

that you are most likely to have abuses of the hold, we will have shown that we are willing to make changes that hold the U.S. Senate and each Member here publicly accountable for their actions.

Mr. President, none of us got here easily. Like many other Senators, my campaign and my election was something of a trial by fire. No Member of this body lacks fortitude. I think we can stand some extra added light. I think we can stand some extra added sunshine. I think that we can take the secrecy out of the hold procedure and still make sure that each and every Senator is able to exercise their rights and protect their constituents.

I believe that the passage of this amendment, at a time when millions of Americans are especially cynical and skeptical about Government, will cause citizens to say that the Senate is doing the right thing, and we will see constituents have a bit more respect for this body as a result of Senators being willing to be held publicly accountable. This amendment is not about getting rid of the hold. It is not about doing anything to a hold other than saying that a Senator has to be publicly accountable when that one Senator effectively moves to block the consideration of a bill or a nomination.

Mr. President, I have not been here as long as some, but I read the statements of Senators who have been here for quite some time—Senator GLENN, who called it deplorable; Senator THURMOND, who said that there has been an abuse; Senator HATCH, who said that every Senator has been victimized by it; and, Senator LEAHY, who went far far farther than anything I would be talking about. He said there shouldn't be any holds at all.

In fact, in my conversations with Senators, I have been told that some Senators find this procedure so abhorrent that they will not exercise it at all, and they are especially frustrated by their colleagues who do.

So, in closing, Mr. President, let me go back to just how great the abuse is.

It is one thing if Chairman FAIRCLOTH or Senator BOXER or another Member of U.S. Senate puts a hold on a matter. All of the Senators are directly responsible to their constituents. What I found is a lot of Senators didn't even know that a hold had been placed on a bill in their name.

One senior Member of the U.S. Senate came to me last session, and said, "I am for your bill. I think it is a good idea. We need some public disclosure of these holds. And the reason I am for it is a few minutes ago a Senator came up to me and said, 'Why do you have a hold on my bill?' And the person who was sympathetic to what I have been trying to do said, 'I don't have a hold on your bill.'" It turned out that a staff person had done it in their name.

So what we have is a situation where not just are holds by Senators kept anonymous and kept confidential, but now we have staff that doesn't have an

election certificate putting holds on these matters as well.

The hold started out many years ago. I gather from historians that it is well over 100 years old. It started out as a matter of common courtesy. It was something that Senators did to accommodate each other to make sure that an individual could be present to speak on an amendment, to ensure that they would have an opportunity to be heard if they had some sort of glitch in their time schedule. That is not what this amendment addresses. That is not what this amendment addresses at all.

This amendment is about ensuring that when a U.S. Senator uses all of their power, every bit of their power, to block a measure or a nomination, and they exercise those extraordinary rights that each of us has, that it be accompanied by a responsibility to the American people. That responsibility to the American people is to tell them, tell your constituents, when you exercise this extraordinary power that you are the one who did it. You are the one who blocked a bill or a nomination.

Let's bring some sunshine here.

I will tell leadership—let me say that Senator DASCHLE and Senator LOTT have talked with me about this. Both of them have been very gracious. Senator DASCHLE indicated that he is in support of this. I believe that what I am proposing in this amendment complements the useful changes that Senator LOTT, the majority leader, made this January.

The majority leader, Senator LOTT, implemented a number of changes that I think are constructive, but they still allow for the secrecy. They still allow for one Senator to effectively block consideration of a measure or matter.

I gather that the vote on this amendment will be tomorrow.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent at this time to be able, prior to the vote tomorrow, to speak on this amendment again for up to 10 minutes, to be able to ensure that Senators prior to the vote—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. FAIRCLOTH. There is objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, reclaiming the floor, will the Senator from North Carolina be open to a question at this time?

Mr. FAIRCLOTH. Yes.

Mr. WYDEN. I am proposing that an amendment be accepted by the Senate that would modestly change one of a Senator's most extensive powers, the power to secretly block a measure or matter from coming to the Senate floor. Does the Senator believe that it is not appropriate to have 10 minutes of discussion of it tomorrow before it comes up?

