ask that following that vote, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, the Senate then resume legislative session, and recess as under the previous order.

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, this is the 136th judge that we will have approved during the term of President Bush. We have turned down two. As Senator LEAHY said on the floor yesterday, the number of judicial vacancies is the lowest number in more than 13 years. I ask that the unanimous consent request be modified to allow Senator MURRAY 5 minutes to speak on this judge at 12:10, prior to the vote.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. STEVENS. That is fine. Also, I ask unanimous consent that the time preceding Senator MURRAY's statement be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for not to exceed 5 minutes.

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

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, are we in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in a period of morning business with Senators allowed to speak for up to 5 minutes.

TRAVEL TO CUBA

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I just came from a conference about 30 minutes ago dealing with the issue of travel; that is, the right of the American people to travel. We have the right to travel almost anywhere. I have been to China, a Communist country; Vietnam, a Communist country; I can go to Iran or North Korea.

The American people have a right to travel almost anywhere in the world—except for Cuba. Why? Because with respect to Cuba, we have had a 40-year embargo, which not only embargoes trade between this country and Cuba but prohibits the American people from traveling in Cuba.

We have an organization in the Department of Treasury called OFAC, Office of Financial Assets Control, I believe it is. OFAC is an agency that is supposed to be tracking terrorists at this point. Following 9/11, we understand there are all kinds of terrorists and others who wish this country ill and are willing to murder Americans. We have the FBI, the CIA, and a whole range of interests trying to track terrorists. As I said, one part of that is a little organization inside the Treasury Department called OFAC.

OFAC is supposed to look at all the money trails to track terrorists. But that is not all they do. OFAC, as I speak today, has folks in the Treasury Department tracking American citizens who are traveling in Cuba.

I want to give an example of what they are doing. There is a woman named Joan Slote. She is a grandmother. She is also a world-class senior citizen cyclist. She was a medal winner at the 1993 senior olympics. She has bicycled through 21 different countries. She still bicycles 100 miles a week. She is in her seventies. This weekend, the Washington Post wrote a story about Joan Slote. She went with a group of Canadians to take a bicycling trip to Cuba. She believed it was legal for Americans to bicycle in Cuba. It was certainly legal for Canadians to do so. She openly told the U.S. Customs agents that she had been there.

When she got home, she received from OFAC, this little agency in the Treasury Department, a notice that she was being fined $10,000. She did not respond to OFAC's missive because her son had a brain tumor and she was attending to her sick son, who later died. So OFAC said: Sorry, you are fined $10,000. You did not respond, so you know what we are going to do? We are going to start taking your Social Security payments.

Here is a retired grandmother of six attending to her son who dies, who went bicycling in Cuba prior to that and now gets fined $10,000 and has the Treasury Department saying they are going to take this woman's Social Security payments.

I do not understand it. I guess it is the Forrest Gump film, isn't it, that says: Stupid is as stupid does. Life is just a box of chocolates. I have no idea.

What on earth can be happening at the Treasury Department that has people in OFAC, who are supposed to be tracking terrorists, tracking little old ladies, retired people bicycling in Cuba, and fining them $10,000. Or if it is not Joan Slote, perhaps it is a 77-year-old World War II veteran who fought for this country many years ago. He posted some information on a Web site he created about a licensed meeting of United States/Cuba Sister Cities Association in Havana. The OFAC organization down in the Treasury Department accused this 77-year-old World War II veteran of organizing, arranging, promoting, and otherwise facilitating the attendance of persons at the conference in Cuba without a license. The fact is, this guy did not even attend. He did not go to the conference. It was licensed by OFAC. He did not attend the conference, but he put something on his Web site that had to do with sister cities, and now OFAC is after him. So this 77-year-old World War II veteran has to hire a lawyer. Or perhaps it is the fellow from Washington State whose dad was a Cuban. His dad died, and he wanted his ashes spread on the soil in Cuba. So this young man took an urn with his father's ashes to Cuba. Guess what happened to him. We have these vigilant folks down at the Treasury Department—no, not tracking terrorists, not protecting this country—tracking a man who took the urn with his father's ashes to distribute them in Cuba.

