

urgent. This is an urgent need, and Congress needs to act now.

The Grand Forks Herald is the newspaper of a city of 50,000 people. Every day since Congress took the Memorial Day recess at the front of their masthead they say, "10 Days Since Congress Let Us Down." I suppose it is now 18 days since the House adjourned without passing the disaster bill. The editorial makes the point, and every citizen in Grand Forks makes the point, that Congress ought to move on this disaster bill and move now.

On March 19 the President sent his request to Congress. When the flood occurred and the President went to Grand Forks, ND, and spoke to several thousand people in an airplane hangar at the Grand Forks Air Force Base, he made the point that he was seeking a significant disaster relief bill and that he hoped that Congress would not add extraneous or unrelated amendments to the bill. What he hoped would not happen has happened. The result has now been substantial delay—at least 3 weeks' delay, and probably more.

Madam President, my desire would be that everyone call a political truce, that we simply recognize that the disaster bill is to respond to disasters, and that the way to provide hope and help to the victims of the disasters is to pass a bill without the major areas of controversy that have now been sent to the President.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST

Madam President, for all these reasons, I now send to the desk a clean supplemental appropriations bill for myself, Mr. CONRAD, Mr. WELLSTONE, and Mr. JOHNSON.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 18, H.R. 581; that all after the enacting clause be stricken, and that the text of the clean supplemental appropriations bill that I just sent to the desk be inserted in lieu thereof, that the bill be passed, and that the motion to reconsider be laid on the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. NICKLES. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, let me describe what it is I was just proposing. The major items of controversy that now exist in the legislation the President vetoed are the so-called anti-Government shutdown provision—the so-called continuing resolution provision—and the census issue.

I know the President in his veto message was going to object to more than those two. The bill that I sent to the desk and asked unanimous consent be considered was the conference report that was agreed to in both the House and the Senate, with the anti-Government shutdown provision and the census provision removed.

The shutdown provision has substantial amounts of controversy attached to it. I have no objection at all for that

to be considered at any time. I just do not think it ought to be considered on a disaster bill.

My bill removes the census portion of the disaster bill. I do not object that the Senate consider the census provision at some point. But there are plenty of other opportunities to consider it. As soon as the President signs the bill and disaster aid begins to flow, we will have other bills come to the floor of the Senate. My understanding is that there was a proposal to be brought to the floor of the Senate tomorrow. Both of these issues could be offered as amendments to that bill. I have no objection to that. If somebody wants to offer that, let's offer that and have a debate. I have no objection nor concern about that.

I just do not want these provisions to be provisions that interminably delay a disaster bill which should have passed, now it is 3 weeks ago.

If the newspaper reports are correct, it looks like this issue will not be resolved this week, nor probably next week.

How long do victims of a disaster have to wait? When will Congress understand its obligation, and the historical approach of dealing with disaster bills, of not adding highly controversial issues to a bill that deals with disasters?

It seems to me that this should be a time for cooler heads to prevail; a time for both sides to back away a bit and decide to pass the disaster bill without these provisions.

I have taken the time again today simply to attempt to describe what our region of the country is faced with, to describe why we are upset and angry about what has happened to this piece of legislation. And I will no doubt be on the floor additional times today and during this week.

I hope that in the coming couple of hours Members of Congress will decide this is not a strategy that does anything other than hurt victims of a disaster.

Does it help the political party? I don't think so. I mean, I guess that is why a political party would run ads over this weekend in my State, because they think they are being helped by it. I don't think anybody is being helped by it. I think the net result is that victims of a disaster get hurt.

I mean, if there are some who do not care who gets hurt as you march toward a political victory, that is one thing. But I don't think this is marching toward anything but chaos in any event, and I think it is clear who is getting hurt. Victims of the disaster are getting hurt.

I started today with a description of Ranee Steffan, who is living in a camper trailer, has been for some while, perhaps will be for some while, with her kids. She does not want much. She, her family, and her children want a job because she doesn't have a job, because most of the businesses in this area have been closed—wants a job and a

home. She wants decisions to be made that will allow that to happen in her city, and in her community. And until this piece of legislation passes that cannot happen.

