

when we first started this Senate bill, and worked tirelessly from beginning to end to deliver on the promise that we all have to the American people. In large part it was accomplished because of their work and their partnership in many ways.

Senator JOHN BREAUX deserves huge credit. I have worked with Senator BREAUX over the last 7 years. There was a Breaux-Frist bill that came out of the Bipartisan Commission. He has demonstrated real leadership and, in my mind, has been at it in terms of the final product longer than anybody in the Senate, working together on the model we ended up with.

All members of the conference committee showed a degree of dedication and resolve that is seldom seen in either Chamber. There were Senators ORRIN HATCH and DON NICKLES and JOHN KYL. We simply would not have reached this point if we had not worked together with strong leadership on the part of the conferees.

In addition, there were people such as Senators JEFFORDS, GREGG, HAGEL, ENSIGN, WYDEN, and SNOWE, who have focused on a tripartisan, bipartisan approach to health care reform, which has been instrumental in many ways.

Senators BUNNING, THOMAS, SMITH, LOTT, and SANTORUM all made huge contributions working through the Finance Committee.

Members of this body who voted against final passage also contributed in remarkable ways to this product.

I do also want to mention, just in passing, the House leadership because the House leadership, especially Speaker DENNIS HASTERT and Leader TOM DELAY, deserve very special recognition. I worked very closely, and our leadership worked very closely with them, especially in the final 2 weeks of that conference.

I had the opportunity to call yesterday Chairman BILL THOMAS. He is really the mind behind what we accomplished. He was able to assimilate very complex policy and put it into a portrait that ultimately became the substrate for this bill. He demonstrated real leadership, real patience.

Also, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Chairman BILLY TAUZIN, we simply would not be here without his active participation as well.

My dedicated staff—Dean Rosen, Elizabeth Scanlon, Rohit Kumar, and Craig Burton—put in hundreds of hours and poured over thousands of details. Lee Rawls, Eric Ueland, David Schiappa and his wonderful staff here really made it possible.

So in closing, to everyone who worked so hard and have given so much of themselves, working hard on this effort, I thank them. I thank you, the Senate thanks you, America thanks you, and, most of all, America's seniors thank you.

Madam President, I appreciate the Senator from New Jersey giving me the floor for those few minutes. I look for-

ward to listening to what he has to say on a very important issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, first, I want to say thank you—

Mr. CORNYN. Will the Senator yield for a brief UC?

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Sure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of the Senator from New Jersey—I believe he told me he would speak for about 10 minutes or so—I be recognized for remarks that I might make at that time.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, I wonder if the Senator might add to that UC—about how long does the Senator plan to speak, so I could then try to amend that UC to place myself in order?

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I would make my remarks no longer than 15 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I ask the Senator if he would modify his unanimous consent request to allow the Senator from Michigan, and then I believe the Senator from Washington, to each have 10 minutes following his remarks?

Mr. CORNYN. That is acceptable.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LAUTENBERG. No objection, Madam President.

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

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I would just note that the gracious statement of the Senator from Texas said "10 minutes or so." I would hope, for clarification, if "or so" is 3 or 4 minutes longer, it will not be a violation of the unanimous consent agreement that we just heard.

COMMENDING THE MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, before the majority leader leaves the floor, I want to say that I have been back here about a year now, and working with the majority leader, when he took office, has been an interesting and a positive experience. We are all cognizant of the wonderful work that Dr. FRIST has done in his time before the Senate and how he served populations so desperately in need. He took the risks and the time necessary to do that.

We all congratulate him for that, for his generosity of spirit, and his skill as a surgeon and physician.

I have found on the rare occasions that I—I hope they are rare—called on Senator FRIST for an ear, he was more than willing to lend it. If he disagreed, he said so. And if he agreed—even rarer—that was done with dispatch and a straightforwardness which I greatly

respect. I hope he and his family will enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday.

