

an agreement that he would not hold up one good bill for his amendment having to go just on that bill. We have other options. There will be other bills. The majority leader, whose word is good, will find another opportunity for the Senator from New Jersey. But we must know that we are going to have the stalking bill at some reasonable time. I would like to see it before the recess so that we can put this law into place. It has been pending since Memorial Day. So I would like to ask if we could work on having this bill out and work with the Senator from New Jersey for his amendment to go on another bill. It is really quite simple. If everyone is in agreement that the underlying stalking bill is good, then I think we should move forward on that.

Mr. BOND addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

VA-HUD APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, while we are talking about bills that need to be moved, I want to return to the matter of the VA-HUD appropriations bill. As Members in this body and those who are observing our actions will recall, last night, proceeding to the bill was objected to by the Senator from Minnesota. This bill is being held hostage for another issue not related to it.

I rise today to point out to my colleagues the importance of passing this bill as quickly as possible. This is an appropriations bill. This is an important appropriations bill that provides money for the Veterans Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Environmental Protection Agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, National Science Foundation, and others.

We not only have to pass that bill, however, to provide funds beginning on October 1, the start of the new fiscal year, there are, at the request of the administration, certain emergency supplemental matters that have to be dealt with now. Let me advise my colleagues that the consequences of continuing to delay action—and the delay last night may already have made it too late to get this bill through—I am ready, however, to stay here and work as long as the leadership wants us to work, because this bill contains a supplemental appropriation for Ginnie Mae, the Government National Mortgage Corporation. This bill provides a \$20 billion increase in the current limitation on loan guarantees for mortgage-backed securities needed to finance FHA and Veterans Administration mortgages through September.

If we do not pass this bill, it means that sometime probably in early September, the VA and FHA will no longer be able to sell in the secondary mortgage market the paper that is generated by an issuance of loans to veterans and to those who qualify for the FHA. These people will be without the financing that should be available to

them, and it will be the fault of this body and those who have held up this bill if veterans in my State, in the State of California, the State of New York, or the State of Minnesota are not able to get mortgages in September.

The effect will be ultimately increasing mortgage interest rates and constraining home financing availability.

In addition, if this bill is delayed past the signing after October 1, as of September 30 the Federal Emergency Management Agency advises us that they will no longer be able to write flood insurance policies. Property owners in every State in the Nation depending upon Federal flood insurance will no longer be able to get Federal flood insurance. The authority expires. We have been asked to include an extension of the authorization for one more year in this bill. Without this bill, flood insurance will not be available.

There has also been discussion of water projects. Everybody knows that the District of Columbia is suffering from drinking water problems. This bill includes \$2 million for water infrastructure funds, including funds that will go ultimately to the safe drinking water revolving fund in every State and the District of Columbia.

That requires some additional explanation. We know that the House has passed the safe drinking water bill. We know also that the appropriations measure which passed both bodies and was signed into law for the current fiscal year had a provision that if the safe drinking water law was reauthorized prior to August 1, there would be roughly \$725 million available for that fund. August 1 has come and gone. As a result of the terms of the appropriations bill for this year, that money goes into the clean water fund. Those moneys are in the process of being paid out by the EPA to the State revolving funds.

When this bill is ultimately passed and signed by the President, traditionally the EPA takes about 3 months to get regulations issued so that funds can be paid out to all of the States under the formula for the drinking water revolving fund.

We are prepared in this measure when the President signs the safe drinking water bill, as I hope he will, to credit the safe drinking water fund with the money that is poured over into the clean water fund and provide additional appropriations, reducing the clean water funds for the next fiscal year.

I have assured the authorizing committees that we will make those moneys available as soon as we can approve this bill. As soon as we can send it to the President and get it signed, that money will be there.

The opposition to moving forward to VA-HUD means that we are holding up money to go to drinking water projects and clean water projects. The money that was temporarily set aside until August 1 for the States for the drink-

ing water funds is now in the clean water fund, and the EPA can continue to distribute that money. It can go to the States and the State revolving fund.

