

15,000 people contract HIV every day, the majority of them young people.

The Foreign Operations conference report provides \$800 million for an increase—a much needed increase—in the Global AIDS Program. It is a positive step in our effort to fight and defeat this pandemic. It should have been done 2 months ago. We should not have to wait another 2 months. The crisis is simply too pressing.

Unfortunately, the Republican leadership and the House Appropriations Committee would have us wait. There are a lot of controversial items in this huge omnibus, but let's be clear: The Foreign Operations conference report and the increased AIDS funding is certainly not one of them. Foreign Operations was signed by every single conferee. It was minutes from being filed. Unfortunately, some Republicans intervened and demanded that it be rolled into the larger bill.

Why? Because they wanted increased leverage on the omnibus and the controversial policy provisions, provisions that go against the will of bipartisan majorities in both Houses of Congress.

So let's be clear. The reason they insisted on this was to hold increased AIDS funding hostage to these special interest giveaways. In a season of disappointments, that is especially disappointing. So I am very deeply disappointed that by unanimous consent we could not take up a bill that had passed unanimously in conference, signed by all the conferees, recognizing that 8,000 people who die every day will not get the kind of attention, the resources, the commitment, and the response they so desperately need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

ARMY CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER
BRIAN VAN DUSEN

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I rise to remember a native of Columbus, OH, a brave man who sacrificed his life to save another, that of a little Iraqi girl who had been severely injured in an explosion near the Tigris River. That man is Army CWO Brian Van Dusen. On May 9, 2003, Brian, age 39, and fellow soldiers, CWO Hans Gukeisen from Lead, SD, and CPL Richard Carl from King Hill, ID, were killed when their air medical helicopter crashed after that little girl had been safely carried away in a separate aircraft.

These three men were selfless. They were courageous. They understood how precious human freedom is and how precious human life is. At a memorial service for them at Fort Carson, CO, Chaplain James Ellison said: Our last act can demonstrate our life's purpose.

Indeed, Brian Van Dusen's purpose was to preserve and protect freedom for his children and his family, for us and our families, and, yes, for that little girl in Iraq and her family. He gave his last full measure of devotion so that a little girl whom he did not know, a lit-

tle girl living in a land far away from his own children, could grow up and live her life in freedom with a future filled with hope and opportunity.

Brian Van Dusen had been flying military helicopters for 19 years. He was stationed with the 571st Air Ambulance Medical Company in Fort Carson. In fact, he voluntarily deferred a post in Germany so that he would be deployed with his own company to Iraq. He chose to go to Iraq because he believed in saving lives, and he believed in what we were doing. He wanted to go.

He did, in fact, save lives. He also wanted to bring hope to the Iraqi people, especially the children. He also wanted to serve our country.

When he left for Iraq, Brian filled his duffle bag full of lollipops that he would give to the children in Iraq. Not only did he give all of those lollipops away but he wrote letters home asking his wife to send even more.

Brian Van Dusen cared. His friends and family say he had a gentle manner; that he was a family man, a loving husband to his wife Bridgette and devoted father to his younger children Angel and Joseph and to his older children Joshua and Kelly. Bridgette described him as a selfless man and a wonderful father.

From Iraq, he took the time to write home regularly to send his love and make sure Angel and Joseph were learning to ride their mini-motorcycles. "Make sure mommy takes you riding," he wrote. He loved his children and his family with all of his heart.

Brian Van Dusen also loved NASCAR and was an avid hunter. He cherished the deer hunting trips he took with his older brother David. As David so eloquently said after Brian's death:

You just can't take anything for granted. I'm going to miss him. He was a good brother and a great father. God bless him—wherever he is.

Brian Van Dusen was a man of great devotion. He was devoted to his wife. He was devoted to his children. He was devoted to our Nation. He gave of himself in every way. He served selflessly with compassion, courage, and strength. Clare Booth Luce once said that courage is the ladder on which all other virtues mount. Without question, CWO Brian Van Dusen's courage created a ladder with rungs of great virtue. He is an American hero who will live on in our hearts and minds forever.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

URGING PASSAGE OF FISCAL
YEAR 2004 OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS
BILL

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, yesterday the House passed the fiscal year 2004 omnibus appropriations bill by a bipartisan vote. Republicans and Democrats alike joined in adopting this bill. I had hoped today the Senate could be given the opportunity to pass

this bill which would fund a variety of programs critical to the American people and indeed the world.

That does not seem possible now, but the consequences of delay on this bill are real and the dangers are great. Many people will be affected by this delay. One of the bills included in the omnibus appropriations bill is the foreign operations budget. That measure includes increases in funds to combat the world's growing AIDS epidemic. With the support of Democrats and Republicans alike, \$2.4 billion was added to this bill to combat AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria around the world. This money would be used to buy life-giving medicines to treat people suffering with AIDS. It will help save the lives of mothers, fathers, and their children afflicted by this deadly disease of AIDS.