On behalf of Ranee Steffan, and so many other thousands of families whose lives are on hold, I hope very much that both sides of the aisle will decide to pass a disaster bill free from contentious unrelated political matters. We need to get aid to those who need it as quickly as is possible.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader is recognized.

URGENT SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. NICKLES. Madam President, first, I objected to the unanimous-consent consideration. My friend and colleague from North Dakota expected it. He knew I would do so. He basically tried to pass the bill as designed by one Senator. That is not the way the legislative body works. The way the legislative body works is that there are procedures. It goes through committees. Senators add amendments trying to influence the behavior of Congress, trying to influence the behavior of Government, trying to set policy. That is what happened in this bill.

I might tell my colleague from North Dakota I did not vote for the bill anyway. I think this bill was not just a disaster bill. This bill grew, and it grew too much. The President submitted a bill in, I think, early May, for approximately \$4 billion. This bill grew to over \$9 billion. I voted against it.

Now, the President vetoed the bill, and he vetoed it supposedly because Congress put in a provision that says if, for whatever reason, we do not get an appropriation bill passed by the end of September, we will continue operating at this year's level of funding. I happen to think that is a perfectly responsible thing to do. The President does not like it. Maybe some Democrats do not like it, I guess because they want to spend a lot more money than this year's level. I think it was a responsible thing to do so we would avoid a shutdown, so Government employees, Government agencies, everyone would know that if in the event we did not pass an appropriation bill, we could continue operating at this year's level. I think that is proper. They did not. The President vetoed the bill. I wish he had not vetoed it for that reason. If I was President, I would have vetoed it because it spent too much money. That is one of the reasons why we have divisions of power. We happen to be equal branches. We do not just write an appropriation bill just designed by the President. If so, we would not have a Congress. We would just let the President write the bill.

But that is not the way the system works. We have equal branches of Government. So the President can submit his proposal, and then we will act on it.

He vetoed it, and we have a couple of options. We can vote to override the veto—in all likelihood, we do not have the votes to override the veto, and so then we will work with colleagues to see if we can come up with a proposal that will pass and get his signature. And that is the proper way to do it. It is not the proper way to do it to try to pass it by unanimous consent, a bill designed by one Senator. I, for one, would object because I think it spends too much money not even related to the two objections that my colleague from North Dakota had outlined.

Mr. DORGAN. Will the Senator from Oklahoma yield just for a point?

Mr. NICKLES. I will be happy to yield at this point.

Mr. DORGAN. I appreciate the Senator's statement. The bill that I asked unanimous consent to have considered was not a bill written by me. It was the exact conference report just reported out by Congress, minus the two contentious provisions. So I do not want people to think it was a bill written by me. It was exactly what the conference did, leaving out the two very controversial provisions.

Mr. NICKLES. Madam President, I understand my colleague did not like two provisions. Maybe the President did not like two provisions. It may well be the President will look at the rest of the bill and he will not like other provisions. My point being, we have two branches of Government, both equal, and the President can make a request and Congress disposes of it and he has the right to veto it. Evidently he has done that. I understand the majority leader of the Senate is trying to get in contact with him today and maybe some discussions will ensue.

I also just happened to be looking at this report. The initial request was \$4.5 billion in discretionary outlays. The committee report, the committee report as it came out of the Senate was \$7.6 billion, so, in other words, \$3 billion more than originally requested. The conference report, after it went to conference, was \$8.6 billion. And if you add budget authority with the mandatory it was over \$9.5 billion.

So this, like a lot of urgent supplementals, grew, and many times they grow at the request of the administration. They did not make it in their initial request, but they asked for more money, and somebody else said, well, I think we should fund this and everyone was in agreement, both Democrats and Republicans, so we go ahead and fund it. What we wind up doing is we fund things in an urgent supplemental that, frankly, should be funded in the normal appropriations process. We should be in the process of passing normal appropriations bills now for next year so they do not have to be in the supplemental; we do not have to prefund them. We should fund it through the process. And I, for one, since evidently the President's vetoed this bill, hope we come in with a very streamlined, strictly urgent supplemental bill.

