

If we intend to make good on our collective hope to pass legislation, at some point the ongoing discussions and negotiations must end and a bill must be brought to the floor.

In addition to the months of work that have been put in by my staff and others on these discussions last year, we had an additional 90 days since the winter recess, and I am prepared to have talks go on for another 30 days through the end of March. But at some point, talking must end. As I made clear last fall, I am committed to bringing a bill to the floor by the end of March.

Victims are still going uncompensated. Companies are still going bankrupt, and the economy is still being unnecessarily burdened.

The minority leader, as well as Senator LEAHY, Senator DODD and other Democratic Members have made clear to me their interest in working toward consensus legislation.

I ask all participants in the process to work during these remaining days to bring these discussions to a close and to reach consensus on the remaining outstanding issues.

I am not interested in forcing a vote on this bill. But the victims and the workers who are being hurt by these delays deserve closure. They deserve a bill that puts an end to this ongoing crisis. I will begin floor action on an asbestos bill either the last week of March or the first week in April. Again, I will begin floor action on an asbestos bill either the last week of March or the first week in April.

There is no perfect solution to the current asbestos litigation crisis. But it is clear that maintaining the status quo is simply unacceptable. We must not let this historic opportunity to enact fair and meaningful reform pass in order to pursue a perfect solution that is unachievable. The time has come for the Senate to fashion the right solution for one of the most pressing issues facing us, facing our economy, and facing this Nation today.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I will make a few comments in respect to the closing days of Black History Month, the month of February.

Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to take a truly extraordinary journey with Members of the Senate and House Members. I use the word "journey" because this trip was not only to a geographic destination, not only a place to which we traveled but, indeed, was in many ways an emotional and a spiritual voyage that touched—I know me and, in talking to my colleagues, them—in very deep and meaningful ways.

It was 2 weeks ago Friday that we departed from Washington. This journey was one I had the honor of leading. It was a bipartisan delegation. Ten Senators participated at some time over the course of those 3 days on this civil

rights pilgrimage to Alabama and to Tennessee. It was a real privilege to travel not just with my colleagues in this body and the House of Representatives, but also traveling with us were some of the loftiest figures of the civil rights movement.

These included our colleague, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, who, by the way, graciously organizes this trip each year for his colleagues. This is the first time he specifically put it together for the Senate, but also traveling with us or speaking to us as we were in Alabama and Tennessee were the real civil rights giants, people such as Dorothy Cotton; Bernard LaFayette, who I had the opportunity to get to know over the years, he is a close friend of a physician friend, Dr. Karl VanDevender from Nashville; Diane Nash, who played a prominent role in the non-violence movement, much of which originated in Tennessee; Johnnie Carr; Attorney Chestnut, whose vivid words are starkly ringing in my mind even as I stand here; Bob Mants, and the list goes on—people who were there, people who participated through the late 1950s and early 1960s in the civil rights and nonviolence movement.

I say to them and take this opportunity, something I have told each one personally, to publicly thank them for their service to our country, for their willingness to face violence and intimidation directly, to face injustice and to face oppression, and to face all of this with bravery and to face it with love and caring and compassion. It was this juxtaposition of one facing the other that ultimately had the impact of transforming America. Indeed, it led to a great awakening that continues to reverberate through history.

I also thank these remarkable individuals for sharing their hearts over this 3-day period, of sharing their faith, sharing their spirituality, and sharing their stories with us for these intense sessions over Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. I speak for my colleagues. Again, 10 Senators is 10 percent of the Senators in this body participating in this pilgrimage in some shape or form. I speak for all of them when I say that we thank the participants from the civil rights movement who spoke to us, who spent time with us, and left us profoundly inspired.

We began our trip in Montgomery, AL, visiting the Montgomery bus stop where Rosa Parks said no to moving to the back of the bus. We marched over the Edmund Pettus Bridge where—you read about it and you study it and you hear where, as they marched over the bridge they were trampled by horses and were beaten with billy clubs and were sprayed with tear gas just for the audacity of seeking their constitutional right to vote. You read about it and you hear about it and you see it in some little clips, but actually being there, that physical presence, that physical sense of time and space that we were given 2 weeks ago, really captures the full picture as much as one

can. Again, to those participants, I say thank you.

