

hands of teenagers or preventing identity theft? Eighty-one percent of Americans agree with von Spakovsky's position on this matter. Yet he is being attacked as being outside the mainstream for what his critics call a partisan position.

Because of the holds that have been placed on Commissioner von Spakovsky's nomination, we now come to this impasse where the FEC will be left with only two Commissioners, unable to rule on any potential violation that may occur in the 2008 election—a Presidential year, along with all of the Senate races that are up, and every Member of the House of Representatives. The FEC will not be able to rule on any violations because they will have only two Commissioners—all because of an ideological bent pushed by groups outside of the Congress saying that this one man, because he agrees with 81 percent of the American people, is somehow disqualified for being too partisan.

The principle has always been that the Republicans pick the Republican nominees for the FEC and the Democrats pick the Democratic nominees for the FEC—a principle that makes sense. I do not know very much about the Democratic nominees for these positions who will not be confirmed, and, frankly, I do not care because they are not mine to select. They have been picked by the Democratic leadership to represent the Democratic position, and I am willing to vote for them on that basis.

Mr. von Spakovsky has a 2-year history of acting intelligently, with great integrity, and great collegiality in this position, and it is a tragedy that the whole Commission will be denied the opportunity to function in a Presidential year; that those Presidential candidates who are depending on Presidential matching funds will not get them because outside groups have demonized this one public servant. It is a sad day that this kind of thing is happening with respect to our governmental appointments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I see the distinguished Senator from West Virginia. I certainly do not want to preempt him if he wants to go next. Does the Senator have a preference? If not, I will go ahead, if that is OK.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

IN MEMORY OF THOMAS B. MURPHY

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I rise on a sad occasion for me personally and for my State, but also in some sense a proud time for me to be able to acknowledge the life and times of Thomas B. Murphy.

Last night, at 10 o'clock, in Bremen, GA, in Haralson County, Thomas B. Murphy died from the complications of

a stroke that for the last 4 years kept him, at best, semiconscious and in a very difficult state.

But in those previous 79 years of life, he is probably the most remarkable political figure in the history of the State of Georgia. Elected speaker of the house in 1974, he maintained that position until 2002—for 28 years—longer than any speaker of any legislature in the history of the United States of America.

He was the son of a primitive Baptist preacher by weekend and a railroad telegraph man by day. He was a product of the Depression. And he was Irish. He was tough as nails but had a heart of gold. He was a Democrat through and through, and proudly stated his absolute distaste for any Republican.

For 8 years of my 17 years in the Georgia Legislature, I was the Republican leader of the Georgia House. To give you an idea of what a minority is really like, I was 1 of 19 Republicans, and there were 161 Democrats. I understood what being a minority leader was all about.

Tom Murphy was a powerful, forceful leader. But from the day I met him, when I was first elected in 1976, to the last day I held his hand, this past April, by his bed in Bremen, GA, he was always fair, he was always good, and he did what was best for the State.

Tom Murphy did not play golf. He did not play tennis. He raised tomatoes in his garden. His house is a modest brick ranch in Bremen, GA. His trade as a country lawyer was exceeded only by his skill as a politician. He never cared for money. He never cared for fame. He never cared for attention. His favorite day of the year was March 17, St. Patrick's Day, for which he would summarily adjourn the Georgia Legislature so he and his entourage could go to Savannah, GA, and be a part of the second largest St. Patrick's Day parade in America, in Savannah, on St. Patrick's Day.

His second favorite thing was to hold his grandchildren in his lap as he sat on the throne of the speaker of the house of representatives, and let them watch over his presiding of the Georgia House.

But this common, tough, fine man did so much for our State it is almost difficult to describe. We would not have a Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority were it not for Tom Murphy. He delivered the rural vote for the urban city of Atlanta in 1974 to get mass transit and to raise the taxes to do it. If you ever watched the Super Bowl in the Georgia Dome, the Georgia Dome would have never been built were it not for Tom Murphy.

As to the Georgia World Congress Center, there is not a Member of this Senate who has not been there because almost every convention in America goes through there once every couple years. It would never have been built were it not for Tom Murphy. Our rural roads and highways, the Governor's Road Improvement Program, would

never have happened were it not for Tom Murphy.