What on earth can they be thinking about? Yes, it is true, we have a law, and the law in this country says: Let's punish Fidel Castro by limiting the right of the American people to travel. Some of us think that is dumb—d-u-m-b dumb. It does not hurt Fidel Castro to say to the American people we are going to limit your travel opportunities. We have had debate after debate in this Chamber, and in every circumstance we have said the same thing: The way to resolve the issue with Communist China is to lead them to a better place on human rights. How do we lead them? Through engagement, trade, and travel. We encourage trade and travel with China, a Communist country.

Vietnam: How do we engage Vietnam to lead them toward a better future with more rights for their citizens—more civil rights, more human rights? Through engagement, through travel, and trade, because we do that with Communist countries. Both political parties have said that is the right thing to do.

For 40 years, our country has had an embargo with respect to the country of Cuba. For 40 years, we have indicated that we will punish Fidel Castro by limiting the right of the American people to travel. Forty years of failed policy ought to be enough to convince us to change the law.

I have no interest in Fidel Castro except that he limits the rights of the Cuban people. I went to Havana on an official trip. I demanded to see an economist named Martha who was imprisoned. I was refused the opportunity to do so.

The fact is, human rights and civil rights in Cuba are not where they ought to be. The Cuban people are not free, but we will not, in my judgment, advance rights for the Cuban people by deciding to embrace a policy that has failed for 40 years. We will and should, it seems to me, encourage trade and travel with respect to Cuba because that is the quickest way to undermine Fidel Castro. The quickest way to undermine this regime is through trade and travel, just as we preach it will do in China, in Vietnam, and in other areas of the world.

In addition to restricting travel, we have had this terribly ill-considered ban on trade. It is, in my judgment, always immoral to use food as a weapon, and yet we have done that with Cuba. It is interesting; the law was changed briefly, and as result of the law change I helped engineer in the Senate, along with my former colleague who is now Attorney General, Senator Ashcroft—I offered with Senator Ashcroft, legislation that became law that opens just a bit the ability to ship food to Cuba so

we can sell food to Cuba. Last year, for the first time in 42 years, 22 train carloads of dried peas left North Dakota's farms and elevators to be shipped to Cuba.

Using food as a weapon, as we have done for four decades with Cuba, does not hurt Fidel Castro. Does anybody here think he has missed a meal in 42 years because we have an embargo on food shipments to Cuba? Does anybody think Fidel Castro misses breakfast, dinner, or lunch? Absolutely not.

Using food as a weapon hurts sick people, poor people, and hungry people, and it is basically an immoral policy, in my judgment.

The issue of trade and travel is important. It is not in any way supportive of Fidel Castro for us to say a 40-year embargo does not work and that the same strategy we use with respect to China and Vietnam does work, and that is engagement through trade and travel. It undermines the ground on which dictators sit. It undermines their capability to govern, and that is what we ought to do.

This afternoon, we are marking up the Agriculture appropriations bill, and I am going to offer an amendment to that bill. We have U.S. agricultural experts who have been denied the opportunity to go to Cuba to sell American agricultural products. As I said, Senator Ashcroft and I opened the door just a bit, and we have been selling some products to Cuba. But in order to do that, Cuba has to run the transaction through a French bank because it cannot even be run through a U.S. financial enterprise. It makes no sense to me, but that is the restriction.

I am going to offer an amendment that says at least those who are moving back and forth to sell and buy agricultural commodities ought to be able to travel. Let's at least begin the first step dealing with this issue of travel.

I will end by saying again, it is illogical, in my judgment, to attempt to injure Fidel Castro by restricting the right of the American people to travel. Does anybody really think that at the Treasury Department today we have these folks in gray suits and tiny little glasses, and probably green eyeshades, pouring over all this data—what are they looking for? Are they looking for financial information to track terrorists to put terrorists in jail? No, that is not what they are looking for. They are trying to find a grandmother from Illinois who answered an ad for a bicycling trip in Cuba so they can fine her $10,000 and attach her Social Security checks. Shame on them. Yes, that is what the law says. Shame on us. In my judgment, we ought to change the law. It does not make any sense.