If they have to wait another month or two, will it make a difference? Unfortunately, the stark answer is yes.

Bono, the founder of Data, a worldwide humanitarian group, has urged us to pass this bill now. He knows better than most of us what a delay will mean to the people on the ground who wait patiently for our help. Can they wait another month or two? Probably not.

Closer to home, there are others who will suffer if this measure is delayed. Our conferees provided an increase of \$38 million to provide more AIDS drugs domestically through the AIDS drug assistance program at the Health and Human Services Department.

Our Nation's veterans will be among groups hit hardest by a delay on this bill.

Again, on a bipartisan basis, the Senate led the way in providing additional funds to make sure America's veterans will get the medical treatment they were promised. In my own State of Alaska, some veterans have had to wait months for a basic doctor's appointment. Unfortunately, the veterans in Alaska are not alone. The waiting lists for veterans around the country, from Arizona to West Virginia, North Dakota to Florida, are on the rise. As veterans return from Iraq, the demand for medical care will increase even more. Coupled with the 1 percent attrition rate for VA doctors per month—I repeat that, a 1 percent attrition rate in VA doctors per month—the waiting periods for veterans will only get longer with this delay.

Likewise, without the additional money provided in the bill, 48 community-based outpatient clinics will be in jeopardy. Since the VA is forced to operate under the lower funding level provided in the continuing resolution, those clinics cannot open. In addition, pharmacy costs are going up for our Nation's veterans. In 2003, drug costs rose by a whopping 11 percent. The VA is incurring increased demands for prescriptions every month. To cover the high cost of drugs, the VA has been forced to cut other high-priority medical programs. They are forced by this

delay to continue operating under last year's lower funding level. So the problem, again, will only get worse.

Some of the older veterans, especially those with whom I served during World War II, may be forced to wait longer for long-term care because of the delay of this bill. The VA had planned to increase long-term care by 20 percent with the funds in this bill. I am not sure those veterans from World War II can wait additional months for that care.

Worst of all, the VA has raised concerns that the continuing resolution may not authorize mandatory compensation and benefit payments for veterans which were scheduled to begin in January. So, according to that information that we received from the VA, unless we pass this bill this week, beginning on New Year's Day, the VA will not be able to make the compensation payments to 2.5 million veterans and 314,000 of their survivors. There remains some confusion about this issue.

Likewise, the VA will not be able to make benefit payments to another 537,000 veterans. These benefit payments are needs-based pensions and sustain veterans with no other means of support. The payments will average \$790 per person per month. Obviously, those with no income cannot wait another month without the money to pay for their rent or their food.

I do not think it is fair to ask disabled veterans, for some of whom this is their only income, to wait an additional time. I do not think this is how our returning veterans from Iraq should be welcomed home.

Unfortunately, it is not just our Nation's veterans who will suffer as the Government is forced to continue operating under last year's levels for another month or two. The Federal Housing Administration at HUD has indicated to our committee that its prorated insurance authority under this continuing resolution is not enough to meet the current projections for either FHA mutual mortgage insurance or the FHA general insurance and special risk insurance fund. That means that sometime in January the FHA insurance program for single-family and multi-family housing will run out of money. Needy families will also be forced to wait for the section 8 rent subsidy vouchers. They are living in shelters and must stay there for a few more months because we cannot bring this bill to a vote.

Under the continuing resolution, the AmeriCorps Program, which helps needy families and communities, would also be in jeopardy. Passage of our omnibus bill in January will delay this. Unless we pass this omnibus bill in January, there will be a delay in the enrollment of tens of thousands of new volunteers.

The Nation's schoolchildren will also suffer if we do not pass this omnibus bill before the end of the year. On a bipartisan basis, the conferees agreed to an increase of \$2.9 billion for education

programs to help our Nation's schools. Unfortunately, that money is just not available under the continuing resolution, based on last year's appropriations. Undoubtedly, now, despite our pledge, some children will be left behind.

Under the continuing resolution, assistance for school districts, States, and colleges will also be delayed. For example, the conferees provided an increase of \$728 million for poor schools under the title I grant program which helps disadvantaged children. These moneys are not available under the continuing resolution based on last year's level, and that money will not be there when the second semester starts the first week of January.

Kids with disabilities are also going to suffer. The conferees provided \$1.26 billion in new funding to help States meet their responsibility for kids with learning disabilities and physical and mental challenges. Instead of continuing impressive increases in Federal commitment to reaching the 40 percent payment authorized for students with disabilities, under the continuing resolution the Federal contribution will be frozen at 17.5 percent. This bill would have paid 40 percent; the continuing resolution provides only 17.5 percent. I do not think our Nation's schools should have to wait for this additional money, which they should have received back in October shortly after the school year began.

