

Mr. LOTT. I withdraw my reservation.

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

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say to my friend, the distinguished Senator from Mississippi, and all those within the sound of my voice, I appreciate his dissertation on what we should do in the approximately 15 days we have left in this legislative session. I appreciate his observations. The fact is, whether we want to acknowledge it, we have not done anything the whole year. If there is any cause for our having so little time to do so much, it is because we have not done anything up to now. We have not passed any appropriations bills—one.

To hear talk about an omnibus bill should cause the hair on everyone's neck to rise. The omnibus bill we had last year was a disaster, in my opinion. I hope we do not do that again. I would rather have a series of continuing resolutions than have this big, ugly piece of legislation that has so many ways of creating mischief.

I do appreciate my friend from Mississippi, who has a wealth of experience, having been majority and minority leader of the Senate, but he should acknowledge what he is talking about is pie in the sky. We cannot do that. We do not have time.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, will the Senator from Nevada yield?

Mr. REID. I will be happy to yield. Mr. President, we have to do the best we can with the tools we have.

I will be happy to yield for a question from my friend.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I listened to my colleague from Mississippi. I agree we should pass a good energy bill and a jobs bill. I agree with all that. He suggested at the end to the Senator from South Dakota—I assume he was referring to the Democratic leader—that it would be good to get things done. I point out the Wall Street Journal article of today titled "Lawmakers Face Big Backlog." Let me read what this article says, and most of us know this to be the case:

The highway bill, for example, is hung up in a dispute between Republican Senators and the White House. . . .

That is not obstructionism by this side.

In the energy debate, oil-state Republicans, led by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas, want liability protections for companies that make the fuel additive MTBE; Northeastern Senators, such as Sen. Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, are opposed.

That is not obstructionism on this side. That is the Energy bill.

Quoting again:

The animosity between House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas and Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley has slowed progress on tax legislation.

That is the JOBS bill about which my colleague was talking. There is the

highway bill, the Energy bill, the JOBS bill, and this article from the Wall Street Journal today, hardly a progressive organization, says the problem is not obstructionism by this side of the aisle; it is the other side of the aisle that is having an internal debate they cannot resolve, and that is what is slowing things down.

I say on my behalf and I expect I say on behalf of the assistant minority leader from Nevada and certainly from the standpoint of the Democratic leader, Senator DASCHLE, we would like nothing more than to get a good highway bill, to get a good energy bill passed through the Congress, to proceed and deal with the issue of jobs. We cannot resolve on this side of the aisle the internal debate that goes on between the White House and the majority party in the Republican caucus. That is exactly what is holding up these issues. My hope is they will resolve those debates. We can work together and find a way in a bipartisan manner to address all of these issues—energy, jobs, and the highway bill. I think we should do that.

I wanted to make that point quoting from an article that was in the Wall Street Journal today which I believe describes what is really at work here that has held up the progress and business of the Senate.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say to my friend, the distinguished Senator from North Dakota, he has pointed out in reading from the Wall Street Journal a few of the problems are around here. These very important issues cannot be resolved, in my opinion, in just a matter of a few days. For them to come out now and say we suddenly have our act together now, let's have no debate and rush these through because we have no time left in this legislative session, is not fair. It is not fair to the Senate but, more importantly, it is not fair to this country.

Mr. President, I hope all Senators had a good productive 6 weeks since we were last in session. I personally had a productive time in Nevada. I held many townhall meetings all over the State of Nevada, from Sparks to Pahrump in southern Nevada. They were productive meetings, but I was surprised the meetings all related to the same subjects.

People brought up the same issues no matter where we were in Nevada: Health care. People are tremendously concerned about health care. The people of Nevada realize we have 44 million people with no health insurance, millions more who are underinsured, and those who have health insurance see the costs escalating. Small businesses are finding it more difficult all the time to give health benefits to their employees. It is not because they are cheap. It is not because they are mean. It is simply that they cannot afford health insurance. They know they would have a more productive workforce if people had health insurance. This is a tremendous issue all over the State of Nevada and this country.