My hope is that perhaps with my colleague, Senator ENZI, who just left the Chamber, and others—Republicans and Democrats—who believe the restricting of the right of the American people to travel makes no sense at all, my hope is that Republicans and Democrats can work together to change this law and stop OFAC from doing what it is now doing. It is hard to find adjectives to describe the basic stupidity of our country chasing little old ladies who ride a bicycle in Cuba and levying $10,000 fines on them and then saying: If you do not pay it, we will attach your Social Security check.

Why are we doing that? Because we are saying a person cannot travel, or we are restricting their right to travel because we want to injure Fidel Castro. The way to injure Fidel Castro is the way we have done with China and Vietnam, which are Communist countries, and that is engagement through trade and travel that undermines the governments of those countries. That is what we ought to do with Cuba.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF LONNY R. SUKO, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE, FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). Under the previous order, the Senate will now go into executive session to consider the nomination of Lonny R. Suko, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Lonny R. Suko, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Washington.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, my colleagues will be voting momentarily on the nomination of Lonny Suko, and I rise today to support his nomination for U.S. District Court Judge for the Eastern District of Washington State.

Lonny Suko is a distinguished lawyer and U.S. magistrate judge from my home State of Washington. I am honored to support his confirmation as a district court judge. He was unanimously reported out of the full Judiciary Committee on July 10. Judge Suko has strong bi-partisan support, and for good reason. He has handled some of the most difficult cases in Eastern Washington in the past decade, and he has won the respect of everyone who has come before him. That is one of the reasons why Judge Suko enjoys such strong support from a diverse group of attorneys and community leaders in Washington State.

Both Senator CANTWELL and I assisted the President in choosing him from a list of very qualified candidates. Lonny Suko has spent his life living and serving Eastern Washington. He is a graduate of my alma mater, Washington State University, and of the University of Idaho School of Law. He has had a distinguished career as a lawyer and a U.S. magistrate judge. In private practice, Lonny Suko had a sucessful practice defending both plaintiffs and defendants in a variety of tort, contract, creditor-debtor, and public sector cases. He has also distinguished himself as a U.S. magistrate judge, serving part-time from 1971 to 1991, and full time since 1991. As I mentioned, Judge Suko handled some of the most challenging cases in recent history in Eastern Washington. He heard the injury and death claims of more than two dozen plaintiffs who were victimized by a gunman at Fairchild Air Force Base in the early 1990's. He was involved in several other high profile settlements.

In all of those cases, Judge Suko won high praise for his judicial demeanor, his fairness and his respect for all parties. Judge Suko clearly meets the standards of fairness, even-handedness, and adherence to the law that we expect of our Federal judges. Outside of his many professional credentials, I have met with him, and have been impressed by his professionalism and decency. Therefore, it is my pleasure to support for confirmation to the Federal bench such a great lawyer and judge who I believe will make an exceptional Federal judge. He has served the people of our State well. I urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this nomination from Washington State has the support of the Democratic Senators from that State. Senator MURRAY and Senator CANTWELL have both worked hard to establish a bipartisan process for making recommendations to the President for Federal judicial vacancies in their State. They are to be commended for their work. They support the nomination of Lonny R. Suko, whose nomination is a product of Washington's bipartisan selection commission.

With this confirmation today, the third so far this week, the Senate will have confirmed 136 judicial nominees of this President. These include 36 confirmed just this year. That number equals the number of judges confirmed during all of 1997, exceeds the 34 judges confirmed in all of 1999, and is more than double the number of judges confirmed in the entire 1996 session. Thus, we are well ahead of the pace that the Republican majority used to maintain when reviewing President Clinton's nominees.

We have reduced judicial vacancies to the lowest number in 13 years and currently have more Federal judges on the bench than at any time in our history.

Working with home State Senators from both parties helps make the confirmation process proceed more smoothly as we have demonstrated over and over and demonstrated again today.

I congratulate the nominee and his family on his confirmation today.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I am very pleased that the Senate will be acting today to confirm Lonny Suko as a District Court Judge for Eastern Washington.

Lonny Suko is extremely well qualified. He has been a full-time Federal