

together, in a bipartisan way, and pass lobbying reforms, some ethics reform, some earmarks reform, and take a real step together in an important way.

As we all know, the House has passed a set of rules, and so the conference is going to be an interesting one because the Senate will have its own bill. The House will have its own exclusive rules and hopefully will present some bill language from relevant committees in the House that we will be able to reconcile in the conference committee.

Tomorrow, with Senator BENNETT as the ranking member, as well as Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS, we will formally present this bill. I hope that the presentation will reflect our commitment to work together to see that the discussion is full, that we understand that there are differences of opinion within the Senate on some of the points, but that it is critically important that action be taken.

We all know what has happened this past year. We all know that the results of the election have indicated that corruption is an important concern of the electorate, some say the most important concern, even with Iraq, that was voted on in this election. So the voice of the people calling us to move ahead, pass legislation, and see that our House is clean and scrupulous is increasingly important. I believe we will measure up.

The base bill that will be on the floor tomorrow is identical to the bill that was passed last year. It came to the floor in the early part of the year and was then passed by the Senate. It was held up in the House over a difference of opinion on 527 reform. And from that point on, it was stymied and went nowhere.

It is also my understanding—and my staff has been a party to the discussions—that there will be a leadership amendment. That leadership amendment will be concurred in by the majority leader, the minority leader, the chair and ranking member of Rules and others. It will essentially toughen the bill that was presented last year. We will deal with a number of issues, including strengthening the earmark language.

Now, I want to make a couple of personal comments on earmarks. In my view, this is the most difficult part of the entire bill, to reconcile feelings, to be able to develop some form of a consensus. An earmark is an appropriation placed in the budget by Members of Congress. I believe earmarks should exist. We have big States, and I come from a big State of 38 million people. We pay far more in taxes than we get back in services. Therefore, to be able to place in the budget certain critical items that benefit California's infrastructure and California's programs is important.

I also strongly believe that my name should accompany the earmark. I have no problem letting anyone know what earmark I have suggested.

I strongly believe that—and this is where I think I probably differ from

some of my colleagues—if an earmark is added in the dark of night, if the earmark is not voted on by a subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, it should be subject to a 60-vote point of order. Right now, rule XXVIII, according to the Parliamentarian, does not apply to earmarks per se but out-of-scope matters only—for example, ANWR. So I think the discussion in the ensuing week and a half is going to be an interesting one.

Secondly, are earmarks just non-Federal additions, congressional additions to a budget, or do they also encompass funds that go to State entities or private entities? As we work on this issue, I say to the Members that I would very much like to know your views. I would like to work with every Member. It is my intention as the new chairman of the Rules Committee to work openly and, hopefully, in a bipartisan way not only with the ranking member but with other Republicans and Democrats on that committee. The first hearing we will have in the Rules Committee will be on the subject of the past election—specifically, the undervote in Sarasota, FL, on certain items on their ballot, e-voting, and what we might be able to do to assure people who vote that their vote is recorded accurately; that there are actually no switchovers; that there is no difference between how you press the button and how your vote is recorded; and that you can corroborate with a paper trail that, in fact, that is the way you voted.

I come to the Senate floor to make very brief opening remarks and signal my intention to work with the Rules Committee on this bill in a bipartisan way and, hopefully, to make as much progress as we can.

I have been an appropriator for 13 out of my 15 years in this body. I have served in different capacities, as we all have. We work our way up through the chairs in Appropriations. I think the time has come for earmarks, and for holds as well, to stop the anonymity, give them the full light of day; for Members who produce earmarks to be willing to defend them and that when earmarks are placed in the dark of night by a Member, they would be subject to a 60-vote point of order.

I will say one other thing about holds. A hold is something that a Member does to essentially indicate that they have a concern about a vote. It is difficult, from a parliamentary perspective, to take action because you may just want to hold a bill so that you have an opportunity to read it, which would just be 24 hours or so. Or you may have some mischief in your mind when you produce a hold. I have seen holds that were put on virtually everything that came out of a committee because one Member wanted to make a point. I have seen Members put holds on every bill another Member had to make a point. It seems to me that along with the era of the anonymous earmark, the era of the anonymous hold ought to be put to rest with a big sign that says "rest in peace."

This is a new day. I do agree that transparency and full disclosure act in the best interest of this body. I look forward to presenting the bill tomorrow, along with Ranking Member BENNETT, Senator LIEBERMAN, and Senator COLLINS, and to the ensuing 6 or 7 days of discussion and amendments.

I want to ask one other thing, and that is that when the bill comes to the floor, Members come down and file their amendments so that in addition to the leadership-proposed substitute, we will have knowledge of what is about to come to the floor.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I understand we are in morning business with Members granted approximately 10 minutes apiece, if they so choose; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the Presiding Officer.

