

It is a big deal if we can affect the economy. I do not think there is any doubt. I have been convinced for a long time in the projections that we could achieve a 1-percent or a half-percent increase in the gross domestic product by passing the stimulus package. That is important. I believe we should pass a bill.

No less than 2 weeks ago I became deeply concerned that we might actually leave this body without a bill being passed. At first I did not think that was possible. We brought up a bill and disagreed, the House had passed a bill, and some here didn't like it but negotiators were working together. The Finance Committee chairman and ranking member, the majority leader, the Democratic leader and the Republican leader, they were all working and talking and surely a bill would pass, I thought. They would work out their differences.

Frankly, I never believed exactly what was in that bill, if it met a few simple principles, would make a lot of difference. Probably, another \$100 billion, another \$75 billion into the economy we would have made an impact. There was no doubt in my mind if a middle-income family would have gotten a 2-percent reduction in the amount of money withheld from their taxes they would have more money and they would spend it.

Because of my concern, I offered my own bill. As a matter of fact, we were here one night until midnight. I sat around with some colleagues and refined my ideas and four of us introduced a stimulus package. It was simple. It did not have a lot of complexity to it. Frankly, I did not think anybody could find anything wrong with any of it or would object to a bit of it. I said: We offered this bill; let's just vote on that.

It had a number of provisions in it that I thought were worthwhile. My favorite contribution, what I believe in and would like to see accomplished and really needs to be accomplished as part of this package, or it may be more difficult to pass, is the advanced payment of the earned-income tax credit.

The Presiding Officer understands these finance issues a lot better than I, but I can understand a little bit about low-income working Americans. They are at a point with the earned-income tax credit where the Federal Government gives them a tax credit. It is \$31 billion a year. It amounts to, for an average family with one child, a \$2,000-per-year tax credit. They can get it when they work or on their tax refund a year after they work. Since the earned-income tax credit was designed to encourage work, there has been a strong feeling it ought to go on the wage that they earn.

What has happened, however, is that we have never accomplished that. Only 5 percent of the workers take advantage of the opportunity to get their earned-income tax credit on their paycheck. If it were given to them 100 per-

cent, that would be a \$1-an-hour pay raise with no deductions from it. But we have never been able to figure out how to do it.

They finally passed, a day or so ago, an amendment that would allow that to happen, but only 5 percent take advantage of it; 95 percent get their credit the next year.

So it is good public policy, in my view, that they get their credit early. I believe in this time of stimulus, if we would make a conversion and pump in \$15 billion or \$20 billion extra on low-income people's paychecks, many of whom may be out of work for a while, get another job, lose work and find another job, they would have more money to take care of their families with and it would not cost the budget of the country, the Treasury of the country, any money in the long run. It would shift about \$15 billion or more into this fiscal year but that money would be from the next fiscal year, and we would have \$15 billion left to spend next year. It is good public policy and a superb stimulus that moves money forward and saves money next year.

We would have put in another item. We proposed reducing the median income tax rate from 27 percent to 25 percent. It was planned to be done anyway.

We extended the unemployment benefits, as most of the proposals have, for an additional 13 weeks. We provided insurance and health benefits. We provided a \$5 billion fund for national emergency grants for States to help people who have been displaced or lost their job. And we advanced the plans for 1 year for the child tax credit. This child tax credit is a plan that would infuse about \$6 billion or \$8 billion into the economy for families with children.

Those were some of the provisions we put in that plan. It could have passed. I don't believe anybody would have been upset about it. It had no business provisions in it that would upset anybody. It did have some depreciation advancement.

I say we ought to have done something. That bill, other bills, the bill that almost reached conclusion, the bipartisan approach that passed the House last night, was sent over here, and we did not get a vote. So I am very disappointed.

I believe the leadership of this Senate made a mistake. We were not even allowed to vote on it or debate it. Everybody said we needed a stimulus package, but we never even got to bring the bill up for a vote. We had a number of Democratic Senators and certainly a large number of Democratic House Members who supported this bipartisan bill, and we could have passed it, but we did not and it is a great disappointment to me.