Mr. FAIRCLOTH. It might be all right to have 10 minutes, but we will have to decide it tomorrow. I am not ready now to agree to it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. JOHNSON addressed the Chair.

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

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

Mr. JOHNSON. I will not use the full 10 minutes.

HONORING THE LIVES OF AIRMEN ANTHONY BEAT, CLAY CULVER, KIRK CAKERICE, AND GARY EVERETT

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, a B-1 bomber from Ellsworth Air Force Base near Rapid City, SD, crashed last Friday killing all four of the flight crew members. All four men who lost their lives were highly decorated American airmen receiving such awards as the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Combat Readiness Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal.

The four men were Col. Anthony Beat of the 28th Bomb Wing, vice commander. He was from Attica, OH, and is survived by his wife, Delores Ann, and sons, James and Alan. Maj. Clay Culver was the 37th Bomb Squadron assistant operations officer and weapons systems officer. He was from Sulfur, LA, and is survived by his wife, Cynthia, his daughter, Ann, and son, Parker, all of Rapid City. Maj. Kirk Cakerice, the 37th Bomb Squadron assistant operations officer and instructor pilot, was from Eldora, IA, and is survived by his wife, Myra, son, Brett, and daughter, Kendra, all of Rapid City. Capt. Gary Everett was the 37th Bomb Systems weapons systems officer from Brooklyn, NY, and is survived by his parents, Joseph and Dorthy Everett, of Glasgow, KY, and several brothers and sisters and fiancée.

On Monday, over 1,500 friends, peers, colleagues, and family mourned the loss of these four brave men in a memorial service at Ellsworth Air Force Base. At this time of tragedy, thoughts and prayers and the attention of people of the Black Hills region and the State of South Dakota and our Nation are with the families and friends of these four crewmen.

This tragic incident underscores how quickly lives of even our bravest and most skilled military personnel can be lost. It is important that the legacy of these four men live on as dedicated airmen, proud parents, loving husbands, grateful sons, and honorable men. Our loss reflects the fact that in peacetime, as well as during conflict, the men and women of our military, our friends, our spouses, our children, put their lives on the line each and every day to preserve and protect our liberty as Americans.

Colonel Beat, Major Cakerice, Major Culver, and Captain Everett were decorated veterans and honorable men who approached their military service with extraordinary dedication, commitment, pride, and professionalism.

In this time of tragedy, we must also acknowledge that our Nation is stronger and our liberties more secure because of the willingness of these patriots to commit their talent, their leadership, and ultimately their lives to the defense of our Nation.

Colonel Beat, Major Cakerice, Major Culver, and Captain Everett were shining examples of the quality, the expertise and the talents of the men and women who put on the uniforms of our Armed Forces.

And so again, Mr. President, our prayers are with the families of these four great American airmen. We know that every day of the week others embark on similar training experiences and similar endeavors. Lives are always at risk in times of peace as well as in conflict in order to protect our liberties as Americans, including our ability in this Senate to gather, to debate, to discuss policy issues affecting our Nation.

So it is in the great effort of these airmen, and others like them in all of our branches of the military, that we owe great gratitude. All people in the State of South Dakota share the grief but also the pride of these families in the great contribution that these airmen have made to our Nation.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE BRANCH APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The report will be stated.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendments of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2209) having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by all of the conferees.

The Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of September 18, 1997.)

Mr. BENNETT. Madam President, I am pleased to report that the House and Senate conferees reached an agreement on funding for the legislative branch for the fiscal year 1998. The agreement we reached provides for total spending of slightly under \$2.5 billion—an increase of 2 percent over the fiscal year 1997 level and a decrease of 6 percent from the President's budget.

Before we begin, I would like to state for the record that the issue of pay for Members of Congress is not in this bill.

However, there were significant differences in the amount of funding in the House and Senate bills. The House wanted to limit the growth of the legislative branch to the fiscal year 1997 level exclusive of Senate items. The Senate had made a commitment to the General Accounting Office—a commitment which was made when Senator MACK chaired this subcommittee and oversaw a 25-percent reduction in GAO. This was a 25-percent reduction in their budget and a 33-percent reduction in staff. I participated in the decision to reduce the agency, and I was also a party to the Senate's commitment to stabilize the agency once it made the reduction. Senator DORGAN shared my desire to meet that commitment.