And I, for one, have serious questions whether or not we should be funding Bosnia assistance in this. How can the Bosnia assistance be urgent? We have had the troops over there. We have known about it. You cannot say that is not expected. We have known the troops are over there. I know that they are raiding operation and maintenance accounts; they are drawing down those funds. We have underfunded defense in the past. But we have known we have had a significant peacekeeping force in Bosnia and we do not fund it. And so then we start saying, well, we need to fund it all of a sudden because we did not put enough money in for defense last time.

We have known those troops are over there and should be funded. But the costs have risen significantly. We should get control of those costs. I have some reservations about whether or not we should have had those troops in the international peacekeeping force in the first place. The President puts them over there, underfunds them and asks us to bail him out with an urgent supplemental. I have some reservations about it.

Mr. President, there is only two issues of dispute. One is on the census language, one is on whether or not we would have a continuing resolution to keep the Government open should we reach an impasse on appropriations.

Just a couple of final comments. We have reached an impasse in appropriations the last 2 years, in 1995 and in 1996, prior to the last election. The way that was solved in 1996, prior to the election, was the President basically said I am going to shut Government down unless you give me a lot more money. Unfortunately, in my opinion, we succumbed to that temptation; we gave the President about \$8.5 billion so we could get out of town. I hope we do not repeat that failure.

Who was the real loser in that? Maybe Congressmen and Senators weren't, but I think the taxpayers lost. We wrote big checks. Discretionary spending really went up. It went up in some cases, Madam President, even more than the President requested so we could get out of town. I hope we do not replay that.

So the essence of this continuing resolution was, if for whatever reason we have an impasse, let us at least continue operations at this year's level so we will avoid that disaster, so we will not have the curtailment, so we will not have the shutdown, and I still think it is good policy. I regret the President vetoing it for that reason. I think that was a mistake. He has that right to do it.

I think it is important we follow constitutional procedures and keep in mind constitutional prerogatives. The President is President. He does not have the right to dictate every detail in an appropriation bill. He can veto every appropriation bill he does not like. I want to preserve that right. But likewise, we are an equal branch of

Government and we have a right to put on language that a majority of Senators are supportive of.

So I will work with my colleagues from North Dakota. I see another colleague, Senator CONRAD, is here and wishes to speak on the issue, and I will not detain him. I know he has very strong feelings, as Senator DORGAN does, as well. And so I will work with my colleagues. Hopefully, we will be able to come up with another bill, one that will not cost taxpayers as much as the previous bill, and hopefully we will be able to break the impasse and provide needed relief in a timely manner.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CONRAD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent for 15 minutes.

Mr. NICKLES. Madam President, reserving the right to object, what was the request?

Mr. CONRAD. I was asking for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is an order already standing for Senator COVERDELL to be recognized at 4 o'clock.

Mr. CONRAD. All right, then I will withdraw my request.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. CONRAD. Madam President, the President of the United States has now vetoed the disaster relief bill. He has done so because there were unrelated provisions put in that legislation.

Madam President, the time for political games is over. This is a headline from the largest newspaper in our State over the weekend. The headline is: "You Are Playing with Our Lives." The woman quoted is a Renee Steffan. The article said, "She has strong words for Members of Congress who think flood victims can wait while bickering continues in Washington over a disaster relief bill."

She goes on to say, "You are playing with our lives."

She issued that warning from the sweltering travel trailer that she and her family now call home. She says, "This isn't some game. You should come here and walk in my shoes for a day." Homeless for a month, out of work, and bounced from one temporary shelter to another, the wife of two is fed up with lawmakers who think Grand Forks residents are getting along just fine.

Madam President, Grand Forks residents are not getting along just fine. Not only are Grand Forks residents not getting along just fine, nor are the residents of East Grand Forks. In these two communities, 50,000 in Grand Forks, 9,000 in East Grand Forks, nearly every single soul was evacuated 6 weeks ago. Thousands of them are still homeless. Their homes are destroyed. Their jobs are destroyed. And their lives are on hold waiting for us to act.

The President vetoed this bill. He said clearly these unrelated provisions ought not to be in a disaster relief bill.