Other education programs will suffer under the continuing resolution. New funds for reading, some \$57 million, will be delayed; impact aid, about \$49 billion for children of military families, will be affected; \$50 million for our Nation's colleges will be in jeopardy. Saddest of all, to me, will be the delay in funding for Head Start. We had provided an additional \$148 million to expand and improve Head Start programs around the country. That also will be delayed because the money is not within the continuing resolution.

In addition to the adverse impact on health care for our veterans, the continuing resolution will also have a negative effect on health care programs for other Americans. Most immediate, this bill provides an additional \$50 million to prepare for a pandemic flu outbreak, which is upon us now. It is upon us as I speak. Normally the flu season does not begin in earnest until late January, but this year it is early. If this measure is delayed, that \$50 million will sit in the Treasury while Americans go untreated and unvaccinated for the flu. I seriously question whether they can wait for January for that flu shot. I hope something will be done to meet that very pressing problem.

Likewise, the \$261 million provided in this measure for the Centers for Disease Control to combat emerging infectious diseases is also not available under the continuing resolution. That means the funds needed to combat diseases such as SARS, monkeypox, and

hepatitis may not be there when they are needed.

The \$122 million the conferees added to strengthen and expand community health centers will be delayed under the continuing resolution. This medical care to the underserved and uninsured across the country should not be delayed, but it will be.

Similarly, the \$1 billion in new money for health research at the National Institutes of Health will be delayed under the continuing resolution. That is research on heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other killers. It will have to be delayed until the bill is finally passed.

Our omnibus bill also includes an additional \$159 million to combat substance abuse and mental health diseases. Hundreds of thousands of Americans suffering from addiction and mental illness, who could have received additional care, will go untreated under the continuing resolution. These additional funds could treat thousands of Americans. They will not be available now.

The omnibus bill also funds the Agriculture Department which helps feed the Nation. On a bipartisan basis, the conferees agreed to make substantial increases in funding for programs to make sure that no child goes to bed hungry.

The conferees provided an additional \$3.6 billion over the 2003 funding level for the Food Stamp Program. That money is continued now at the 2003 level—not at the higher level of this bill. In fact, it is not enough money to allow every qualified applicant to participate in the Food Stamp Program without this bill.

Not only that, but this bill provides an additional \$1 billion in reserve funding to provide for any unanticipated increase in program participation in food stamps.

In total, that is an extra \$4.6 billion for the Food Stamp Program, or just under \$400 million a month. That is what is going to be delayed—at least \$400 million a month.

This bill cannot possibly get to the President until the end of January. It means that almost \$800 million will not be available to feed hungry families between now and the end of January. It means that some families may not have a Christmas dinner.

Likewise, the conferees provided an additional \$837 million over the 2003 funding level for other child nutrition programs—programs such as school lunches, school breakfasts, child and adult food programs, and the special milk program. Since this bill has been delayed, that money will not be available to help the hungry. A 2-month delay will mean about \$70 million a month will not be there for those people.

The omnibus appropriations bill funds the Department of Transportation programs for fiscal year 2004, as well as other critical programs.

For example, the conferees agreed to add an additional \$1.5 billion to complete preparations for the November

Presidential election. Continued operation under a continuing resolution means the full amount of funding will be delayed, along with the installation of state-of-the-art voting machines. This is very critical to our Nation. We all remember the last election, and we pledged to fix that. I do not think it will be possible because of the delay of this bill.

This measure also funds transit programs at \$7.3 billion to address traffic congestion around the country. It provides \$13.9 billion for the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure the safety of our air transportation system. Increases in both programs are now in jeopardy because this bill will not pass before the end of the year.

I have great concerns about the delay in funding for counterterrorism that will result in not passing this measure now. The conference report includes significant new funding for the Department of the Treasury to disrupt the financing of terrorist groups. Delayed funding could hamper the ongoing efforts to disrupt the cash-flow to the terrorist groups throughout the world.

The State-Justice-Commerce bill is also included within this omnibus measure. If this bill is not adopted, critical funds for the FBI and counterterrorism programs will be delayed. In addition, the United States would be late in paying its dues to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, which is due January 1.

The District of Columbia bill is funded in this legislation, including the voucher program which was controversial, I will admit. But it is to give kids attending failing schools a chance to succeed in life. If this voucher program which is now authorized is delayed, it probably cannot go into effect the next semester. It is uncertain whether the program can be up and running by the next school year unless this bill passes before the end of this year.