So that money is not lost. There have been some irresponsible statements by people who do not understand the process that the money is being lost. The money is not lost. The money can go to work today, tomorrow, this week on the clean water fund, but if it gets passed by both Houses and the President signs the safe drinking water fund at the direction and at the request of the authorizing committees, I will recommend to the committee and to this body that we put an equivalent amount from the 1997 appropriations into the safe drinking water revolving fund so that the District of Columbia and other States—as soon as the Environmental Protection Agency writes the regulations and can hand out the money—will have the dollars available to improve the drinking water supplies. That is another reason this bill must be protected.

In addition, this bill includes the funds needed as of October 1 to send out benefit checks to about 2 million poor and disabled veterans and veterans' widows. When this bill is held hostage, as it was last night, we are threatening the money that goes to the poor and disabled veterans and their widows.

This bill, Mr. President, also has \$1 billion to restore FEMA's disaster relief fund so that disaster victims from floods and other disasters across the country may be helped by FEMA. Mr. President, when someone holds up this bill and holds it hostage, it is holding hostage the money that would go to aid victims of disaster.

I ask my colleagues to quit playing games with a vitally important appropriations bill. Deal with the other matters. There are many sensitive matters. There are many things that I have that are being held up, and I am doing my best to work out agreements with those who are holding them up. But I say to you that the appropriations bills need to go forward not only to fund vital programs that begin October 1, but in the instance of the Ginnie Mae loan limitation, the bill has to be enacted as soon as possible so that Ginnie Mae's ability to sell VA and FHA mortgages will not expire.

In addition, as of October 1, there will be no authority for FEMA to write flood insurance.

Mr. President, we have talked enough about all of these problems. I hope that very shortly the majority leader will be able to ask unanimous consent to move forward on some of these vitally important measures that are pending before this body.

I yield the floor.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Thank you, Mr. President. I say to my colleagues that I will take only 2 minutes.

Look, the Senator from Missouri—we know each other. We work together on the Small Business Committee. If we want to talk about being held hostage, we have a judge who is being held hostage. The Senator knows—he was up here earlier—that there are a lot of discussions going on. And I think the majority leader is confident that this can be worked out very soon.

Nobody is trying to stop everything. This all started with a wonderful judge. You would think she is wonderful. She thought she was going through the other night. Everybody had given their word. It was going to be by unanimous consent. And then, all of a sudden, for a variety of different reasons, it did not.

It does not do any good for anybody to get angry at anybody any longer. It did happen. We are now trying to work this out. Believe me, this really was the judge that was held hostage. But we are beyond that now. We are working hard on an agreement, and that is going to happen.

That is all I would say to my colleague. I think he knows that.

Mr. BOND addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I would say simply that the effect of what has been done is to hold this bill hostage. I am not in here to fight about judges. I have had judges held up before. I sympathize with people who want to move things forward that are held up. I am simply pointing that out for whatever reason. I am not here to judge whether this judge may or may not be important in all the measures and all of the provisions that I have cited.

I want to call attention to everybody in this body the likely consequences of holding up this bill. It was held hostage last night, and until we hear differently, I regret that it apparently is being held hostage, and the consequences.

I yield the floor.

Mr. FORD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, let me just take 1 minute, and then I will sit down.

The Senator from Missouri is fussing quite eloquently here about not getting his bill up and giving a lot of reasons. The objection this morning came from your side, not from this side. It came from your side to bringing things up over a bill that is in the House, not in the Senate.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Will the Senator yield? There has been no objection this morning. There has been no offer. There has been no objection. The objection was last night by the Senator from Minnesota on a judgeship.

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I know what the objection would be. The reason it has been brought up is because there would be an objection, and the objection was made last night.

The finger pointing has gone too far here. I think we need to call a quorum, wipe the sweat off, and try to work things out instead of pointing fingers at each other. We are getting too harsh.

