

at least have asked whether maybe, before unilaterally turning back the clock, there is a way to find common ground.

President Bush has made much of his abilities as a consensus builder. Frankly, I think had he bothered to ask, he would have found a willingness to compromise, because contrary to the President's statement and contrary to a lot of the press reports, this issue is about far more than abortion.

It is about protecting the health of women in desperately poor countries where more than half a million women die each year from complications relating to pregnancy, and where women have little control over their own bodies or their lives. We have the opportunity, at very little expense, to help. Instead—not to save money but to make a political point—we cut off that help.

The Mexico City policy has been the subject of more political posturing, more press releases, more fund raising letters, more debates, more votes, and more Presidential vetoes, than virtually any other issue I can think of.

I remember when President Clinton did the right thing by repealing the Mexico City policy 8 years ago. When he did that, a Republican Congress responded by sharply cutting funding for voluntary family planning—not funding for abortions but for voluntary family planning. The predictable, tragic result of that misguided, politically motivated act was an increase in the number of abortions and of deaths of women from botched abortions.

Again, the evidence is indisputable that when family planning services are available, the number of abortions goes down. But apparently that didn't matter. Mexico City proponents cared more about scoring political points than preventing abortions or saving women's lives.

President Bush has made a decision. He has a right to do that. But I believe it was the wrong decision—wrong because the Mexico City policy is not about taxpayer dollars, wrong because he ignored the bipartisan majority in the Senate that opposes the Mexico City policy, wrong because it will likely result in more abortions, not less, in poor countries where abortions are often unsafe.

The irony is that if we had a vote a majority of Senators—Republicans and Democrats—would vote the other way.

I do appreciate that the administration has said it will provide the full \$445 million the Congress appropriated for family planning this year. That is critically important, and we should discuss how to significantly increase that amount in future years. But by reinstating the Mexico City policy, by cutting off support for some of the most effective organizations involved in family planning and women's health, the President has set us on a collision course. We can now expect extended debates that we have all heard countless times before, votes to repeal the pol-

icy, vetoes of appropriations bill, and on and on.

I hope this is not what the President meant when he spoke of working together. We can do better. We have to do better if we are going to avoid the pitfalls that divided us in the past on this issue.

Madam President, we have moved foreign aid bills through this body in record time in the last few years. Senator McCONNELL of Kentucky and I have been the floor leaders year after year. But it used to take many days, and one of the reasons was that we got bogged down in debates on the Mexico City policy.

The President could have waited until February 15 to make his decision. There was time to consult with Republicans and Democrats. He could have said: Look, I know this issue is divisive. Let us work together, come back and sit down again in a few days and work through this—because one thing we can all agree on is that with the abysmal state of women's health in so many parts of the world, we can make it better. That should not be a Republican or a Democrat or pro-choice or right-to-life issue. That is a human issue, a moral issue. This would be a good year to forget the political point making, and solve this.

I have traveled to many parts of the world. My wife is a registered nurse. She has traveled with me. We have seen how bad the situation is. We have seen how a little help can move women in many parts of the world generations ahead of where they are today.

The distinguished occupant of the chair has visited some of those same places, and many more. I know I preach to the converted.

We have enough other ways to make political points, on either side.

Madam 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. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, we do have an essential agreement here that will allow us to move through three more nominations. I would like to go through this and then also give the Senators some further idea as to how we might proceed beyond this next week.

As in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that at 2 p.m. on Monday, the Senate proceed to the nomination of Gale Norton to be Secretary of Interior and that it be considered under the following agreement: 3 hours to be equally divided between the chairman and ranking member of the

Energy Committee, 60 minutes equally divided between the two leaders or their designees, and following the use or yielding back of the time, the nomination be laid aside.

I further ask unanimous consent that at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, the Environment and Public Works Committee be discharged from further consideration of Gov. Christine Whitman to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that there be 30 minutes for debate to be divided as follows: 10 minutes under the control of Senator CORZINE, 10 minutes under the control of Senator TORRICELLI, 10 minutes equally divided between the chairman and ranking member of the Environment Committee.

I further ask unanimous consent that following that debate, at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, the nomination be temporarily laid aside and the Senate resume consideration of the Norton nomination under the following agreement: 10 minutes under the control of Senator FEINGOLD, 15 minutes under the control of Senator DURBIN, 15 minutes under the control of Senator WELLSTONE, 10 minutes under the control of Senator STABENOW, with 30 additional minutes for closing remarks under the control of Senator BOXER and the final 30 minutes under the control of Senator MURKOWSKI.

Further, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:15 on Tuesday the Senate proceed to the consideration of Elaine Chao to be Secretary of Labor, and that there be 15 minutes for debate equally divided between the chairman and ranking member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and 15 minutes under the control of Senator WELLSTONE, to be followed by a vote on the confirmation of the Secretary of Labor, to be followed by a vote on the confirmation of Gale Norton to be Secretary of Interior, and that be followed by a vote on the confirmation of Governor Whitman to be the head of EPA.

I further ask unanimous consent that following the three back-to-back votes, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate resume legislative session.

Finally, I ask unanimous consent that either leader may vitiate the agreement with respect to the Chao agreement prior to the vote and that in no case shall it proceed if the Senate has not yet received the nomination and the accompanying papers.

Mr. REID. Madam President, reserving the right to object, as I understand what just transpired and will have transpired by next Tuesday early in the afternoon, is that all of the President's nominees for his Cabinet will have been approved with only one selection still to be debated. It is our intention, I say to the leader, to move this to a final vote without undue delay. I hope we can do that expeditiously.

