

Mr. REID. Mr. President, before the Senator from Minnesota leaves the floor, I want to make a couple comments. There have been, as the Senator indicated, a number of people who have worked very hard on domestic violence. Senator JOE BIDEN authored the original legislation and has been a model for what has transpired since then.

I say in the presence of the Senator from Minnesota that since he came to the Senate, this has been an issue he has worked on passionately. I appreciate the work he has done.

The Senator from Minnesota mentioned his wife Sheila. I remember the work the two of them have done together.

I remember the display they put in the Russell Building, which certainly dramatized the need for continuing the work in this area. There are many unique partnerships in America today, but one of those that I admire greatly is that of PAUL and Sheila WELLSTONE. They have worked on these issues together. I think it goes without saying that the good work the Senator has done would not be as good but for the involvement of his wife.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Senator REID from Nevada is very gracious towards lots of Senators. That is just the way he is. I thank the Senator very much.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SAFETY AND THE TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I want to emphasize the bipartisanship of the request made by my distinguished chairman, the Senator from Arizona, to get some kind of consent for S. 3059, the bill dealing with, of course, the defective equipment. We had extensive hearings.

Let me emphasize several things that we learned during the hearings.

One, generally speaking, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has been—I do not want to say defunct; I will use an elaborative; dormant. The testimony showed there had not been a single recall ordered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration in five years. They had not ordered a recall.

Now, of course, I have kept up on this because I have had to stand in the well defending my trial lawyer friends who really bring about far more safety than one would normally suspect. In the 5-year period, there have been 99 million recalls. And everybody can write a

thank-you note to Mark Robinson in the Pinto case. He never collected a cent in his punitive damages. But once industry realized there could be just that—lawsuits—then they began to voluntarily have recalls. And that is what occurred here.

This defective tire situation, causing multiple deaths—over 100 that we know about in the United States—was not a result of recalls ordered by NHTSA. More or less, the lawsuits, even though gagged, had really brought it to the attention of NHTSA to get off the dime, wake up, and start acting.

So we brought together now a measured safety precaution where this will not occur again. And again, it has been simmered down somewhat from the unanimous vote. We have been working, on both sides, with consumer product safety officials, with the tire companies. I talked to the tire companies themselves. Their main objection, in a way, to that bill was dealing with foreign defects, in reporting foreign defects and otherwise. Of course, you can call it the A tire here in the United States and manufacture the B tire in another country like it is different, but it is the same tire. So we would want to know about the recalls in Saudi Arabia, which started first, in order to bring the attention here of the Firestone defect.

So we worked it out. Now here we have a unanimous report out. The distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee, as he just said a moment ago, had no objection to that bill coming up because he voted for it to be reported favorably to the floor of the Senate. Otherwise, the distinguished majority leader, as a member of our committee, voted for it. So there has to be an untying of this snarl or knot so that we can get things done.

The only reason we cannot get it done is that we cannot offer an amendment to the conference report. If the conference report were an item just called up, we could call up this amendment, have a time limit for 10 minutes to a side, and easily adopt or reject the amendment, which was the bill, S. 3059. But, of course, it is a conference report, and under the rules we cannot just bring it up as an amendment. I say that so everybody will understand.

But as the distinguished chairman of our committee, Senator MCCAIN, pointed out, we could easily agree to give it some kind of consideration—an hour to a side. It could be called up so we can stop this indiscriminate killing on the highways due to faulty equipment.

I think it ought to be emphasized that we found this out really as in getting past the gag orders. I do not like these gag orders, but sometimes they do promote settlements of judicial disputes. So we do not have anything in the bill in relation to the gag orders. But when you get lawsuits—that means that you have gone to a lawyer; you have a serious injury or you maybe have a death case, or whatever it is—so when you get multiple lawsuits, then

that notice is given, of course, to NHTSA, and we can act from there.