The majority leader is working hard, trying to make this thing work, and then we have people jumping up and down fussing back and forth. It is time it stopped. It is time it stopped.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. The Senator is correct. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. DORGAN. I want to make the same point. The Senator from Missouri makes an appropriate point about the urgency, and we need to move this legislation. I understand that. I accept that. I hope we can do that.

To suggest somehow that one Senator, the Senator from Minnesota, or anyone else in the Chamber is deliberately holding something hostage is not appropriate.

What has happened here is there are a series of issues that get done by consent and by agreement, and the majority leader and minority leader and others have worked hard to put these things together. Some of them become unraveled, and there are a number of reasons that they become unraveled.

The fact is when you start talking about taking hostages, if we wanted to spend some time we could talk about hostages here for a while, but I do not think it would serve your interests or mine. I just think it is not appropriate to suggest that the Senator from Minnesota or anyone else is holding up this bill. There is a whole series of things that have to be done by agreement here, and when they are done all these things are going to work and happen.

Again, I say that it is appropriate to talk about the urgency of this bill. I do not want to go back and talk about how this started, but I know how it started and so does the Senator from Missouri, and it needs to get unraveled, which includes a whole series of issues including this bill.

I appreciate the Senator yielding.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise to raise the awareness of the Senate as to the importance of being able to pass the D.C. appropriations bill today.

The reason for that is that we have in this city a serious problem with the drinking water. And I will mention that in a little more detail in a moment. The bill is at the desk. It has passed the House. There is an appropriation in that bill to provide for immediate efforts to clean up the serious circumstances with the city's drinking water. I do not want to alarm anyone too much, but it is a health hazard to certain individuals who have immune problems as well as elderly people.

In order to correct it, it is going to take some effort from private contractors, and it is going to take funds in order to contract with respect to certain pumps that may be broken in the efforts to flush the pumps out.

In addition to that, we also have serious problems right now which need attention immediately, that is, we have public safety funds which have been increased in this bill. We have police cars right now on the blocks; we have fire engines in the shop and computer systems in chaos. There are funds in the bill which will allow us to do that and to get started immediately upon passage of the D.C. appropriations bill.

Let me read to you from the report on the drinking water matter so that everybody is fully aware of the situation the city finds itself in:

The conferees are deeply concerned about recent violations of Federal drinking water standards and continuing problems that beset the drinking water supply and the distribution systems in District of Columbia. The Federal Environmental Protection Agency recently completed a preliminary investigation of the water quality problems attributed to the District water distribution system and concluded that there is an urgent and immediate need for the District to implement steps to assure the integrity of drinking water quality in the District. Among the most important of these recommended actions is that the District hire a private contractor or contractors to flush the drinking water distribution system completely and to inspect and repair water valves. The conferees agree that there is a strong Federal interest in assuring that those who visit, live, and work in the Nation's Capital have safe drinking water. Accordingly, the conference agreement includes \$1 million in Federal funds for this purpose under Amendment No. 2. These funds are provided to the Financial Control Board to contract with a private entity or entities to conduct an inspection, the flushing and repair work recommended by the EPA. The conferees direct the Control Board to consult with the Department of Public Works, D.C. Water and Sewer Authority, and EPA in implementing this activity. Further, the conferees encourage the Control Board to move expeditiously to contract for the work in anticipation of the funds provided.

I just want to point out that if this bill passes, an immediate action will be taken to be able to correct the serious problems we have with the water in the city. So I hope that it would come to a point where we can pass that expeditiously today. The majority leader may or may not wish to call it up, but I want to let everyone know I am ready. It has passed the House. I want to assure all of the citizens of the District as well as those who visit us that we are doing everything possible and any delay would, again, impair the safety of certain individuals in the District, and I hope that does not occur.

In addition, we are ready to move on this, and it is important for the city to get into a position where they know where they stand. There are significant