had second- and third-degree burns on his face, hands, and legs.

When I called, he was not able to handle the telephone. Someone had to handle the telephone for him. He is one of the very brave men who every summer endanger their own lives to go into these areas where it is difficult to comprehend people would be willing to go into.

I talked with him about what had happened, and he explained it to me, with a lot of humility, embarrassed that the fire had gotten to him and burned him so badly. He felt that he had been a failure. Of course, he had not been a failure. He had worked in many of these fires.

This happens every summer. He was one of the lucky ones. He was not killed.

These type 1 crews, like Dave Webb, have worked together for many years. They know each other. They are, in effect, the Green Berets of the firefighters. I extend my appreciation to the type 1 firefighting crews, those who jump out of airplanes, climb out of helicopters, who work the front lines.

Mr. President, there are others, though, thousands and thousands of others who do not jump out of airplanes or helicopters or are not trained to be hotshots, but are extremely important. These are the type 2 crews.

They come in, they fight fires. They watch fires after they have been put out, because one of the real dangers we have with fires is they appear to be out, but some of the worst forest fires we have had have been initiated after the fire has been put out, when people thought the fires died down.

Over 3,000 fires in the Great Basin alone burned almost 2 million acres this summer, and communities across the State of Nevada were witness to the dramas that played out in the hills and mountains above their homes.

Driving just 2 miles out of Reno on Highway 80 going to the west, you see the results of one fire they had there this summer. There in the Belli Ranch area, 7,000 acres were consumed by a fire that is suspected to have been caused by an arsonist. This cost the taxpayers at least \$2 million.

As you go past the Belli Ranch area and drive into the community, you are confronted by really a breathtaking scene.

You can see the black sweep of the fires that rolled up and down hill after hill. Then, almost magically, the black gives way to the beautiful green of the sage and other brush and grasses. This green is the buttress of only about 10 or 20 feet from the homes. The fire got within 10 to 20 feet of the homes. Saved and intact, the homes in the community are alive with the daily hustle and bustle of life, having come so close to having been consumed, as other homes in Nevada and the West were consumed this summer.

So people in Nevada and other parts of the West are grateful to the men and women who put their lives on the line to stop the fires before communities were swallowed up, just like the homes that were saved in the Belli Ranch fire.

This fire season is drawing to a close, Mr. President, and we in the West breathe a sigh of relief that we have been able to endure again the wrath of mother nature, or sometimes an act of malice, or carelessness by man.

We say thanks to the 22,000 firefighters that have been employed by the Federal Government during this fire season. To the pilots who fly into the face of these fires, the crews that jump out of these airplanes, out of these helicopters, the ground crews that struggle against the infernos that threaten communities, to the people of the National Interagency Fire Center who coordinate so well so much of the battle, I say thank you. And to my fellow Americans, Mr. President, I say, that is how Government works for you. I yield the floor.

Mr. INHOFE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to extend my 5 minutes to not to exceed 10 minutes.

Mr. GRAHAM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. GRAHAM. I would like to add to that unanimous-consent request that

at the conclusion of the Senator's remarks, I be allowed to speak for 15 minutes for purposes of introduction of legislation.

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

Mr. INHOFE. Thank you, Mr. President. I will be very happy to accommodate the distinguished Senator from Florida with his request.

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I happened to be presiding this morning when the very distinguished senior Senator from Massachusetts, Senator KENNEDY, made a number of comments. I know that he would not intentionally say anything that is not totally accurate in reflecting upon the positions and past performances of Senator Bob Dole, but I think inadvertently he misrepresented his stand on a number of issues. I would like to just briefly go over a couple of these.

First of all, it seems as if it has been over a year now since the demagoging of Medicare has taken place on this floor. I was very pleased a year ago today, I believe it was, to read an editorial in the Washington Post. And, Mr. President, I do not think anyone has ever accused the Washington Post of being a Republican publication.

So, finally, I feel that they looked at this and thought this is such a serious thing, that the Republicans had a program to save Medicare, and that by the admission of the board of trustees that was appointed by President Clinton, if we did not do something, Medicare would have gone broke by the year 2002, then that was updated a year later and they said it really would be 2001, and the Republicans had a program to control growth, not cut—there has never been any intention to cut benefits of Medicare to the American people—but have controlled growth, do away with waste and fraud and abuse and install some other things that would make it a viable program.

So, finally, the editorial boards around the country, that are normally not sensitive to Republican causes, rallied and said, we are going to have to do something about it.

I would like to read the last two sentences of an editorial found in the Washington Post a year ago, just about now. I believe it was a year ago today. It was called "Medagogues, Cont'd." This is the second one. A week before that they had one where they demonstrated very clearly and very persuasively that what the Republicans were trying to do was to save Medicare. The last two sentences are:

The Democrats have fabricated the Medicare-tax cut connection because it is useful politically. It allows them to attack and to duck responsibility, both at the same time. We think it's wrong.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at the conclusion of my remarks, the editorial entitled "Medagogues, Cont'd" from the Washington Post be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.
(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, the second attack on Senator Bob Dole by the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts had to do with the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, implying that Bob Dole was opposed and had been opposed to the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill. I would suggest to you, Mr. President, that one thing that Bob Dole was opposed to was a single payer Government-run system which the President had advocated earlier in his administration. In other words, socializing medicine, taking about 12 percent of the economy of this country and putting it in the hands of Government because they can do it so much better than the private sector can do it.

That is what Senator Dole was opposed to. He was not opposed to some of the reforms that were found in the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill. There were a couple of reforms that he wanted that ended up being in the bill. In fact, the President said that if the MSA's, medical savings accounts, were added to the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill, at one point he said he would veto it. Many of those on the other side of the aisle said that if the MSA's are in, it would be vetoed.

Why were people concerned about the MSA's? They were concerned about them because those people who would want to have a socialized approach to health care delivery in this country know that once we have MSA's, we will never go back to that system.

What do MSA's do? They merely allow the choice of individuals so that if an individual wants to shop around for his health delivery services, and he can save money doing so, then he can benefit and have the rewards of what he has saved. I think that our health delivery in America is the only product or service known that actually has a built-in disincentive to save. And I am guilty like everyone else. You know, if I have my deductible and I go ahead and pay that, then I am inclined to go and get any kind of medical or health service that is out there because it no longer costs me any more money. That is human nature.

We finally got a modified medical savings account system put into the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill. I say "modified." It is only on a trial basis. It is going to prove itself. I heard estimates that we could actually reduce the total cost of health care in this country by as much as 50 percent just by having MSA's.

Mr. President, there is another thing we need to do that is not in this bill, and that is to have some kind of medical malpractice so we do not have such a high defensive cost. But anyway, the fact that MSA's are in there now—the President had said he would veto it if they were in there. He did not veto it. I am glad he did not veto it. But certainly it was never Bob Dole's intention to oppose the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill with the reforms in it that he felt