

under our great leader from North Dakota, Senator CONRAD—we have said for the first time we are going to fund veterans services at the level the veterans organizations say we need. We are going to use the numbers they recommend. We have seen consistently under this administration an underfunding of those things which are needed by our veterans coming home, the top of which has been health care, mental health services, and rehabilitative services.

We, since January, have made veterans health care the top priority. I am proud of the fact that we have added dollars. We have addressed the system problems. We have looked at what we need to be doing for families, both of Active military as well as our veterans. We don't have any concern at all about standing up and saying that we have been putting our veterans first, despite filibuster after filibuster after filibuster. Anyone watching will see more this week. It seems to be the nature of things today. But we have increased the dollars, the resources, the commitment—keeping our promises to veterans. We have done that in the budget for next year. We have done that in the funding available now. It is part of our overall vision and commitment.

We are getting results for middle-class Americans. That is what we are all about, the folks who are sending their children, husbands, and wives to the war to fight for our country, coming home, expecting us to keep the promises the country has made as it relates to veterans. We take that extremely seriously. We are keeping those promises as part of our efforts to get results for the American people. We intend to do that in this budget we will pass, that will go to the President, that will be historic in that it is keeping the promises to our veterans that they expect us to keep.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. STABENOW). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FARM BILL

Mr. TESTER. Madam President, before I begin my speech today on the Wild Horse border crossing legislation, I want to say a couple things in reference to the farm bill, and I will be speaking on it, potentially, later today. But if what I have heard this morning here in morning business is correct, I ask the leadership on the other side of the aisle to bring that caucus together.

The farm bill is far too important to play politics. It is a critical issue dealing with this country's food security and dealing with this country's family

farmers. As I have said many times before, if we ever lose family farm agriculture in this country, this country will change for the worse—no ifs, ands, or buts about it. This farm bill is a good farm bill, passing out of committee, I believe, unanimously. It is a bill that deserves an honest debate by this body and deserves passage. It is critically important that this happen very soon, that we set our differences aside and work together to get this bill done.

WILD HORSE BORDER CROSSING

Mr. TESTER. With that, Madam President, I want to announce that yesterday I introduced a piece of legislation that will establish a 24-hour port of entry at the Port of Wild Horse, which is north of Havre, MT.

This legislation will establish this 24-hour port on the Montana-Alberta border. American trade with Alberta is growing at a rapid rate. Excluding pipeline shipments, Alberta's exports to the United States have grown 86 percent over the last decade. America's exports to Alberta have increased 75 percent. So it is a good deal in both directions.

The United States now sells more than \$12.5 billion worth of goods to Alberta, most of which moves by truck through just five border crossings—only one of which is open 24 hours a day.

Commerce between the United States and Alberta is expected to increase. The Canadian development of the Alberta oil sands region means the United States is sending more heavy machinery north of the border. That is traffic which must move by truck. But today, truck traffic from Texas and other main shippers of these products must go hundreds of miles out of the way to reach the oil sands region. According to one Canadian study, an additional \$4 billion worth of goods will be needed annually as the oil sands are developed in Alberta. This represents more than 40,000 truckloads of goods each year.

If all these trucks—as well as the 160,000 trucks that currently pass through our 24-hour port of Sweetgrass—were forced to move through the one existing 24-hour border crossing, the result would be an average of 480 trucks crossing it every day of each year. There is little doubt that such a pace would be both economically insufficient and unsustainable for our security needs. It would be faster and more economical for many of these products to move to the oil sands area through an eastern Alberta crossing, such as a crossing north of Havre at Wild Horse, and that is exactly what this legislation will do.

The State of Montana and the Provincial Government of Alberta have both passed resolutions calling for an upgrade to the border crossing at Wild Horse. Over the next few months, Senator BAUCUS and I will work with our

colleagues and with Customs and Border Protection to determine how best to accomplish this goal.

I understand that CBP faces numerous staffing challenges in order to meet this proposal. I have tried in my short time in the Senate to highlight and address these challenges. But the cost of ignoring economic growth in Alberta and the border crossing needs in that region would be harmful to Montana's economy and to our Nation's economy. For that reason, I am pleased to have offered this bill.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RELEASE OF AITZAZ AHSAN

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a matter of great personal concern with respect to events in Pakistan.

On last Saturday, a Pakistani leader, Aitzaz Ahsan, was arrested while conducting a press conference in Islamabad. Aitzaz Ahsan is one of the most distinguished jurists in Pakistan. He is the chief counsel to the Chief Justice of the Pakistani Supreme Court. He is the head of the Pakistani Supreme Court Bar Association. He is a longtime leader, or was a longtime leader in Pakistani Parliament. He has represented people ranging across the political divide in Pakistan, from Prime Minister Bhutto to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Sharif, although a political opponent, hired him to be his chief counsel.

Mr. President, this is a personal matter because Mr. Ahsan's son is a close friend of our family. I want to say further about Mr. Ahsan that he is pro-Western. He is prodemocracy. He was educated at Cambridge. His son is a close friend of our family, who went to Harvard University, graduated there, went to Yale Law School, graduated there, served in the very prestigious law firm of Cleary Gottlieb in New York, was then hired by Kofi Annan to be a speech writer for him at the United Nations, a post where he continues to serve.

I have, yesterday, written a letter to President Musharraf asking for the immediate release of Aitzaz Ahsan. Today, I am circulating a letter among colleagues asking them to sign the letter to President Musharraf, asking for intervention.