But of all the great legacies and edifices that will be named after him, and have been named after him, his legacy will live on not through buildings and institutions but through people because Tom Murphy cared the most about people. And he cared the most about people who were poor and people who were disadvantaged.

Tom Murphy's legacy is the children who were born in poverty who came out of poverty and became successful because of the programs he put in place as speaker of the house. Tom Murphy's legacy will live on because of those who know, as a foster child or as a child in trouble, it was Tom Murphy who was there to give a hand up, not a handout.

Tom Murphy will be honored this Friday in the State capitol, where he will lie in state, and where his funeral will take place—a State capitol where for 28 years, through five Governors, he ruled the State of Georgia—not in the sense of a ruler or a tyrant but in the sense of a proud man whose time and destiny came together in the great State of Georgia. I will mourn his loss for all I learned from him.

I end my remarks by telling you about that day I sat by his bed this past April and held his hand. He could not communicate, but I knew he was awake. I said: Mr. Speaker, I am now in the U.S. Senate. And I just wanted to tell you I am a better man, and I probably got there because of the painful and wise lessons I learned from you.

A tear came in his eye, and he squeezed my hand. I knew, as we communicated first in 1976, we communicated once again. And from the day I knew him in 1976, to the last day I knew him this year, I respected him, I honored him, and I loved him.

Georgia appreciates the service Tom Murphy gave to all her people.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

LIHEAP

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, let me begin by thanking my good friend, the distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee, for yielding.

The reason I rise is to deal with a very important issue that impacts millions of our fellow Americans, and that is all over this country, with the price of home heating oil soaring, people are wondering about how they are going to stay warm this winter. My very fervent hope is that the Congress, both the Senate and the House, will address this issue before we adjourn for the Christmas holidays.

I commend Majority Leader REID, Minority Leader MCCONNELL, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator BYRD, Chairman HARKIN, and others for, in fact, adding a significant sum of money—over \$400

million—to the Omnibus appropriations bill. This is important, and I appreciate that. I think people all over this country appreciate that.

Unfortunately, however, this total of \$2.6 billion in funding for LIHEAP, the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, that so many people, so many elderly people depend upon in order to stay warm in the wintertime, while it is an 18-percent increase from last year, it is still 23 percent below what was provided for LIHEAP just 2 years ago in nominal dollars. Meanwhile, as everybody knows, the cost of home heating fuels has soared. Compared to 2 years ago, heating oil prices are projected to be 50 percent higher this winter. The price of propane will be 38 percent higher, and electricity prices will be 14 percent higher. These high prices, coupled with the reduction in LIHEAP assistance compared to 2 years ago, mean States will be forced to either reduce the number of people who will be receiving LIHEAP or else to significantly cut back on the amount of money that people will be receiving. There is no question about what will happen if that occurs: People in the United States of America will be cold. It is possible that some may actually be freezing.

Two years ago, thanks to the leadership of Senator SNOWE and many other Senators, LIHEAP funding was increased by \$1 billion above the appropriated level because it was then the belief that we faced a home heating emergency. Well, if we faced a home heating emergency at that point, let me tell my colleagues we face one today that is even more severe. In the State of Vermont and all over this country, we are having elderly people living on fixed incomes who are looking at the soaring prices of home heating fuels. They are scared to death. It seems to me that we have the moral responsibility as the Senate of the United States of America to do something for those people before we adjourn.

I thank my colleague, Senator LEAHY from Vermont, as well as Senators COLEMAN, KLOBUCHAR, SNOWE, OBAMA, DOLE, BAUCUS, SUNUNU, CANTWELL, COLLINS, CASEY, LIEBERMAN, LANDRIEU, KERRY, KENNEDY, and CLINTON for supporting an amendment that will essentially increase LIHEAP funding by \$800 million, half of which will go into the normal LIHEAP formula, half will go into emergency funding to be used at the discretion of the President.

While those Senators are already onboard, I know there are many other Senators—Republicans, Democrats, and Independents—who are also wanting a vote to show the people back home that we have not forgotten them and that we do not want any Americans to go cold this winter.