As we muse over what happened in the last week, since Senator FRIST is a physician, I hope he can prescribe a way we can heal some of the bruises that occurred in this last contentious period.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1602

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, it is about 26 months since the assault on our families, our people, and our invincibility that took place at the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon, and in a field in Pennsylvania where it was so heroically disrupted on its way to a target. Therefore, I am outraged that we can't find enough time to further pay attention to the memory of the 9/11 victims by passing a bill to extend the deadline for victims' families, enabling them to apply for victims' compensation which is in a fund that was passed in the Senate and passed in the House and that is about to expire.

Though we have just been through a difficult and contentious period with some acrimony, no matter how much I or others might have agreed with the outcome, our business for this year is not yet done. We are facing the expiration of this compensation fund, and there are lots of families who have yet to participate in this program that was designed for them.

The need for this 9/11 victims bill is urgent. If we don't vote on it before Thanksgiving, this bill will become obsolete because the current filing deadline is December 22, 2003.

We are reminded that a truly joyous part of the year is just beginning. It starts with Thanksgiving, goes through to Christmas and Hanukkah. It is just around the corner. A lone, anonymous Republican Senator is holding up a bill that would make these holidays less stressful for the 9/11 families. As we requested or will request in a unanimous consent request, the Senate must take up and pass this bill today in order to fulfill our commitments to compensate the victims' families.

So far, out of approximately 3,000 killed, about 1,800 families, or only 60 percent of those eligible, have filed claims on behalf of relatives who were killed. This is far too low a percentage.

Helping the families of 9/11 victims is not just the responsibility of the Senators in the Northeast, it is a national commitment we made that we owed to those who suffered on that tragic day. I am distressed by the fact that because of somebody in the majority, having just spent 39 hours of time talking about a handful of judicial nominees, we can't even commit a few minutes today to take up a simple but critical bill and pass it.

The bill is vital to thousands of Americans who lost loved ones or who were themselves injured in the 9/11 attacks. Many of these families will mourn forever. Many of these families

cannot yet bring to closure the terrible tragedy that befell their families. They are just not emotionally ready to begin the process of closure by applying to the victims compensation fund while their grief is still surrounding them.

Imagine the Thanksgiving table without a son or a daughter or a mother or a father or a child. How sad that is. And we walk away from here not yet completing the task.

I quickly point out, there are no additional funds required. Those funds were allocated 2 years ago when the fund was established. It is a rather confusing application, 40 pages. The difference is, if one applies to the fund, there is a settlement available. But in some cases, it may seem better for them to resort to the courts. That is why we have the system we have.

It is hard to proceed and leave here without trying to do something about the condition in which we leave these families. We should help them get through the holiday period and encourage them a little bit further.

The fund was estimated to cost \$5 billion by Mr. Feinberg, who is the master in charge of the distribution. He is an outstanding lawyer who took this job, volunteered to do it. He notes that only \$1 billion out of \$5 billion that might be required or available were expended. Many others have been waiting. Some victims' families are non-native-English speakers, working hard to understand, get people to help them comprehend the application forms. Many others have been waiting to receive the required information from their loved ones' former employers in order to complete the forms.

S. 1602, the bill that Senator LEAHY and I introduced, keeps our promise to the 9/11 victims' families by extending the deadline to apply to the fund to the end of 2004, roughly a year from now. We are simply giving these grief-stricken families some more time to fill out this cumbersome application. Senators BOXER, CLINTON, CORZINE, DODD, DURBIN, LIEBERMAN, and SCHUMER are cosponsors of this bill.

I think it is really unfair that the Republican majority will not permit us to just move this bill along. President Bush and other Republicans were anxious to appear with the 9/11 families soon after the tragedy to show that they shared in some way their grief and to try to alleviate their distress. Now the cameras are gone. We should not, however, forget that we have these obligations to these families. This bill is unfinished business with a deadline.

I had hoped the majority leader and my Republican colleagues would allow us to pay our respects to these families who need our help.