Mr. LOTT. I appreciate the comments of the Senator from Nevada. I also note with regard to the last paragraph, we do not anticipate there will be a need to vitiate the agreement with regard to the Chao agreement. It is just that we have not received all of the papers yet. We do not expect there to be any problem, but because we do not have it all, it was necessary to put this in.

Also—and I appreciate Senator REID's comments—it is our anticipation to proceed, after these three stacked votes Tuesday afternoon, on the debate with regard to the Attorney General nomination, and it is at least my hope, and I believe everybody's hope, that we will be able to complete action on that nomination next week.

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

Mr. LOTT. In light of this agreement then, the next votes will occur back to back at 2:45 p.m. on Tuesday next.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now be in a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### NOMINATIONS

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise today to comment on several of the nominations on which we have voted in the last few days.

I am pleased the Senate is acting responsibly and quickly to put the President's cabinet in place. While I am sure I will not always agree with everything proposed by the nominees we have confirmed, I stand ready to work with them toward our common goal of the United States's best interest.

I especially want to welcome Governor Tommy Thompson, of my State of Wisconsin, to his new position as Secretary of Health and Human Services. I had the honor of presenting the Governor at his hearings before the Senate Finance and Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committees. As I said there, the Administration is truly fortunate to have a man of his energy, creativity, and intelligence in this extremely important position.

I also want to comment on some of the other nominations on which the Senate has already acted.

I am pleased to lend my support to the nomination of General Colin L. Powell to be Secretary of State. There are many foreign policy challenges facing the next Administration including the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, our peacekeeping commitments abroad, instability in the Middle East and in other hot spots, and the continued evolution of our relationships with Russia and China. I am confident that General Powell brings a wealth of experience, a formidable in-

tellect, and a level head to the challenges ahead. I look forward to working with Secretary Powell in forging a truly bipartisan foreign policy.

I am also pleased with President Bush's decision to appoint Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense. He is an experienced voice on defense issues, and one that the Congress has come to rely on for outside analysis. He recently addressed the threat of ballistic missiles in a special report to Congress that now shapes much of the debate on ballistic missile defense. His years of public service and expertise will give him the credibility inside the Pentagon to make the tough choices that face the new administration, and they will face many. I feel confident that Secretary Rumsfeld is qualified to help the President shape our armed forces to meet the evolving threats of the new century.

And finally, I support the nomination of Rodney Paige to be the Secretary of Education. Dr. Paige has received overwhelming praise since his nomination was announced, and in my opinion, there is good reason for that. He understands the need to change the system when the old programs aren't working like they should. He is willing to work with all sides—from teachers to parents to principals to school board members. And he brings with him to Washington an important lesson from his time in Houston: If you set high standards for students and teachers, and require them to meet them, they will strive to succeed.

Mr. President, there are many worthy nominees who deserve comment and support, but I will reserve further remarks until we engage later in the year in what I hope will be bipartisan legislating.

#### NOMINATION OF ANTHONY PRINCIPI

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, yesterday the Senate unanimously approved the nomination of Anthony Principi to be President Bush's Secretary of Veterans Affairs. In my judgment, Secretary Principi is supremely qualified to take on the challenges that will face the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and I fully supported his confirmation.

Secretary Principi will bring a wealth of experience in a broad-range of capacities pertaining to veterans and veterans health to his work at the VA. A graduate of the United States Naval Academy and decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, Secretary Principi is personally aware of our veterans needs and concerns. He was appointed deputy secretary of Veterans Affairs by President George Bush in 1989 and served as Acting Secretary during 1992—providing him with a working knowledge of the VA's structure and an understanding of how to make the system work for our veterans. Most recently, Secretary Principi served as president of a California-based health care contractor. Through a blend of public and private service, Secretary Principi has assembled an impressive track record and compiled the type of

practical experience that will serve him well at the VA.

I was pleased to hear during Secretary Principi's nomination hearing that he plans to focus on veterans benefits, among other concerns. I agree strongly with this priority. Through dedicated service and sacrifice, generations of veterans and their families have answered the call to serve this nation in her darkest hours and most shining moments alike. They have kept the solemn covenant established by honored patriots past and have earned the gratitude of a grateful nation.

With 139 facilities serving 3.5 million veterans and survivors, however, the task at hand is a daunting one. While broadly speaking, the VA provides high-quality health-care and services to our veteran community, ensuring that such a standard is maintained requires constant attention and a firm guiding hand. I am confident that Secretary Principi has the leadership and managerial skill, and perhaps more importantly, the compassion, to serve well our veterans and their families, as they have served our country.

I commend President Bush for putting forth such a quality and qualified nominee. Secretary Principi will be a credit to this Administration. I am pleased that the Senate has moved emphatically to confirm him as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. I look forward to working closely with him on issues of mutual concern, and I wish him well.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I am very pleased to support the nomination of Anthony Principi to serve as Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Mr. Principi is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, and a combat-decorated veteran who commanded a River Patrol Unit in the Mekong Delta during the Vietnam War.

Since completing his service in the U.S. Navy, Mr. Principi has had a distinguished career in public service serving as staff director of the Senate Committee on Armed Services and Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs for several years until he was appointed Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs by President Bush in 1992. Now, as Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Anthony Principi will have responsibility for a \$48 billion budget in the Federal Government's second largest department, coordinating a nationwide system of health care services and benefits to serve America's more than 25 million veterans.

As we begin the 107th Congress, there are few challenges we face more important than ensuring that America's veterans receive the health care and benefits that they so justly deserve. The challenges include providing adequate funding for veterans health care services, ensuring access to VA health care for homeless veterans and veterans living in rural areas, providing timely access to specialized medical care, and responding to the many concerns of Persian Gulf Veterans as well as veterans with service in the Balkans. Secretary Principi, as a combat veteran in