I was pleased the Senator from Alaska discussed the energy bill that did not pass this time, under the very same factors. I was in Mobile Monday of this week. On two different occasions a real estate person and a very fine doctor

came to me and said: JEFF, I think you have to do something about the energy situation. We are too dependent on Middle Eastern oil. They have the ability to disrupt our economy and to affect our foreign policy and damage us in ways that we ought to defend against. You need to do something to reduce our dependence on middle eastern oil. That is something I believe in very strongly.

The bill the Senator from Alaska, Mr. MURKOWSKI, has so eloquently argued for has conservation, reduced use of energy, as well as increased production. Both of those steps together will help reduce our dependence on foreign oil. It will help reduce the amount of American wealth that goes out of our country to purchase this substance that it would be better if we could purchase at home and keep that wealth at home.

I believe we have had a number of opportunities to do better. I wanted a farm bill passed desperately. The President has made clear that we do not have a fight over money on the farm bill. We are prepared to honor the \$75 billion set-aside in our budget over 10 years for farm programs. But there are some problems and serious disagreements about some of the policy that was in that bill.

We could not get debate on it. Every amendment was rejected virtually on a party line vote, so we ended up not passing an Agriculture bill. We will have to come back and work on that because we need an Agriculture bill. We do not need to go into the summer without an Agriculture bill. So I am sure we will be back on that early next year. But it could have been done this time.

So I will just say there were some great things accomplished this year: the education bill, a bipartisan effort that passed. The tax reduction was a historic empowerment of individual working Americans, a victory for the individual against the State and the power the State has to extract what they earn from them and spend as the State wishes. But it would empower them to utilize the wealth they have earned in the way they choose. If we had not done that, I am confident our economy would be struggling even more today.

I see the distinguished Senator from West Virginia is ready to speak, and I am interested in hearing his remarks. I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator from West Virginia for his time. I wanted to express these remarks before we recessed today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER OF THE SENATE

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, first I thank our Presiding Officer, the Senator from New Jersey. He always has a clean desk. What does that mean? That

means he is paying attention to what is going on in the Senate. He is not at the desk reading a magazine or a piece of paper, a newspaper. He is alert. I watched him. This is the way he always presides. That is the way Presiding Officers ought to conduct themselves when gracing that desk in this, the greatest legislative, parliamentary, deliberative body in the world.

He does it with a great dignity and style. I thank him. He sits there many evenings at this hour when most Senators have gone on their separate ways. I thank him.

I thank the other Members of the new class—I say it in that fashion—who have worked at that desk. There are some of them—I will not call their names at the moment—who make me proud of the Senate. The fact is, the way they preside is a model for legislative bodies everywhere to watch. Too often as we sit in that chair, we forget that millions of people are watching the Senate. They are watching the Chair.

I have been a member of the State legislature in West Virginia and the West Virginia House of Delegates. Those people in the State legislatures watch the Presiding Officer of this body.

This is the premier upper house in the world. They should see the premier act of presiding on the part of the Senator who sits at that desk. Teachers, college professors, students, political column writers, and editorialists watch. We ought to remember that when we are sitting in that chair.

I congratulate the Presiding Officer. I congratulate Senator CORZINE. I thank him.

GLORIA GILLESPIE

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, as we head toward Christmas and the close of this session of Congress and this turbulent and tragic first year of the new millennium, I want to pause to remember a young woman who passed away this summer. Gloria Margaret Gillespie was a friend of mine.

Many Members of the Senate and staff will remember Gloria, for she worked in the Senate hair salon for 29 years. She cut my hair. Probably for the first time that my hair was ever cut at that salon she cut—28 years or 29 years ago. She worked there for 29 years.

She loved her work, and she loved her friends and she loved life. Gloria had a cheerful, loyal, uplifting spirit. And her time on this Earth was far, far too brief. She was only 54 years of age when she passed away in Berea, KY, this past July—54.

Five years ago, Gloria began a battle with cancer. She had smoking-related lung cancer. But instead of withdrawing, she used her illness as a forum to warn others about the dangers of smoking.

Gloria did not win her battle with cancer, but to the end, even in the face

of great pain, she remained a fighter and a friend to all—someone who loved the Senate and someone who loved life.