But it is a studied, deliberate, measured response. Generally speaking, they don't ever agree. I do not want to infer the industry agrees this is a good bill, but listening to them, they didn't have any serious objection that I can discern.

I support 100 percent Senator MCCAIN's movement on the floor. He is not holding things up. We can get a Transportation conference report to the President here on Friday. We can come in here on Tuesday, if there is a holiday on Monday. We can easily get it to the President.

And as has been indicated, it has already been approved. We know the White House folks watch and make sure their concerns are taken care of in the measure. So whether it gets there Friday, gets there Tuesday, next Wednesday, let's get on with having safety in America.

The Senator from Arizona standing in the well is not being an obstructionist whatsoever, but trying to promote safety where everybody is agreed. But, as he said, there is a "fix" on somewhere because why can't we just call up the bill and get an agreement and everything else of that kind?

Our distinguished leader, the Senator from Nevada, says perhaps there is not going to be any vote in the Senate. And the Senator from Alaska, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee says, oh yes, we are going to have a vote to move to proceed. But that is not going to get us anywhere because with the vote to proceed, we will still have plenty of time to talk. And we will talk into next week, and talk into Tuesday and Wednesday, and everything else, to show to the American people that there is some kind of responsibility with this political entity here, the Senate.

Heavens above, when we have everybody agreed—it is totally bipartisan—why can't we move deliberately and bring it up and have a vote on it?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Time in morning business has expired.

Mr. HOLLINGS. I yield the floor.

Mr. THOMAS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. DODD. May I inquire? Would it be possible to extend morning business a few minutes beyond the 11 o'clock hour?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It would take unanimous consent.

Mr. DODD. Senator STEVENS and I both have a short time we want to take after our distinguished colleague has a chance to speak.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the morning hour be extended until 11:15, with the time equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

THE PROGRESS OF THE SENATE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to speak about energy, which seems to be one of the things I think is very important that people are talking about. But first I wish to comment a little on the progress, or lack thereof, that we are making in the Senate. It is not unusual that we come up to the end of the session and find ourselves kind of blocked up here, and things have been postponed until now. Of course, it is the appropriations bills that always end up in this category. We have 13 of them to pass in order to keep the Government going. The fiscal year expired at the end of September, of course. We have extended our time and will do it into next week again.

One of the important roles of Congress is this allocation of funding. It is one that is very important and really needs to be given all the attention we can give it. I think we ought to move as quickly as we can to do that job. I hope we don't end up with huge omnibus bills at the end of the session. They are so large that people don't know what is in them. I would rather we deal with them individually as much as possible. Let me say that one of the things we ought to consider, which I have supported since I have been in the Congress—and from my experience in the Wyoming Legislature—is I think we ought to have a 2-year budgeting arrangement, which would alleviate this sort of thing every year. Nevertheless, we are not there.

However, we need to move forward. When we are ready with the appropriations bills, we ought to do that. I favor the bill being talked about here. I think it is a good bill. I don't know why it wasn't brought up earlier in the week when we were sitting here and didn't have anything before us. Now we are down to the last hours of this week and we bring up something that stops the opportunity for us to pass legislation regarding appropriations. I think that is unfortunate. In any event, we ought to be doing that.

Obviously, one of the difficulties with appropriations has been this idea of attaching to them the kinds of things that are not within the appropriations process because it is the end of the session, and because they have not been handled, or some refused to handle them earlier. That was wrong, in my opinion. I hope we consider a rule that would make that more difficult.

ENERGY POLICY

Regarding energy, we ought to talk about that. We ought to talk, more importantly, about where we want to be, and what we think the role of the domestic energy program ought to be to achieve what we consider to be our goal. I have become more and more aware of the importance of that sort of thing in all the legislation that we ad-

dress. Really, it became clear to me when we were talking about re-regulation of electricity. We got wrapped up in all the different kinds of details that necessarily go into it, but really I don't think we had a clear vision of where we wanted to be when we were through. We didn't have a clear vision of our goal.

