

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we have returned this evening to session awaiting various conferences to finish their work and for House action on the remaining conference reports. We need to remain in session this evening in case those conference reports do become available. When we are certain one way or the other on the timing of the Defense conference reports, we will make a decision on the length of the session. Certainly if the conference report will not be available before midnight, then I do not anticipate a late evening. We should know something about that within the next couple of hours.

We cannot rule that in or out at this point. Therefore, we will monitor the timing closely and then make further announcements.

For tomorrow, we continue to try to set votes on seven district judges who are on the calendar. If we are not able to reach an agreement for that shortly—I hope we can set those votes for a time certain so we can alert Members. I will be discussing this shortly with the Democratic leader. Again, we will be doing our best to get word to the Senators shortly as to the schedule for this evening and tomorrow.

People have worked through last night and throughout today on these conference reports and there has been a lot of activity in the last hour or hour and a half. Shortly, I will come back to the floor with something more certain in terms of the schedule for later tonight as well as tomorrow.

 RECOGNITION OF THE
DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Democratic leader is recognized.

 DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS
CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have said on previous occasions how much I care about this institution, but I have trouble expressing how disappointed I am as to what is going on. The arrogance of power of the Republicans in the House and the Senate is beyond my ability to comprehend. The Republican leadership now is attempting to impose the most cynical and I believe abusive practice in this pending conference report that, if successful, has the potential of changing the way this body operates forever. We will become another House of Representatives.

Any conference report can set the tone of debate, the hours of debate, the parameters of debate. If the Senate does that, it will no longer be the Senate that was led by some of the greats such as Mansfield and Dirksen. I say this respectfully. I do not know how anyone would allow this to happen, those who have the ability to do it. There have been issues I felt strongly about, but I always played within the rules. That is not what is happening

here. The game is being changed, the rules of the game are being changed in the middle of the game.

In the Senate and the House, the rules are that the conferees are not allowed to include in the conference report any matter that was not submitted to the conference by either House. This avoids the possibility of conferees including legislation that would not pass either one House or the other on its own and forces the Congress to reach a consensus on controversial legislation. This process has served the Senate well for more than 200 years.

But the Republicans in Congress and the White House simply do not care about rules and they break them when it suits their interests. This conference report violates Senate rules on scope and is a cynical attempt to leverage support for funding our troops at war in order to include numerous extraneous items for special interests that could not pass the Senate on their own.

They have included—and we all know what this is about—the authority for oil companies to drill in the Alaska Wildlife Refuge, I say to the American people, that this year are making \$100 billion. But that is not enough. This abuse of power will have long-term ramifications in this body and is as bad or worse than anything ever attempted before, including the nuclear option. But in the future, if this goes forward, any matter, including nominations of a Secretary of State—you could limit debate for our giving consent on a Secretary of State to 20 minutes equally divided. All you have to do is stick it in a conference report.

There has never been an attempt in the Senate like this to similarly abuse our practices. When they have occurred, they have been ruled out of order or the leaders of the respective parties in this body have said you are going too far. The Senate has a series of precedents prohibiting bootstrapping a procedural fix in the same bill that violated the particular rule. Those precedents should be applied here to prevent this abuse of practice. If this practice is allowed to stand, then the Republican majority, or any majority, can change the rules in the Senate procedure prospectively in a conference committee without any say by the minority party by a simple majority vote on an unrelated conference report.

To show the cynicism of this whole charade, in the same conference report they reverse the rule. Now, try that one on. These rules mean nothing. It is like a game of Monopoly with grade school kids. But this is the Senate. It is not a Monopoly game.

This next few days is going to take longer than a Monopoly game, and some of those take a long time. If the rules are going to be played with—and they are being played with—then they are going to have to follow every rule. If you want a vote on a nomination, then invoke cloture on it.

This is a dark day in the history of the American constitutional form of government.

We become the House of Representatives. The Founding Fathers didn't want two House of Representatives. They wanted a bicameral legislature. But we become the House of Representatives, and the possibilities are endless in an institution that exists to forge a consensus and not act on the whims of whichever majority party is in control at the time. We become similar to the House of Commons. Whoever has the most votes wins. We haven't worked that way for 216 years.