Senior citizens. I had a number of townhall meetings related specifically to senior citizens. To say they do not like the new Medicare bill is an understatement. It is a bill that is designed to bankrupt Medicare and is in the process of doing so. To top this off, they were told last week that there would be a 17-percent premium increase. They are very concerned.

Education. The Leave No Child Behind Act is leaving children behind. It is ruining public education not only in Nevada but all over the country. Nevada is a rapidly growing State. We created about 15 new schools this year. When school started a week ago, we had in Clark County alone 15 new schools, 3 new high schools. There are so many new teachers hired in the Clark County school district they cannot get them all together at one time. I talked with all the new teachers, but it took 2 separate groups of 1,000 each—2,000 new schoolteachers in Clark County alone.

These young men and women are anxious to begin a new career. There are some teachers who have transferred from other places or who have come from other places, but most all the teachers are first-year teachers, and they are excited about being able to educate these children, to form the minds of these little people who appear before them.

They are concerned because they know the reputation of the Leave No Child Behind Act has preceded them, and they know how difficult it is with this law, these unfunded mandates that are contained therein, to do a good job of teaching. Administrators acknowledge this.

I met with all 17 school administrators, school superintendents, in the State of Nevada. All 17 said the Leave No Child Behind Act is destroying public education. These 17 superintendents are from school districts as large as the one in Clark County of 300,000 students, to Esmeralda County, Goldfield, NV, 88 students in that school district.

I did not ask their party affiliation, but I am sure they are Democrats and Republicans. They all acknowledge that the Leave No Child Behind Act is simply not working.

My friend from Mississippi gave a short dissertation on all the things we need to do, but what one needs to do is look at the calendar and how we are going to accomplish this. It is a very short period of time. I think the majority leader will tell us we are going to end around October 8. This is a real short week, so there is 1 week, 2 weeks, 3 weeks, 4 weeks. That is 5 weeks. We have the Jewish holidays week after next which will make that a very short week. We have Columbus Day. We have so few days to do so much.

What I think we need to do is make sure we fund the Government. If it means a lame duck session, which none of us like, it means a lame duck session. The fact is, we have so little time to do so much. I hope we would be able

to focus on what is absolutely necessary.

Again, I have the greatest respect and admiration for my friend, the junior Senator from Mississippi. But what he is talking about does not acknowledge what we did not do before the break occurred.

I look forward to working with Senator McCONNELL. Senator DASCHLE has asked me to work as the lead Democrat on the working group to consider the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. We will focus on the role Congress plays in supporting our intelligence community and the Department of Homeland Security.

I start out on this acknowledging that the two people who led this Commission, Governor Tom Kean and Congressman Lee Hamilton, are two of the finest public servants anywhere in America. They spent a year of their lives working on this issue. They had good Commission members. They had 80 of the top people in the world to help them do their research and investigations.

What they came up with is good, and it is going to take some real strong evidence to show why we should not follow that. I have an open mind and look forward to working with Senator McCONNELL, for whom I have the highest regard. This is a bipartisan working group and we must keep it that way. We have to keep politics out of this process. We are in the middle of an election, but this is not a partisan issue. I am going to work with every member of this group to find solutions that will make our Nation stronger and improve our intelligence capabilities.

I hope we can finish the so-called FSC bill that the majority leader has named the JOBS bill. I hope we do this for lots of reasons, but the most important reason, as far as I am concerned, is when I went home people are concerned about energy.

This country has less than 3 percent of the known oil reserves in the world, counting ANWR. We cannot produce our way out of the problems we have. There are things we can do to improve our production, but we cannot produce our way out of our problems. We use 12 million barrels a day. We import over 60 percent of those 12 million barrels. That cannot go on forever.

I hope we would recognize that this FSC bill, the JOBS bill, has in it section 45 production tax credits to give tax credits for Sun and wind production of energy, geothermal production of energy, and biomass. This is the future. When a country has less than 3 percent of the known oil reserves in the world, this is where we need to go. We need to go to alternative energy. That way we can move to a production society. We can do lots of good things.