WESTERN KANSAS SNOWSTORMS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to call your attention to what can only be described as a major disaster in my home State of Kansas and surrounding States—certainly the State represented by the distinguished Presiding Officer—along with New Mexico and eastern Colorado, more especially in western Kansas.

In the last days of December, a large winter storm spread over 30 inches of heavy snow and up to 3 inches of ice in much of my State of Kansas.

As you can see from this picture of what used to be a row of electric towers—a very idyllic scene in Kansas, where we produce the food and fiber this Nation needs—and then from the following picture—I will take this picture down and basically show you what happened after the blizzard—of what remains, this storm has caused overwhelming destruction all throughout the region. There are 21 towers in this condition, as shown in the picture. These are major towers of power, of electrical grid that have been destroyed all across my State of Kansas, more especially in the western part.

As a result, 15-foot snowdrifts closed highways and left over 60,000 customers without power. Over 10,000 downed utility poles litter the area. We did not get that picture blown up in time, but it is a marvelous picture of a road—you can see the snow here—that goes by with a whole bunch of telephone poles snapped off like matchsticks. And that has happened all throughout that area. Residents who are lucky enough to have

generators are now paying up to \$50 a day for diesel fuel to simply generate electricity to stay warm, to exist.

What is more, the storm hit one of the largest concentrations of livestock in the State. Let me put up a chart that is going to be a little difficult to discern from the standpoint of what it portrays. For reasons you can understand when you look at this image, we have received numerous reports of animals like this calf—yes, this is a calf. You can see the calf's nose, and one eye here and one eye here. We do not know whether the calf made it, in that our producers are working overtime, our ranchers are working overtime to get food to their livestock herds. But in this particular instance, you can see what happens to an animal that is caught in these kinds of conditions—a rather sad scene, to say the least. Either they succumb to a lack of food or a lack of water or they suffer extreme weight loss.

(Ms. STABENOW assumed the Chair.)

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, what happens, as you well know, coming from the State you represent, is that you will have a thaw, but the thaw will only involve a couple of inches, and it turns to ice, and then below that mud. So if you have any livestock there, they are stuck. You could even put a bale of hay right next to them and they could not eat it.

So many economic livelihoods are in danger if Kansas farmers are unable to reach their herds of cattle or keep them fed. I take great pride in reporting that all across our State our producers are doing the very best they can under very difficult circumstances.

In light of the overwhelming destruction this storm has thrust on our State, 44 counties were immediately declared states of disaster. This comes as no surprise to those of us who have seen the damage this storm has caused or those of us who have gone through previous storms. I remember the one in 1973, which caused great damage, and we had to use Air Force planes with bales of hay to keep the livestock herds, at least to the extent they could be, from dying. However, what comes as a surprise to myself and many others is that FEMA has been unable to fully respond to our vital requests for assistance.

Last night, the President issued a major disaster declaration for Kansas, allowing the State access to two—two—of the seven—that is important: Two of the seven—major types of public assistance. However, he agreed with me, when I showed the President these images of our State a moment ago at the White House that the damage in the western part of our State goes far beyond something called “debris removal” and “emergency protective services.”

Furthermore, we have been told that debris removal does not cover the removal of snow. Now, wait a minute. If you are in western Kansas or you are out on the high plains and you have 30

inches of snow and 15-foot snowdrifts but you cannot remove the snow because it cannot be categorized as debris, how on Earth can you reach the debris that is underneath the snow? That seems to be a quandary or a question that is rather ridiculous under the circumstances.

While I understand that Federal officials must confirm a record or near-record amount of snow in order to expend Federal funds—I understand that—30 inches of snow certainly covers any other debris one could hope to clear, including the 15-foot drifts.

The bottom line is that the State of Kansas needs its Federal Government to assist in restoring power and clearing massive amounts of snow. And they need this assistance immediately—not next week, next month, or next year.

I have been told that meetings this week will determine whether Kansas qualifies for the remaining categories of public assistance. You remember that picture of the transformer, which I will put back up—and I will cover the picture of this poor calf—these are the kinds of things where we have to have public assistance; otherwise, you have local, small generators and people paying \$50 a day for diesel fuel just to keep warm. That is the kind of category of public assistance—I am not going to list all of them—we desperately need.

I can only ask on behalf of Kansans, who will have been stuck in the snow for 2 weeks by the time these meetings occur, that these decisions be made sooner rather than later. I have been informed just this morning by our FEMA Director, Mr. David Paulison—who wants to be of all possible help—that much work remains to be done between the State and also our regional FEMA officials.