Let me simply conclude by suggesting to you that the people of our country all over America are losing faith in the U.S. Government. That is no secret. Polling for the President,

polling for Congress is at an almost all-time low. They think we are concerned about a whole lot of issues, but we are not concerned about them. It seems to me that before we go home to our well-heated homes, before we go home to our vacation time, that we not turn our backs on some of those who are most in need. I think we have to act boldly to restore faith in the U.S. Government, and I hope that before we leave, we can get a vote on this floor with bipartisan support, and that we can move this process forward.

Mr. President, with that, I thank my good friend, Senator BYRD, the outstanding leader of our Appropriations Committee, for yielding, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank the very distinguished Senator for his remarks.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the Senator from West Virginia has the floor, but would he yield me at least a couple minutes in reference to what my colleague from Vermont just spoke about?

Mr. BYRD. Yes, Mr. President. I am glad to do so.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished chairman. I agree with what the Senator from Vermont has just said. In our State, cold weather is not a rarity, it is a fact of life, especially this time of the year. The thermometer on my front steps goes down to 20 below zero. Many times there is no mercury showing because it has gone below that.

Now, that is not theoretical cold, that is cold you die from. I know what it has cost us in filling the tank for my own furnace this year, and I wonder how many people who are not privileged to have the kind of salaries all of us do, how they possibly do it. It is not a matter of just help; this is a matter of life or death. It is not a matter of just comfort. We are not talking about the weather being in the fifties and perhaps you can just put on more sweaters or more coats; we are talking about it being 5 or 10 and 15 and 20 degrees below zero, or even today in Burlington, VT, it began at zero. The temperature was at zero, and then it warmed up from last night. In those situations you die if you don't have heat. It is not a question of being comfortable; you die. It is as simple as that. You die. There are a lot of people who cannot afford this.

I will work with the distinguished Senator from Vermont, as I have with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, in trying to get more money after this bill is passed for LIHEAP. I know the distinguished Senator from West Virginia has supported us every single time on LIHEAP. He also knows what it is like in those rural areas of West Virginia where people barely eke out a living and what happens to them when the snow is falling and it is cold outside and the children are crying because they are cold and the parents are doing everything possible to keep them warm. We will work on this.

I thank the Senator from West Virginia for yielding me the time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

CONSOLIDATED APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the Constitution grants to Congress an extensive array of powers, each of which in one way or another touches the lives of every 1 of the 300 million people who live in America today. But of all of those powers so carefully inscribed in article I, none is so powerful or so necessary for the welfare of our country as the power to appropriate monies—monies from the Federal Treasury. But it is not simply within the power of the Congress to appropriate funds for the operation of the Government. It is a duty that must be exercised each year without fail and without excuses. The operation of the Government to enforce our laws, to serve our people, to protect our liberties depends upon Congress providing the funds that are necessary to do so.

The bill that will soon be before the Senate, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008, is essential legislation for the country. It includes 11 of the 12 annual appropriations bills. In all, it appropriates \$473.5 billion—spelled with a B, Mr. President, a capital B. That is \$473.50 for every minute since Jesus Christ was born.

It appropriates \$473.5 billion for the operations of nearly every agency in the Federal Government, save for those funded by the already-approved Defense Appropriations Act.

The bill contains an additional \$42.2 billion in emergency spending, including \$31 billion for the war in Afghanistan and for force protection for our troops—American troops, our troops—in Iraq. I wasn't for going there; I was against our going into Iraq. But we are there. We are talking about our troops who are there in Iraq.

The President's budget, as submitted, simply did not include sufficient funds for the health of our veterans. This bill provides \$3.7 billion more than requested to make sure the Veterans' Administration can provide better care for our veterans.

The bill also includes \$3 billion of emergency spending for border security, \$622 million for drought relief, \$300 million for firefighting in the West, and \$250 million for low-income home energy assistance. Emergency funds totaling \$2.4 billion are also included for peacekeeping operations in Darfur, refugee assistance, and other foreign assistance programs. We also approved \$194 million for the replacement of the bridge which recently fell into the Mississippi River.

The consolidated appropriations bill contains an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability for Member-requested projects and earmarks. Each and every earmark contained in the bill or described in the explanatory statement is accounted for