The tax credit for wind energy expired the first of the year. We know it worked well. We know there are some farms in the Midwest that make more money producing electricity than they do growing soybeans, corn, and wheat.

Developing these clean, renewable resources, in addition to being the right thing to do, will create thousands of new jobs, and it will help consumers by providing a steady and reliable source of electricity and it will protect our environment. Because renewable energy is made in the USA, it will help reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

We have so much to do. We have only passed 1 of the 13 appropriations bills. We need to address these most important issues. As I have already indicated, I personally am opposed to an omnibus. I would rather have continuing resolutions than an omnibus bill because it was not a good experience last time. We have a lot of work to do. Let us get busy.

I see the majority leader on the floor of the Senate, and I yield the floor to him.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the majority leader is to be recognized, then the Senator from Florida, and then the Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DOMENICI. The Senator from New Mexico would like to ask the majority leader a question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader has the floor.

Mr. FRIST. I am happy to yield for a question.

Mr. DOMENICI. I ask the majority leader, if Senator REID would have no objection, if he could yield me 2 minutes.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I would be happy to yield to the Senator from New Mexico 2 minutes. Then, just so other Senators will know, I have about a 15-minute statement in which I would like to outline what the plans will be over the next several weeks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. I certainly have no objection to the Senator from New Mexico speaking. Unless a Republican comes, because we want to alternate back and forth, I ask that following Senator DORGAN, Senator BOXER be recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. FRIST. That would be fine from my standpoint. And Senator NELSON?

Mr. REID. He is already recognized.

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

The Senator from New Mexico.

PASSING AN ENERGY BILL

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I was in my office and I heard Senator DORGAN talk about the Wall Street Journal and the Energy bill, or at least he commented on it. The Energy bill that is pending at the desk, which the Democrats have refused to let us take up, does not have the MTBE provision to which the Senate Democrats and some Republicans objected. It is not in there. So who is holding it up? The Senate

Democrats, led by Senator BINGAMAN, will not let us proceed on that bill.

It is most interesting. The distinguished Senator from Nevada read off a list of things we ought to be doing. The Senator ought to know that every single one of those, and more, is in that Energy bill. He talked about renewables from wind to solar and production tax credits. They are all in that bill. More natural gas is in that bill; research to use clean coal is in that bill. Also, we have language that will forever cause us to not have any more big regional blackouts in America, and on and on.

So let's be honest about it. The Energy bill, as a superbill, is pending. If they would just let us vote, we would have a bill for America that includes everything Senator REID has talked about and more.

As far as us killing an energy bill with provisions for holding harmless the producers of MTBE, I suggest Senators get the bill and read it. That provision is out of the bill that our leader called up and that the Democrats decided to filibuster. They want us to get 60 votes on everything, including America's energy future. That is the way it is.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATION AND ISSUES BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. FRIST. If we could just go back to regular order, I will do my statement because I know there will be a response back and forth. At this juncture, I have about a 15-minute statement.

I opened the Senate, now about 45 minutes ago, and as my colleagues can tell, there is a lot of interest in a whole lot of both legislation and issues that people want to get out front on. What I would like to do is take a few minutes and give an overview of where we have been a little bit, but also where we are going over the next several weeks.

I talked to Senator DASCHLE earlier today. We will continue our discussions over the course of today and tomorrow, meeting with the leadership on both sides of the aisle, and our various caucuses. We will work out the details.

I want to step back and paint the larger picture because we have so little time with so many huge issues before us. Each Senator has four or five issues that mean the most to them.

What is absolutely critical, from a leadership standpoint on both sides of the aisle, is to have a framework so we can accomplish the Nation's business and move America forward. With a limited number of days and what we know is going to be a very trying season because of the campaigns that are going on and the politics that go on that are necessarily related to the campaigns, it is going to be a huge challenge before us.

As I said an hour ago, I do want to welcome everybody back. I do hope everybody is energized—which we have