Despite reports in the press and some opponents, I think this is a bipartisan bill. I don't believe there is a Senator in the Chamber who cannot or has not claimed credit for at least one program in this bill. It funds programs for Republicans and Democrats alike, and includes projects for Senators who are up for election regardless of party. Each of these seven bills was worked out largely by the chairman and ranking member, a Republican and a Democrat, on each subcommittee. Only a handful of these issues were resolved at the full committee level in conference.

Are there provisions in this bill to which the minority object? Yes. Does the White House endorse all of what we have done in this bill? Absolutely not. Are there sections in the bill that even I oppose? Yes. I do oppose some of the provisions. But the bill is the product of compromise, and unfortunately, it is a compromise that comes about when we are forced to join bills together into an omnibus bill. Senator BYRD and I have consistently opposed the concept

of omnibus bills, and we sought to have bills pass singularly as they should be—13 separate appropriations bills.

I know there are items in here with which Senator BYRD disagrees. As I said, I know there are provisions with which I disagree. But the one thing I do thank the Senator from West Virginia for is working to try to get 13 separate bills. It has not been possible for us to do that. We were forced at the last minute to make some concessions to the White House and to the House in order to get a bill that the House would pass and which the President would sign. Some of those concessions are not acceptable to the minority. I understand that. I understand the process. Unfortunately, the timing of this bill is such that we had no alternative but to make the concessions in order to get the bill to the House.

I had hoped that we would be able to pass it today. I know that is not possible. Delay of this bill is going to cause real problems for people around this country and around the world, as I said in the beginning. It will hit the neediest among us hardest of all. And for some, unfortunately, this delay may be a matter of life or death. During the season of peace and helping each other, particularly the spirit of Christmas and the spirit of bipartisanship, I had hoped the 2004 omnibus appropriations bill would be able to pass today. I regret deeply as chairman of committee that is not possible. I take full responsibility for the delay because it was just not possible for us, within the rules, to finish the bills and get them to the Senate before this time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, let me begin by thanking my colleague, Senator STEVENS, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, for the excellent work he has done on the bill that is now before the Senate, H.R. 2673, the omnibus appropriations bill. It consists of seven appropriations bills. Senator STEVENS has consistently sought to avoid having omnibus appropriations bills. He has zealously tried to have all of the 13 appropriations bills pass on time before the beginning of the new fiscal year and sent to the President of the United States for his consideration. Senator STEVENS has at all times been fair—eminently fair to me and to all members of the Appropriations Committee. I congratulate Senator STEVENS. He is an excellent chairman. And I congratulate the other members of the committee, both Democrats and Republicans, for working together as they have on this bill and as they have always done as long as I have been on that committee; and that is 45 years.

I share the disappointment of the distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee. I share his dis-

appointment. He has been valiant in his efforts. He has been consistent in his search for ways by which we can come together and pass a bill on time. I could ask for nothing more.

Members of this Congress have a duty and a responsibility to the American people, to the men and women who send us to represent them in this great Capitol. Those men and women who send us to represent them in this Capitol do not expect us to rubberstamp legislation. They do not expect us to cash our own paychecks without doing the work that we were sent here to do. Senators are paid to be in the Capitol when votes are taken. Today is such a day, yet few Senators are present.

The 1,182-page conference report before the Senate totals more than \$328 billion. I hold my hand on the top of this 1,182-page conference report. Here it is. What a mammoth bill, 1,182 pages. Yet we were asked to adopt this mammoth piece of legislation by unanimous consent. The majority leader asked Senators for their consent to bring this bill up, which is in the form of a conference report, and pass it without a rollcall vote. Is that the way the American people want their business to be conducted?

This bill totals more than \$328 billion. It provides funds for 11 of 15 Federal Departments. It wraps together the work of seven appropriations bills. This conference report funds our Nation's schools and highways, our veterans clinics, workplace safety initiatives, and medical research. It funds priorities that directly touch the lives of every American citizen. Yet Members of this body do not have the time, apparently, or the will, to be here at their desks in the Senate and vote on this mammoth piece of legislation. Instead of a rollcall vote, the majority leader sought unanimous consent to take up and pass this legislation by voice. My voice is not so good today but it is good enough to say no. I object to passing this bill without a rollcall.

I announced my intention days ago to object to any unanimous consent request to pass this bill without a rollcall vote. I am here, at my place, as I said I would be. Senators may have travel plans or schedule conflicts. They may prefer to be in their home States or traveling around the globe rather than be here in the Capitol. Our responsibility is here in this Chamber when we have an appropriations measure of this nature, of this size, of this importance.

Our responsibility is to work. Our responsibility is to debate and vote on this conference report. We should not have postponed this matter until next year. We should not have put this matter off for several weeks. There is no good excuse for putting this debate on hold.

Now, stop and think for a moment. We have had since April to pass these seven bills. The budget resolution was adopted in early April, on April 11.