Gloria Gillespie knew that each day is a gift. Each day is a gift. She cherished each waking moment. She found great joy in seeing people alive. From childhood, Gloria possessed a deep and abiding faith in God. That strong faith made her courageous and deeply appreciative of the sheer wonder of the world that God created.

Her unflinching optimism was contagious, as was her impish laughter. She brought a special kind of joy to all of her endeavors. She made the load a little lighter for all who knew her.

Gloria is survived by her parents, C.H. and Mary Frances Gillespie of Berea, KY, one niece, Lisa Gillespie, and one nephew, David Gillespie.

Along with all the members of her family and her legions of friends, I shall miss Gloria. But I shall think of her during this Christmas season, and I shall never, never, never forget her.

MARIAN BERTRAM

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I rise to remember a longtime Senate employee who passed away on October 15 of this year. Marian Bertram dedicated 27 years of her life to public service and to the United States Senate. She began her work at the Democratic Policy Committee in 1971, eventually serving as the chief clerk of that committee. She retired from the Senate in October of 1998.

Marian Bertram served four Democratic Leaders, beginning with Mike Mansfield and continuing on through my own tenure as Democratic Leader, George Mitchell's, and Senator DASCHLE's leader terms.

She gained a deep understanding of the Senate's intricacies during those years and researched and wrote the Democratic Policy Committee's Legislative Bulletin. She also shouldered the challenging task of producing voting records and vote analyses for Democratic Members.

Marian was an able and very dedicated Senate employee and through it all she was unflinching good humored and professional.

My sympathy goes out to her many friends in the Washington area who were shocked and saddened by her untimely death this fall. We shall remember her with great affection and with thanks for the many years she gave so unselfishly to this institution.

SENATORS AND SENATE LEADERS

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, let me say just a word or so before I make my final speech of this year. I thank all Senators on both sides of the aisle for the work they do on behalf of this great Nation. They work here at a sacrifice. We are paid well, but there are many here who could earn much more money in other fields. There are many who come here after earning much

more money in other fields but who want to give something to the Nation, who want to serve. Here is the place—in this Chamber—where Senators, since 1859, have served the Nation.

So I salute all Senators. I salute the leaders of the Senate—our Democratic and Republican leaders of the majority and the minority.

I have been a majority leader. I have been a minority leader. I have been a majority whip. I know the kinds of problems with which they are confronted every day. I know the demands that are made upon them by their colleagues. I know of the expectations that surround this Chamber and the expectations of our leaders. They spend a lot of time protecting our interests and working on behalf of our interests. They spend many hours here when the rest of us are probably sleeping. They carry to their beds problems that we don't know about. Many demands are made on these leaders.

I sit here and I hear criticism of our majority leader. He is the majority leader and was chosen by his colleagues for this job. He sets the schedule. He decides the program.

So not only do I salute him for the great work that he does on behalf of the Nation every day, but I also have empathy with him. I know he must go home troubled at night—troubled because he could not fulfill the expectations of this Senator, or that Senator, troubled because he is sometimes unjustly criticized. I had all of these things happen to me.

So I thank TOM DASCHLE. He can't be everything to everybody. He has to do what he has to do. He has to do what he thinks is best. He has to promote the interests of the Senate. He has to promote the interests of getting on with the work.

So does our majority whip. These are two fine Senators. There isn't a Senator here who doesn't think that he could do that job right there better—that majority leader's job. Every Senator thinks he can do it better. Every Senator thinks he can do the whip's job better. But they do the best they can.

I want to pray for them in this season that we are entering. I want them to know that we Senators, upon reflection, cannot help but thank them for the work they do.

Somebody has to do this so we can leave the Senate when our speeches are made and go home. But they have to stay.

Senator REID, the whip, stays around here. He stays around the Chamber. He renders a tremendous service to his country.

I want to take this moment to thank him, to thank TOM DASCHLE, to thank the Republican leader, to thank the Republican whip, to thank the Senators—the ladies and the gentlemen—who preside, all of the members of the staffs in the cloakrooms and in the hallways, in the corridors, and those who provide the security of this Chamber, and the people who work in it. I thank them all.