I understand that. There are a lot of regulations. There are a lot of things Congress itself has put into the regulations in regard to FEMA help or State officials, that they must work through this. But the 850 people in Sharon Springs, Kansas, cannot afford to clear the 15-foot snowdrifts that are currently covering six blocks of Main Street. Their county of 1,500 people could not have known to budget for the 600 truckloads of snow they estimate it will take to clear just their Main Street, just that area. They estimate it would take that to do the job. They need their Federal Government's help, and they need their State and also regional FEMA help to expedite this process, which I understand is going to take place on Wednesday. Why it cannot take place before that I am not sure. And why the Weather Service cannot at least discern this was a major snow—a major snow of 30 inches and 15-foot drifts—is a little bit beyond me. We will keep working on that.

As each day passes that FEMA is not able to issue the remaining categories of assistance—I am not blaming FEMA. I know there is a process. I am not blaming the State. I know there is a process. But the people of Saint

Francis and the people of many other communities—county seat communities, noncounty seat communities, very small communities—need the assistance now.

I hope FEMA and our Government do not give the impression that it is entirely focused solely on large urban and suburban communities, or natural disasters that make the headlines, make the headlines, and make the headlines. Obviously, I am talking about hurricanes, I am talking about mudslides, I am talking about forest fires, I am talking about major disasters where FEMA does the best job they possibly can. We have come through a lot in the past sessions of Congress.

So I am asking our State officials and our FEMA folks here in Washington and also on a regional level to prove this is not the case by quickly providing all available Federal resources to support this effort in our heartland. And again, let's do it this week. Let's not wait until next week and the week after and a month after.

I thank the distinguished Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Florida). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO BOB MCGOWAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the accomplishments of Bob McGowan, the Washoe County assessor. Last year, after more than 24 years in office, Bob retired as the longest serving elected department head in the county. His personable demeanor and dedication to service will be missed.

Bob has been a resident of Nevada for more than 38 years. After working in the Nevada Attorney General's office, Bob made the first of many successful runs for elected office. In 1982, the citizens of Washoe County elected him as their county assessor. For more than two decades, Bob has presided over the growth of Washoe County. From the rising real estate values at Lake Tahoe to the rapid development in the city of Reno, Bob has sought to provide fairness for Washoe County residents.

Most importantly, Bob has never forgotten that the goal of elected office is service. After his election in 2002, he told the Reno-Gazette Journal: “From the first day I went in office, we've always been a public service organization, not just a property appraisal.” Under Bob's guidance, the assessor's office has become more responsive to Washoe County residents. For example, Bob moved the assessor's office into the digital age, and residents of Washoe County can now access many forms online. Bob has also worked to

save the taxpayers money, trimming his own budget to return more than \$2 million dollars to the Washoe County general fund.

As the county assessor, Bob has always been in tune with the issues of Washoe County. He has navigated controversies over rising property values with ease, taking the time to talk with the people he serves. To this day, residents are amazed that Bob is so approachable and accessible. He can quickly put a visitor at ease with his humble demeanor and his frequent jokes. In fact, I cannot recall a time that I have met with Bob when he hasn't told me a funny anecdote or story.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Bob is a dedicated part of his community. He has served as president for Habitat for Humanity and as an executive board member of the alumni organization for the University of Nevada, Reno. Additionally, as the president of the Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful organization, he led an effort to protect the pristine areas surrounding Lake Tahoe. While working to improve Washoe County, Bob also raised three wonderful children in Reno. A few years ago, I had the privilege to host his daughter, Megan, in my Washington office. A finer former employee does not exist.

Bob McGowan has been an important part of Northern Nevada for more than two decades. His retirement will leave large shoes to fill, but I am confident that Bob will continue to improve Washoe County for many years to come. It is my great pleasure to offer my congratulations to Bob and the McGowan family.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPSMAN CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise to reflect for a moment on the service and sacrifice of Navy Hospital Corpsman Christopher Anderson of Longmont, CO. Corpsman Anderson was killed in Iraq last month in the volatile Al Anbar province in service to this Nation. He was only 24, and was laid to rest late last month in Arlington National Cemetery here in our Nation's Capital.

In Longmont, they bade farewell to Hospital Corpsman Anderson with all appropriate honors that this Nation, his community and his family could bestow: A Purple Heart and 21-gun salute, a release of doves, and hundreds lining the streets to pay their final respects to a young man taken from this life all too soon.

Serving as a Navy Corpsman with a unit of Marines is no easy task. The job dates back to the Spanish-American War, and is an incredibly dangerous job which entails carrying a loaded weapon along with the tools of your trade: Saving lives.