To a large extent, I think that is the case with energy. We have high prices, for gasoline, for natural gas, and we are going to have higher electricity and heating oil prices, and so on. Of course, that is the problem we see, but what do we see as the solution? I think certainly these high prices ought not to be a big surprise. This administration hasn't had an energy policy. We were very happy when oil was \$10 a barrel. When it gets up to \$35 a barrel, we are very unhappy, and I understand that. I don't recommend that, either.

We ought to have intermediate pricing. You don't do that without an energy policy. We have lacked a domestic energy policy that keeps us from being entirely dependent and subservient to OPEC and the foreign oil producers. We have allowed ourselves to do that.

It is not new that we don't have one. The Clinton administration has relied on short-term fixes. The most current one was to release crude oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which was 30 million barrels, and I don't suppose that will change the world. That is a short-term kind of reaction, not a long-term solution to where we are going. That has been the latest short-term fix.

I agree with increasing funding for Low-Income Housing Energy Assistance, and other short-term fixes. Those are good, and they have to be done because of where we are. But the fact is, if we are going to get out of that over time, then we have to do something different. We have to take a look at EPA's regulations that have had the effect of shutting down coal-fired powerplants in the Midwest. We have more coal resources probably than most anything. We can do more about the difficulties that have happened in the past. We have done a great deal because coal is now a clean source, but this administration has made it more and more difficult for that to happen. The fact that coal supplies 56 percent of the Nation's electric energy is very important, of course.

I have a personal feeling about it because our State is the highest producer of low sulfur coal. We have had 36 refineries shut down since 1992. No new ones have been built since 1996, largely because the EPA pressed for continuing restrictions that make it much more difficult. This administration—particularly the Vice President—calls for green alternatives. I don't know of anybody who opposes that idea. Green alternatives, right now, provide about 2 percent of our energy needs. It is going to be a very long time before solar or wind energy moves in to do that. So that can't be our short-term/long-term policy.

There are a lot of things that can be done and we are moving to try to do that. It has to do with domestic energy policy which would help increase domestic production so that we are not totally subject to the whims of OPEC. Since 1992, our oil production in this country has gone down 17 percent. Consumption has gone up 14 percent. Part of that is in States such as Wyoming in the West, where 50 percent of the State is owned by the Federal Government. Those areas of Federal land—not all—are for multiple use.

We found this administration making it much more difficult for exploration and production to take place for the multiple use of public lands. That is not a good idea. U.S. jobs were involved in the exploring and producing. We used to have 400,000 of those jobs. Now it is less than 300,000, which is a 27-percent decline. These imports are rapidly growing—up 56 percent now—and we need to move forward with that.

This is really an issue we can do something about. We need to do something about it. I could go over a lot of things this administration has brought about that have helped to create the energy crisis we are in now. I am urging that we look at some of the things that are available to us and that we can do to reach the goal we want in order to be more self-reliant for our energy. We can do something about consumption, too, and I have no problem about that. However, that is not a short-term problem. A short-term problem is going to be the price to farmers, ranchers, truckers, and to people who use oil particularly for heating in the wintertime.

Certainly we are not going to be able to solve this problem in the next few days. I hope we can move forward with our appropriations process, which is obviously before us now. I do think we ought to be giving a great deal of thought to establishing a domestic energy policy that will, in fact, help level out our dependency on foreign oil and be good for this economy and good for American citizens.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. McCain. Mr. President, I await the return of the Senator from Alaska, who I believe would like to object to a unanimous consent agreement I may seek.

If the Senator from Connecticut is waiting, perhaps we can extend morning business for a few minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business has been extended.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, Senator STEVENS and I will have a joint statement on an unrelated matter.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if my friend from Connecticut will yield, morning business has been extended until 11:15, with time evenly divided between Senator STEVENS and Senator DODD. I think everybody will get their wish, because Senator STEVENS will be here momentarily to make a statement and,