

the chairman, TED STEVENS, and the ranking member, DANNY INOUE of the Defense Appropriations Committee subcommittee.

Mr. STEVENS. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BYRD. Yes.

Mr. STEVENS. Turn that over. We have just changed seats.

Mr. BYRD. Yes. OK.

Mr. STEVENS. Chairman INOUE and Ranking Member STEVENS.

Mr. BYRD. The Senator is correct. But those two, TED STEVENS and DANNY INOUE, are just like TED STEVENS and ROBERT BYRD. It really doesn't make a difference. If it weren't for the fact that I am expected, if I leave the Chair momentarily, to call on a Democrat, I would just be as sure and as confident and secure if I turned it over to TED STEVENS. It would not make a bit of difference to me personally. I would say: TED, I have to go out for a moment to see some constituents. Would you take over?

We are fortunate, though, in having TED STEVENS and DANNY as the two key members on national defense, active at the helm in our development and managing of this supplemental. I thank the Senator.

Mr. STEVENS. I was going to mention Senator INOUE because he mentioned to me earlier we ought to do something to try to see if we can get this bill finished today. So we have met Senator INOUE's request.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the conference report?

If not, under the previous order, the conference report is agreed to. The motion to reconsider is laid upon the table.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

The Senator from West Virginia.

COMPLIMENTING SENATOR STABENOW AND HER FRESHMEN COLLEAGUES

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I would not want this beautiful July afternoon to pass without my paying compliments to the Senator who is presiding over the Senate at this point. She presides with a dignity and bearing and manner and presence that are so rare as a day in June.

Just look at that smile. I have never seen a more beautiful smile than that the Presiding Officer today constantly wears.

Walt Whitman said:

A man is a great thing upon the earth and throughout eternity, but every jot of the

greatness of man is unfolded out of woman. . . .

How fortunate we are to have had a degree of presiding professionalism as we see in the new Members of this Senate as they are called upon to preside every day. It is a chore. They have to take their valuable time away from their office and desk where they may be reading letters from constituents, signing letters to constituents, dictating letters to constituents, or working in a hundred other ways every day in the service of the Nation, the service of the people of their State. Yet they give their time to come here and preside.

This group of Presiding Officers in this new class of Senators is the best overall group I have seen in my 43 years of service in the foremost upper body in the world today. This is a good example.

The Presiding Officer, DEBBIE STABENOW from Michigan, is not reading a magazine. She is not sitting up there reading the newspapers. She is not sitting up there signing mail. There used to be a telephone up there. When I became majority leader, I yanked that telephone out so people who are presiding cannot sit there and talk on the telephone. I urge all new Members when they sit up there and preside to pay attention to the Senate. Please don't be signing your mail up there. Please don't be reading a magazine. Please don't be reading newspapers. Be alert to what is being done on the Senate floor.

It is a suggestion that goes over very well at first, but then so many times I have noticed they lapse into the same old habit of reading and signing their mail. It just kind of makes my spirit fall. But I do not see these new Senators doing that. They do not bring their mail up there. They sit there, very alert. And when they ask for order, they get it.

I will have more to say about this on Monday, I promise you. But I just couldn't let this occasion pass or this fleeting moment go by without complimenting the Senator from Michigan, DEBBIE STABENOW, who sets a fine example as a Senator and as a Presiding Officer.

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

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

COMMENDATION OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I know the distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee just complimented the Presiding Officer, and I, too, want to add my commenda-

tion. She is an outstanding Presiding Officer, and she is willing to spend the time and make the commitment to preside over the Senate. As the chairman has indicated, we have a number of extraordinary Senators who are spending the time and making that kind of commitment. I applaud all of them and I appreciate the way in which they are presiding. I commend especially the distinguished Senator from Michigan.

I am disappointed that beginning next week we will not have bipartisan Presiding Officers. I appreciate the importance of the job of the Presiding Officer, especially late in the day on a Friday.

ENERGY AND WATER DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

MODIFICATION TO AMENDMENT NO. 2311

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment found on page 56 of the managers' amendment numbered 1024 to H.R. 2311, the energy and water appropriations bill, be modified with the technical correction to the instruction line which I now send to the desk.

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

The modification is as follows:

On page 11, after line 16, insert the following:

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

AMENDMENT NO. 1029, AS MODIFIED

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the previously agreed to amendment numbered 1029 be modified with the language at the desk in order to vitiate action on the last division of the amendment.

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

The amendment (No. 1029), as modified, was agreed to, as follows:

On page 20, line 16, strike the numeral and all that follows through the word "Code" on page 18 and insert in lieu thereof the following: "\$3,348,128 shall be set aside for the program authorized under section 1101(a)(11) of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, as amended and section 162 of title 23, United States Code;"

On page 33, line 12, strike the word "together" and all that follows through the semi-colon on line 14.

LEGISLATIVE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2002

OFFICE OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, my amendment intends to restore a lost capability to assess the effects of science and technology on our Congressional policymaking process.

Mr. DURBIN. Is the Senator proposing to restart the former Office of Technology Assessment?

Mr. BINGAMAN. I am not proposing to restart Office of Technology Assessment (or OTA). But, I feel that today we lack the analytical insight of its technology assessment process.

Mr. DURBIN. How is the Senator proposing that these funds be used?

Mr. BINGAMAN. I am proposing a one year pilot program to utilize technology assessment methodology to analyze current science and technology issues affecting our Congress. I am proposing to implement this by contracting with outside non-profit agencies such as the National Academy of Sciences. My intent was for the Congressional Research Service to manage this activity as I feel they are better suited to conduct and oversee this type of long term research activity. In doing so, I was hoping that oversight would be provided by the Senate Rules and House Administration Committees and through these Committees, the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress.