I want to thank Senator DORGAN for his hard work, and interest in the bill. It was only with his strong support that we were able to provide adequate funding—a \$7 million increase in direct appropriations plus and increase of \$1.5 million in offsetting receipts over the fiscal year 1997 level.

The Federal Government will spend almost \$1.7 trillion next year. The legislative branch has the responsibility to oversee this budget and make sure that taxpayer funds are being spent wisely. GAO is responsible for identifying wasteful Federal spending and recommending ways in which we can save billions of dollars. This past year GAO has identified \$6 billion in measurable savings in the Federal Government. That does not include other savings which cannot be measured in dollars—such as better organization, ways in which an agency can better serve taxpayers, etc. For every \$1 appropriated to GAO, they have identified \$50 savings. This is an agency which is worth the investment.

Maintenance was another issue in this bill. I believe strongly in the need to invest in maintenance. Saving a small amount of money now on maintenance will only result in higher costs in the future.

I learned in business that if you do not properly maintain your building and equipment you will soon find yourself spending much more money to replace those items which have crumbled or can no longer function. There are a number of maintenance and security items which the Senate identified as priorities such as, repairs to the Library of Congress roof, investment in the Capitol powerplant, and Capitol security.

Funding for the Joint Committee on Taxation was also an issue. The Senate conferees agreed at the strong urging of the House conferees to split the difference between the House and Senate bills resulting in an increase of \$91,500 over the Senate bill. For many years now the Joint Committee on Taxation has operated as an extension of the Finance and Ways and Means committees. Members of Congress who are not

members of those committees have not been able to get revenue estimates for their proposals. Without the revenue estimates, it is almost impossible to go to the floor to offer an amendment to a tax bill.

We have been assured by the House that Congressman ARCHER—the current chairman of the Joint Committee on Taxation is committed to working harder to provide to Senators and Representatives revenue estimates in a timely fashion. It is our intent to ensure that the Joint Committee on Taxation assists all Members of Congress. Included in the statement of managers on page 26 of the conference report is language identifying the scope of the assistance we expect the Joint Committee to provide to Members.

During the course of the next year, I would like to hear from my colleagues if they are finding the Joint Committee to be helpful.

In reaching this agreement, the Senate came down \$37 million in budget authority and the House went up \$24 million. I am comfortable that the legislative branch will be able to meet its oversight responsibilities with the funding provided in this agreement.

Again, I would like to thank Senator DORGAN as the ranking member for his hard work on reaching this agreement. In addition, I would like to thank Senator STEVEN, Senator CRAIG and Senator BOXER for their assistance on the subcommittee as well as the following staff: Christine Ciccone, Jim English, Mary Dewald, Mary Hawkins, Chuck Turner, and Chip Yost, for their superior work.

I thank my colleagues in advance for their support of the conference report.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I rise in support of the conference agreement to H.R. 2209, the fiscal year 1998 legislative branch appropriation bill. The conference agreement provides a total of \$2.25 billion for fiscal year 1998 for the Congress and other legislative branch agencies. This represents a reduction of \$144 million from the budget request.

All in all, this is a good conference agreement. I wish to take just a minute to point out the level of funding agreed to by the conferees with respect to the General Accounting Office [GAO]. As Members are aware, an agreement was reached last Congress between the GAO and appropriators to reduce the GAO's budget by a total of 25 percent over fiscal years 1996 and 1997. The GAO successfully implemented a plan for this reduction, without having to be dragged kicking and screaming. Our commitment to them, in return, was to stabilize their funding at that reduced level. Unfortunately, for fiscal year 1998, the House recommended an appropriation of only \$323.5 million for the GAO, a reduction of \$37.9 million below their budget request. The Senate bill, after thorough consideration and cooperation from the GAO itself, found that an appropriation of \$346.8 million would be sufficient to maintain GAO's level of operations.