Mr. Ahsan is not the type of person who ought to be detained, arrested, threatened. That is not going to build respect for democratic institutions or for the future relationship of our countries.

I repeat, Mr. Ahsan is pro-Western, prodemocracy, somebody who has labored his life long to promote democracy and the spread of political freedoms in his country.

The family has not been in contact for more than 3 days. You can imagine how worried they are. We have even been told there was a move to arrest his wife and that she was not home at the time the security forces came to detain her.

I hope the Pakistani Government realizes how this looks to those of us who have been friends of this Government, who have respected the alliance between our countries, to have somebody like Mr. Ahsan arrested.

I repeat, he is the chief counsel to the Chief Justice of the Pakistani Supreme Court. He is head of the Pakistani Supreme Court Bar Association, is a longtime leader of the Parliament, somebody who has been retained as counsel by leading figures in Pakistan for many years when they encountered legal challenges.

I very much hope the Pakistani Government is listening. I have spoken to the State Department yesterday. We will have further conversations today. I am going to be asking the Ambassador from Pakistan to come and see me to discuss this matter.

I take this very seriously. When somebody of Mr. Ahsan's remarkable record and stature is detained in Pakistan—somebody who is pro-Western, prodemocracy, upholds all the values America stands for—that is a serious matter.

Mr. President, I hope the Pakistani Government is listening. I hope the State Department is listening. I hope my colleagues are listening. At our caucus today, I will circulate a letter and ask other colleagues to sign the letter to President Musharraf asking for Mr. Ahsan's immediate release.

If Pakistan is to have a future—and all of us pray that it will—it is critically important people of Mr. Ahsan's stature and standing are part of that future.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, how much time is left in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Eight minutes.

Mr. REID. OK. Whose time is it?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. It is the majority's.

Mr. REID. OK. I do not see any takers.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if there is any morning business time left on the Democratic side, I yield it back.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST

H.R. 2419

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that amendments to H.R. 2419 be relevant to the bill or to the substitute amendment.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I hope beyond all hope that we can have a farm bill that will be related to the substance rather than the procedure. It is a good bill. The committee has worked very hard on it. People have some problems with parts of the bill. But if we had a vote on the bill right now, we would get 70 votes. We are not going to be able to do that. People are going to come out here—and I suggest they are going to have to write new speeches. This has happened so many times, all you have to do is go to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and read what has gone on before. It doesn't matter whether it is a Democrat or a Republican who is majority leader, the same thing always happens when we are trying to get out of here.

This time we are trying to finish the work period before Thanksgiving. There are things we have to do. I say to my friends, do people really want an open process on this bill? Do we want to debate the war in Iraq on this bill? Do we want to debate amendments relating to labor issues throughout this country? I have been told those are some of the amendments that are going to be offered on my side. I have no idea what amendments the Republicans will offer, but I have kind of a good idea. I have seen the rule XIVs in the last few weeks and the very mischievous amendments that have nothing to do with the farm bill—political amendments.

We are late in this year of Congress. We have just a few weeks left, and every majority leader does what I have done. I didn't invent this. As I said earlier this morning, I learned a lot from my Republican counterparts—from Senator LOTT, when he was majority

leader, and from Senator DOLE. They did the same thing. I have to acknowledge that Senator Mitchell did it and Senator Daschle did it because it is the only way we can get the business of the country done.

We have had an open amendment process this year—not always but generally speaking. Once we got to the bills—and that has been tough—I have had to file cloture on motions to proceed, which has been a big waste of time. But we have been able to work our way through many different things we have done.

I think we have accomplished a great deal, Mr. President. We have done the minimum wage; the balanced budget, pay as you go; the CR; the work on U.S. Attorneys; the excellent work we did on higher education, health care for vets, and Active-Duty servicemembers; disaster relief, wildfire relief, SCHIP—a lot of good things.

So I hope everyone will understand HARRY REID hasn't invented what is taking place on the Senate floor. I am just copying what others have done. Why? Out of necessity. I have told everybody this farm bill is a pretty good bill. It is not everything I want, but one of the interesting things about American farm policy is we don't import 65 to 70 percent of our food as we do oil. Oil, we have been told, is soon going to go up to \$4 per gallon.

Food, Mr. President, we pay too much for food. But we pay far less, on a proportionate basis, than any other country in the world. Why? One reason is the farm policy in this country. Could the farm policy be better? Sure. That is why we are having a bipartisan effort to change the underlying bill. Democrats and Republicans think it could be better.

Mr. President, we should move forward on this farm bill and finish it. We only do it every 5 years. If there are amendments that deal with this, I have said—and that was my consent just asked—if there are relevant amendments dealing with farm policy, move to change it, debate it, and vote on it. That is all I am asking. But I don't want to debate the estate tax repeal. The American people don't deserve that at this time. I don't want to debate another SCHIP bill that a number of Republicans believe is the right way to go for children's health because they are in such desperate shape for the vetoes the President has done. I have mentioned just a few things.

Mr. President, we are doing the right thing. I hope people will go to work on the farm bill. Both Democrats and Republicans have worked for months on a farm bill to get here. Do you think it was easy for Chairman HARKIN to get a bill out of committee? No; it was difficult. How many meetings did he hold—private meetings—with this group or that group of Senators? I have no idea, but there were scores of them. We are at a point where we are today so that we have a farm bill that received overwhelming support in the