On September 11 of this past year, I spoke at an event in Central Park, NY, that was arranged by a company called Cantor Fitzgerald. They lost 700 of their 1,000 employees. One of those who perished was a very close friend of my oldest daughter. They had worked together at another firm. My daughter

went to law school and her friend went to work for Cantor Fitzgerald and was one of the 700 and left 3 young children and a husband behind—so unwilling to believe that his wife, the mother of these children, was taken away, that he visited hospitals in the area for some time after the attack took place, hoping that there was an error someplace, that he might find his wife, and that some way they would be able to continue. But she is gone.

When I spoke to the people from Cantor Fitzgerald, about 4,000 people were there. And, again, this company lost 700. The people they touched is a far greater number than the number who actually perished. They were looking to us for some leadership, some recognition that they paid a price for their sheer courage, many of whom died helping others, including the policemen and the fire personnel, the emergency personnel.

There are all kinds of stories, including the one about the man who walked up a flight to try to carry a woman down and both of them perished in the process. The stories are replete with heroism and courage—but dying.

I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1602 and that the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be read the third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CORNYN. I object, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I know I have to surrender the microphone. I do it sadly, because I don't believe that the Senator from Texas, who raises the objection on behalf of the Republican Party, really would object to extending a deadline—no more money and nothing else has to be done except to say to these people that we have not forgotten. We remember that you died when America's invincibility was shattered. That is a day that will mark our coming and going forever. One need only remember what happens every time you take your shoes off at the airport, or you are forced to show your ID, or you are searched with a magnetic wand, or whatever, or the fence surrounding the Washington Monument so you cannot see it at ground level when you pass by on Constitution Avenue and fortresses are being built out there. They did this to us and we are going to have to live with that.

I wish reconsideration would be taken here in a discussion with the majority leader and the Senator from Texas, if he cares to be involved, and that we can pass that bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

JUDICIAL CONFIRMATION PROCESS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I wish to speak for the next few minutes about the judicial confirmation process, now that we have passed the Medicare bill, which represents perhaps the single largest accomplishment of this session—a session filled with many important accomplishments. I want to revisit the judicial confirmation process because I think it is perhaps the one issue that has the greatest potential for constructive action in this body, and the one issue that has the most potential for destruction of constructive action in this body.

The American people have seen accusations fly back and forth in the Senate as we have observed partisan minority filibusters of President Bush's judicial nominees. As a relatively new Member of the Senate, I have no personal stake in these grievances over past perceived slights or actions. In fact, as the Chair knows, in April, all 10 freshmen Senators wrote a letter to the Senate leadership asking that we have a fresh start when it comes to the way we approach this process because, as we all know, any tactic or strategy used by a partisan minority now to obstruct President Bush's nominees, if successful, if allowed to proceed, will no doubt be sought to be used in the event a Democrat takes the White House and Republicans find themselves in the minority of this body.

I ask unanimous consent that the letter we freshmen Senators wrote to the leadership be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, April 30, 2003.

DEAR SENATORS FRIST AND DASCHLE: As the ten newest members of the United States Senate, we write to express our concerns about the state of the federal judicial nomination and confirmation process. The apparent breakdown in this process reflects poorly on the ability of the Senate and the Administration to work together in the best interests of our country. The breakdown also disservices the qualified nominees to the federal bench whose confirmations have been delayed or blocked, and the American people who rely on our federal courts for justice.

We, the ten freshmen of the United States Senate for the 108th Congress, are a diverse group. Among our ranks are former federal executive branch officials, members of the U.S. House of Representatives, and state attorneys general. We include state and local officials, and a former trial and appellate judge. We have different viewpoints on a variety of important issues currently facing our country. But we are united in our commitment to maintaining and preserving a fair and effective justice system for all Americans. And we are united in our concern that the judicial confirmation process is broken and needs to be fixed.

In some instances, when a well qualified nominee for the federal bench is denied a vote, the obstruction is justified on the ground of how prior nominees—typically, the nominees of a previous President—were treated. All of these recriminations, made by