The marines I have had the privilege of knowing are all proud, brave and honorable men whose respect must be

earned through hard work. For a Corpsman, the title of "Doc" comes only when you have earned the respect of your Marine unit, when they are prepared to risk their lives for you as they would one of their own, because they know with absolute conviction that you would do the same.

One fellow Navy Corpsman reflected on the honor of this title, saying of the Marines, "If they yell, 'Corpsman up,' they know Doc is going to be right there. . . . When the Marines call you 'Doc,' you know you'll never let them down, you'll never leave their side. That bond between a Marine and a Navy corpsman is something that will last forever. We call them 'My Marines'—they call us 'My Doc.'"

Navy Hospital Corpsman Christopher Anderson was "Doc" to his marines.

For Christopher Anderson, service was always in his blood. He was an uncommon young man of steady nerves and a unique ability to inspire others to find greatness in themselves. When he graduated Longmont High School in 2000, he sought a way to make a difference in the world, and had considered becoming a police officer or firefighter. His grandfather observed, "If he saw a wreck on the side of the road, he was the first to stop and help."

And then in 2005, a higher calling of service reached out to Christopher: America. When Christopher enlisted in the U.S. Navy in August, 2005, he was the fourth generation of his family to join the service. And he carried on his family tradition with honor and distinction.

Throughout training and during his service, Hospital Corpsman Anderson met every challenge with excellence. At his boot camp graduation, Corpsman Anderson was voted by his peers the "honor graduate" of his class, the premier member of his class. He sought advanced combat medic training and volunteered for an assignment to the front lines in Iraq. When one of his sergeants was injured by an IED in Iraq, a surgeon commented that Corpsman Anderson's emergency medical treatment was the finest he had ever seen.

A marine will tell you that he will always take a bullet for his Doc, because his Doc is the only one who can take it back out. Hospital Corpsman Christopher Anderson sacrificed his life for this Nation because he knew that our Nation needed his service. He accepted these great risks with a smile and extraordinary courage from which all of us can take a lesson. He sacrificed himself for the ideals of his country. It is a debt which we cannot repay, and a loss we cannot replace. And we are all humbled by his service and sacrifice.

To Christopher's parents, Rick and Debra, his brother Kyle, I know that no words can describe or assuage the pain you feel. I pray that you can find comfort in the knowledge that Christopher was doing something which he truly loved, and of which he was extraordinarily proud. He will endure in our hearts and prayers.

LANCE CORPORAL NICKLAS PALMER

Mr. President, I rise to commemorate the life and service of a young marine from Leadville, CO: Marine LCpl Nicklas James Palmer. Lance Corporal Palmer was killed last month in Fallujah, Iraq.

Nick Palmer was only 19 years old when he was taken from his family in Iraq. But he was serving his Nation with honor and distinction as a marine, something he had dreamed of doing as a high school student in Lake County.

Nick Palmer came to the State of Colorado as a boy, and in 2005 when he graduated from Lake County High School, he was a man prepared to find his place in the world. In high school, Nick was a football player who lettered all 4 years with the Lake County High varsity squad, a lineman to be precise.

I have known a few linemen in my day, and it tells us all something about his character and why he was drawn to the Marine Corps: Nick Palmer was a man who knew that there was tough work to be done, that it required leadership, physical skill and courage and that he was the right man for the job.

The Marine Corps was a natural fit for Nick Palmer. It was physical and independent, and allowed him the opportunity to become a leader. In fact, Nick prepared for Marine Corps boot camp by taking 10-mile runs with a 40-pound pack on his back, determined to be the finest recruit at Camp Pendleton in San Diego.

That is a lineman's mentality, and it is the steel at the very core of the U.S. Marine Corps: Through discipline, one achieves excellence.

Nick Palmer was not solely a man of serious character. His family, classmates, teachers, and community all reflected that he was a young man who always had a smile for a friend and saw the laughs to be had in life. He was a loyal friend, an independent young man who was always prepared to lend a hand or take the lead.

Lance Corporal Palmer was anxious to get to Iraq, to begin his service to his Nation. His time with the Marine Corps was marked by his continuing leadership: Lance Corporal Palmer's commanding officer in Iraq noted that he was never afraid to step forward and say, "I'll do it."

It was that spirit that moved Nick Palmer to serve this Nation in the first place as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps. His character, leadership, and courage exemplified that sacred motto of the Marines: Semper Fi. Always Faithful.

To Nick's mother and father, Brad and Rachele, and his brother Dustin, know that you and Nick will remain in the thoughts and prayers of an entire Nation. We are honored by his service, we are humbled by his sacrifice, and we are forever grateful for his courage and character.

PRIVATE FIRST CLASS SETH STANTON

Mr. President, I rise to reflect on the loss of a Coloradan and member of the U.S. Armed Forces, Army PFC Seth