We met with people throughout who were present and who described the crushing of bones as those billy clubs came down; people who, in the first person, described in such vivid detail, that had such a tremendous impact when you hear it. It is difficult for me to find just the right words to express the power of standing shoulder to shoulder with people who actually crossed the bridge at the time, that bridge that almost 40 years ago was faced with the threatening opposition standing before them.

We later visited the Birmingham Sixteenth Street Baptist Church where four young girls perished on that vicious Sunday morning bomb attack—again, talking to other people who were in the church that morning when that bomb went off, taking the lives of those four young girls.

We walked through Kelly Ingram Park where Bull Connor unleashed dogs and fire hoses on schoolchildren. And on Sunday we entered the Nashville First Baptist Church where the nonviolence movement's young heroes studied and learned and where we heard accurately described the role-playing of nonviolence which ultimately played out just a few weeks and a few months later in the historic lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville. The role-playing, the studying, the curriculum, the discipline, was all around a movement of nonviolence which characterized so much of the subsequent Civil Rights Act in the late 1950s and early 1960s. We met many of the participants who were at the historic lunch counter sit-ins in Nashville, sit-ins that peacefully transformed Nashville, TN, over a period of weeks and then months, sit-ins that started at the lunch counters and subsequently a few months later moved to the movie theaters.

We walked in the footsteps of giants, and we came closer thereby to knowing them as men and women.

I relate all this because it is also clear to me that the movement is not over. So much has changed. We heard it again and again, so much has changed in a very short period of time, but the great hope of that movement has yet to be realized; that is, full equality not only before the law but in the lives of every single citizen.

Immediately you relate it to the sort of things we do in the Senate, to create an environment that equality is not just before the law but in the lives of every citizen. That means equal education. It means no child left behind. It means equal opportunity to live the American dream. It means equal treatment at the doctor's office. It means equal consideration by the mortgage lender. It means equal opportunities to climb that economic ladder and to open the doors to higher learning.

As we celebrate Black History Month, as we look forward to the 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, we must remember that, yes,

yes, we have come a long, long way, but there are still many miles to go.

In his historic speech following the march to Selma, the great Dr. King told his fellow freedom marchers and, I should add, generations to follow:

We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. And that will be a day not of the white man, not of the black man. That will be the day of man as man.

I would like to close with a wonderful account that I think does underscore the universality and great achievement of the civil rights movement. It also underscores the truth that all it takes is one person and one act of courage to inspire millions.

The following is an account by the historian Douglas Brinkley. The year is 1990. Nelson Mandela is arriving in Detroit, MI, where Rosa Parks awaits on the tarmac. The passage reads:

"He won't know me," Parks kept repeating, embarrassed that she had come.

Moments later the airplane's door opened and Nelson Mandela accompanied by his then-wife Winnie appeared to the enthusiastic crowd, shouting "Viva Nelson!" and "Amandala!" the Swahili word for power. Slowly he made his way down the steps and toward the receiving line. Suddenly he froze, staring openmouthed in wonder. Tears filled his eyes as he walked up to the small old woman with her hair in two silver braids crossed atop her head.

And in a low, melodious tone, Nelson Mandela began to chant, "Ro-sa Parks. Ro-sa Parks. Ro-sa Parks," until his voice crescendoed into a rapturous shout, "Ro-sa Parks!"

Then the two brave old souls, their lives so distant yet their dreams so close, fell into each other's arms, rocking back and forth in a long, joyful embrace. And in that poignant, redemptive moment, the enduring dignity of the undaunted afforded mankind rare proof of its own progress.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant journal clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE HIGHWAY BILL AND 9/11 COMMISSION EXTENSION

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, in regards to the issue which has been holding up the proceedings of the Senate, that is the extension of the highway bill and the issue tied to it, which is the charter of the 9/11 Commission chaired by Governor Keane and former Congressman Lee Hamilton, we have been in extensive discussions all day long. I would like to begin by thanking the majority leader as well as the Senator from Nevada for their patience, but also their involvement in trying to help bring about a resolution to this issue. They have certainly done everything in their power.