Mr. DURBIN. Who is the Senator now proposing to manage this activity?

Mr. BINGAMAN. It has been suggested that the General Accounting Office can better serve this function. I feel that the General Accounting Office may not be suited for such a long term research activity. The GAO is investigative in nature. However, it is better to start an initial pilot program utilizing the OTA technology assessment method rather than no pilot program at all. So, I offer this amendment to use the General Accounting Office. But, I ask the Chairman that during conference, serious consideration be given to my request of having the Congressional Research Service manage this pilot program.

Mr. DURBIN. How will the initial studies be chosen for the pilot program and how will it be reported?

Mr. BINGAMAN. The General Accounting Office should submit a listing of Congressionally relevant technology assessment studies to its oversight committees, the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Government Reform. From this list, two projects should be chosen, one by each Committee no later than October 31st, 2001. The technology assessment studies should then begin with a report given to both Committees, and the House and Senate Appropriations Committee, no later than June 15, 2002. At that time the decision can be made as to whether this technology assessment process was beneficial enough to continue it a second year. If this pilot program is to continue, I recommend that the funding be executed using the Office of Technology Assessment authorization language. Rather than OTA's 200 person, \$20 million budget, the organization would be a small legislative branch staff using outside non-profit groups to perform the in-depth research.

ACCESS TO VA HEALTH CARE IN WEST VIRGINIA

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, as chairman of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I want to share with my colleagues some of the concerns voiced by veterans at a recent field hearing in my state of West Virginia.

On July 16, the Committee held a hearing in Huntington, West Virginia, to examine the challenges facing veterans from rural areas who receive health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Committee held its last West Virginia field hearing on access to rural VA health care in 1993. Since then, profound changes in VA's health care delivery—a rapid increase in community clinics, eligibility reform that opened the system to more veterans, and the reorganization of VA into 22 service networks—have affected how veterans access basic and specialized medical care.

The challenges that face VA in providing the best health care possible to our Nation's veterans are often magnified in rural areas, where veterans and VA caregivers must stretch already limited resources over long distances. West Virginia contends with a unique situation: each of our four VA medical centers belongs to a different VA service network. While this partitioning creates problems for West Virginians, it also offers the Committee the opportunity to study in microcosm the problems facing veterans throughout the VA health care system.

Regrettably, many of the problems discussed at the 1993 field hearing remain with us: the struggles with an inadequate budget, long waiting times for care, too few VA personnel to provide specialized care, insufficient long-term care services, and transportation problems for veterans traveling to or between VA medical centers. And, with the aging of the veterans population and continued absence of meaningful prescription drug coverage under Medicare, veterans' concerns about access to, and copayments for, prescription drugs grow even more pressing.

It will not be easy to solve these problems; after the President's recent tax cut, there is simply not enough money available—either in the President's budget or the Budget Resolution adopted by the Congress—for veterans' health care. That said, we must do our best to improve access to rural health care with the resources that we have.

On July 16, West Virginia veterans talked to me about the obstacles they face just to get an appointment at a VA health care facility, and then in getting to that appointment for care. Veterans report to the State Veterans Coalition that they regularly wait months for an appointment for basic VA medical care—or even longer for a first visit. After veterans have finally seen a doctor for a first exam, they may wait weeks or months longer for a referral to needed specialty care.

For veterans in rural areas, referrals frequently require a transfer to distant

VA medical centers. After hours of driving, veterans may sit for many more hours in a waiting room, without meals or a safe place to rest. A shocking number of veterans disabled by spinal cord injuries neglect basic medical checkups to avoid travel. One West Virginia veteran described making more than 30 round trips to the VA hospital at Richmond for tests based on a single referral; and his story, unfortunately, is not unique. This is not only inconvenient for the veteran, but a waste of VA resources.

VA must focus on coordination and management of care between facilities—both to provide the best health care and to consider the practical needs of veterans. For veterans who must drive long distances or depend on van services, appointments could be scheduled to accommodate their traveling times. VA could coordinate tests to compress them into the shortest time span possible, with lodging arranged when an overnight stay is required. Veterans who served this country should not be expected to sleep in waiting room chairs and to go hungry when simple attention to details can prevent excessive traveling and long waits. At the very least, VA should have a systemwide plan for communicating how transfers work, and what resources are available, to veterans and their families.

Although it is impossible to expect that every veteran in the Nation's vast rural areas can access every health care service close to home, it is essential that—should they require care at distant VA or private facilities—their transfers happen as simply and efficiently as possible. VA's network and hospital directors must eliminate barriers to coordinating and managing care between medical centers or between networks. I will continue to work with VA to find better ways to communicate with veterans and to make transfers as seamless as possible.

The Millennium Act, which VA has been shamefully slow to implement, will provide veterans with access to noninstitutional long-term care services. As I heard from the son of a World War II ex-prisoner of war, now being cared for at home at his family's expense, aging veterans suffering from PTSD need caregivers who understand the legacies of war-time experiences. The Committee will continue to oversee VA's efforts to bring long-term care services—both nursing beds and non-institutional services—to the veterans who need it.

I have advocated the opening of community-based outpatient clinics, which bring basic primary health care closer to the veteran. These outpatient clinics are enormously important to veterans in rural areas, and I will continue to urge VA to make these clinics the best they can possibly be—without sacrificing the specialized programs at which VA has excelled.

We have to count more than just the number of clinics and hospitals when