This abusive practice will allow any majority to alter any rule at any time for the consideration of any measure to advance its short-term political interests and will change the very nature of the Senate.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

 ORDERS FOR MONDAY,
DECEMBER 19, 2005

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand in adjournment until 9:30 a.m. on Monday, December 19. I further ask that following the prayer and pledge, the mourning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved, and the Senate then proceed to a period for morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENSIGN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

 PROGRAM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, tomorrow we expect to have the remaining conference reports from the House of Representatives. Much of the activity tonight and all of the activity over the course of the day has been the generation of those conference reports. Since neither of those are going to be available to us this evening, there is no reason for us to remain in session. We will turn to one of those conference reports in the morning and hopefully get closer to finishing our work before Christmas.

 ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION
SIGNED

Under authority of the order of the Senate of January 4, 2005, the Secretary of the Senate, on today, December 17, 2005, during the adjournment of

the Senate, received a message from the House of Representatives, announcing that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled joint resolution:

H.J. Res. 75. Joint resolution making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2006, and for other purposes.

Under the authority of the order of January 4, 2005, the enrolled joint resolution was signed subsequently by the Majority Leader (Mr. FRIST) during the adjournment of the Senate, on December 17, 2005.

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 6:02 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2520) to provide for the collection and maintenance of human cord blood stem cells for the treatment of patients and research, and to amend the Public Health Service Act to authorize the C.W. Bill Young Cell Transplantation Program.

ENROLLED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTION SIGNED

The message also announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills and joint resolution:

H.R. 3963. An act to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to extend the authorization of appropriations for Long Island Sound.

H.R. 4195. An act to authorize early repayment of obligations to the Bureau of Reclamation within Rogue River Valley Irrigation District or within Medford Irrigation District.

H.R. 4440. An act to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax benefits for the Gulf Opportunity Zone and certain areas affected by Hurricanes Rita and Wilma, and for other purposes.

H.R. 4508. An act to commend the outstanding efforts in response to Hurricane Katrina by members and employees of the Coast Guard, to provide temporary relief to certain persons affected by such hurricane with respect to certain laws administered by the Coast Guard, and for other purposes.

H.J. Res. 38. Joint Resolution recognizing Commodore John Barry as the first flag officer of the United States Navy.

The enrolled bills and joint resolution were signed subsequently by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

At 6:36 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Hays, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2329. An act to permit eligibility in certain circumstances for an officer or employee of a foreign government to receive a reward under the Department of State Rewards Program.

H.R. 4501. An act to amend the Passport Act of June 4, 1920, to authorize the Secretary of State to establish and collect a surcharge to cover the costs of meeting the increased demand for passports as a result of actions taken to comply with section 7209(b) of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.

The message further announced that the House has passed the following bill, without amendment:

S. 1988. An act to authorize the transfer of items in the War Reserves Stockpile for Allies, Korea.

The message also announced that the House agree to the amendments of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 797) to amend the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 and other Acts to improve housing programs for Indians.

The message further announced that the House agree to the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 358) to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the desegregation of the Little Rock Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 6968(a) and the order of the House of January 4, 2005, the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House of Representatives to the Board of Visitors to the United States Naval Academy: Mr. Hoyer of Maryland, and Mr. Cummings of Maryland.

The message further announced that pursuant to section 1909(b) of SAFETEA-LU (Public Law 109-59), the

Minority Leader appoints to the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission the following individuals: Mr. Frank J. Busalacchi (Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation) of Brookfield, Wisconsin, and Mr. Steve Heminger (Executive Director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission) of San Francisco, California.

The message also announced that pursuant to section 1238(b)(3) of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2001 (Public Law 106-398), the Minority Leader reappoints Ms. Carolyn Bartholomew of the District of Columbia and Mr. George Becker of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to the United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission for two-year terms expiring December 31, 2007. Their current terms expire December 31, 2005.

ADDITIONAL COSPONSORS

S. 2082

At the request of Mrs. FEINSTEIN, her name was added as a cosponsor of S. 2082, a bill to amend the USA PATRIOT ACT to extend the sunset of certain provisions of that Act and the lone wolf provision of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 to March 31, 2006.

At the request of Mr. REID, the names of the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. JEFFORDS) and the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER) were added as cosponsors of S. 2082, supra.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M. TOMORROW

Mr. FRIST. If there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 8:37 p.m., adjourned until Monday, December 19, 2005, at 9:30 a.m.