The upshot of it is that the Senator from Connecticut and I have been in

conversations with former Congressman Hamilton and Governor Keane. As we understand from our conversations with them, they are scheduled to meet with the Speaker on Tuesday, this coming Tuesday, and that their chief of staff, the general counsel of the Commission, has been assured by the chief of staff of the Speaker that at that time the Speaker will agree to an additional 30 days in addition to the 60 days that the Commission will need to operate, and will be then given an additional 30 days in which to wrap up their report. That is satisfactory to Congressman Hamilton and Governor Keane. Both of them have personally assured me that is satisfactory to them. They will be proceeding on the assumption that they will receive an additional 30 days, as well as the 60-day extension.

I hope, as a result of this, that the House will take up and pass the bill reported out of the Senate Intelligence Committee which the Senate majority leader had approved by a voice vote earlier today. It seems to me that is the most reasonable resolution.

I thank the majority leader again for his patience and hard work in this effort, including visits over on the other side of the Capitol. He certainly performed above and beyond.

May I finally say I believe that the Commission will now receive an additional 60 days of work plus 30 days to wrap up, and hopefully this issue will be resolved.

I thank my friend from Connecticut who has always done such great work. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, very briefly, let me join the Senator from Arizona in thanking the majority leader, the Senator from Nevada, and our colleagues for working together. We have, in fact, in the words of Scripture, "reasoned together," have we not? It may have taken longer than it should have, which is not unusual for the Congress, but we have reached a just result. I am grateful to the Speaker for having agreed to the extension of the deadline during which the Commission investigating September 11 will have to report by the 2 months that the Commission itself, the bipartisan Commission, requested and now having apparently indicated to at least staff of the Commission that he is prepared, in addition to the 2-month extension for the report to be completed, to have an additional 30 days for a winddown period. But this will be worked out in detail.

As Senator McCAIN said, the easiest way to do this is the way we all started today, which was with the Senate bill adopted that, in fact, does this 2-month extension for the report, 30 days for winding down of the Commission.

The basic principle is the enormity of what happened, the horror of what happened on September 11, 2001, that none of us want to ever happen again. That

is what this Commission was created to investigate, and then advise us how to avoid.

There never should have been on the question of the search for truth about September 11 a time deadline which the Commission itself believed was too short to complete their work. I think we have now opened a path—a door—to give it the time it needs to complete its work, which is going to be critical to us as we continue to protect the security of the American people at home.

Again, I thank everybody for being part of it.

Once again, it reminds me of the truth of what I said a short while ago. It is good to be back in the Senate where sometimes it takes a little longer but good things actually get done. This is one of them.

I thank my colleagues, and I thank my friend from Arizona. He is a great and principled fighter for what is right.

The majority leader is bipartisan.

I thank the Chair.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to say on behalf of the minority leader that we certainly thank Senator McCAIN and Senator LIEBERMAN for their persistence in accomplishing something that is important.

I extend my appreciation to the majority leader for his patience. His job is a difficult job. He has 99 of us to put up with. Even though we are the most reasonable people in the world most of the time, once in a while it happens that we are not, and that makes his life more difficult. Having been involved in working with leaders for a while now, I appreciate his patience. It is an admirable quality.

Having worked with the very patient Senator LIEBERMAN since he came to the Senate, I have such great admiration for him. I am personally disappointed that it didn't work out better for him on the campaign trail. But we are really happy to have him back. He is such a great addition to the Senate.

My friend from Arizona is one peg ahead of me in seniority. I am No. 1778 and he is No. 1777 as far as the number of Senators coming here. Senator McCAIN is a unique individual. Every day, serving with him is an experience. The vast majority of those experiences are extremely good.

(Laughter.)

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. It is an experience, Mr. President.

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

TECHNICAL CORRECTION TO PUBLIC LAW 108-199

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I and my colleagues would like to engage my friend, the majority leader, in a colloquy regarding a necessary change