

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

#### UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send to the desk en bloc 12 unanimous consent requests. I ask unanimous consent that the requests be considered en bloc, that the requests be agreed to en bloc, and that they appear separately in the RECORD.

Before the Chair rules, I wish to point out that these requests are routine and are done at the beginning of every new Congress. They entail issues such as authority for the Ethics Committee to meet, authorizing the Secretary to receive reports at the desk, establishing leader time each day and floor privileges for House parliamentarians.

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

The requests read as follows:

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that for the duration of the 110th Congress, the Ethics Committee be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that for the duration of the 110th Congress, there be a limitation of 15 minutes each upon any rollcall vote, with the warning signal to be sounded at the midway point, beginning at the last 7½ minutes, and when rollcall votes are of 10-minute duration, the warning signal be sounded at the beginning of the last 7½ minutes.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that during the 110th Congress, it be in order for the Secretary of the Senate to receive reports at the desk when presented by a Senator at any time during the day of the session of the Senate.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority and minority leaders may daily have up to 10 minutes each on each calendar day following the prayer and disposition of the reading of, or the approval of, the journal.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Parliamentarian of the House of Representatives and his five assistants be given the privileges of the floor during the 110th Congress.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, notwithstanding the provisions of rule XXVIII, conference reports and statements accompanying them not be printed as Senate reports when such conference reports and statements have been printed as a House report unless specific request is made in the Senate in each instance to have such a report printed.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Appropriations be authorized during the 110th Congress to file reports during adjournments or recesses of the Senate on appropriations bills, including joint resolutions, together with any accompanying notices of motions to suspend rule XVI, pursuant to rule V, for the purpose of offering certain amendments to such bills or joint resolutions, which proposed amendments shall be printed.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, for the duration of the 110th Congress, the Secretary of the Senate be authorized to make technical and clerical corrections in the engrossments of all Senate-passed bills and resolutions, Senate amendments to House bills and resolutions, Senate amendments to House amendments to Senate bills and resolutions, and Senate amendments to

House amendments to Senate amendments to House bills or resolutions.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that for the duration of the 110th Congress, when the Senate is in recess or adjournment, the Secretary of the Senate is authorized to receive messages from the President of the United States, and—with the exception of House bills, joint resolution, and concurrent resolutions—messages from the House of Representatives; and that they be appropriately referred; and that the President of the Senate, the President pro tempore, and the Acting President pro tempore be authorized to sign duly enrolled bills and joint resolutions.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that for the duration of the 110th Congress, Senators be allowed to leave at the desk with the journal clerk the names of two staff members who will be granted the privilege of the floor during the consideration of the specific matter noted, and that the Sergeant-at-Arms be instructed to rotate such staff members as space allows.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that for the duration of the 110th Congress, it be in order to refer treaties and nominations on the day when they are received from the President, even when the Senate has no executive session that day.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that for the duration of the 110th Congress, Senators may be allowed to bring to the desk bills, joint resolutions, concurrent resolutions, and simple resolutions, for referral to appropriate committees.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period set aside to conduct morning business.

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

Mr. REID. And that Senators be permitted to speak for whatever time they wish—that is, at least Senator REID and Senator McCONNELL—and thereafter the speeches be limited to 10 minutes each.

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

#### A NEW CONGRESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate everyone's courtesy. This is the first experience of mine to go through these procedures. It wasn't as smooth as clockwork, but with staff help it was smooth enough. So I very much appreciate everyone's cooperation as we look forward to this new Congress.

The future lies with those wise political leaders who realize that the great public is interested more in Government than in politics.

Franklin Roosevelt, 1940.

I have chosen this line to open this new session of the Senate because the wisdom it imparts is as relevant today as it was 67 years ago.

The future lies with those wise political leaders who realize that the great public is interested more in Government than in politics.

The American people are expecting positive results from this 110th Congress, not more partisan rancor. We stand today at the cusp of a new Con-

gress, ready to write a new chapter in our country's great future. It is a time of hope and promise for our Nation. The elections are over, and the next Senate campaigns have yet to begin.

Today we are not candidates; we are U.S. Senators. We 100 are from different States, we 100 represent different people, we 100 represent different political parties, but we share the same mission: keeping our country safe and providing a Government that allows people to enjoy the fruits of prosperity and, of course, our economic freedom.

Last November, the voters sent us a message. They sent this message to Democrats and they sent this message to Republicans: The voters are upset with Congress and the partisan gridlock. The voters want a Government that focuses on their needs. The voters want change. Together, Democrats and Republicans must deliver that change.

No longer can we waste time here in the Capitol while families in America struggle to get ahead. No longer can we here in the Capitol afford to pass the problems of today to Congresses of tomorrow. Those problems, for example, are from keeping families safe to raising the minimum wage to instituting new ethical reforms. We can and we must get to work.

As the new Congress begins, the challenges facing America are complex. They range from a contracted war in Iraq to a health care crisis right here at home, from a middle class that is squeezed to an energy policy that is warming our globe, from a higher education system that has exploded in costs to jobs where benefits have all but disappeared. We Senators can make a difference in each of these areas if we remember we are here to fight for our country, not with each other.

The majority, my party, holds a very slim margin—51 to 49. Some may look at this as a composition for gridlock, a recipe for gridlock, but I see this as a unique opportunity. I guarantee everyone in this Chamber that the American people are hoping it is a unique opportunity—an opportunity for Democrats, an opportunity for Republicans—to debate our differences and seek common ground. We must turn the page on partisanship and usher in a new era of bipartisan progress. How can we achieve progress? By doing things differently than they have been done in recent years.

One, we must—I repeat again and again—work together.

Second, we are going to have to work here in Washington, in the Senate, longer hours. Factory workers, shopkeepers in America's malls, school-teachers, police officers, miners, welders, and business men and women work at least 5 days a week. Shouldn't we here in Washington, where we do our business, in this laboratory we call the Senate, do the same?

Three, we will achieve progress by working on an agenda that reflects not the needs of Democrats, not the needs

of Republicans, but the needs of the people of this great country.

Today Democrats may be in charge of the Senate and the House of Representatives, but we in the Senate are committed to bipartisanship. We found that a one-party town simply doesn't work. We know from experience that majorities come and they go. Majorities are very fragile, and majorities must work with minorities to make that lasting change.

In this body, the U.S. Senate, nothing can be accomplished unless we reach across the aisle—not one way but both ways. It is because when our Founding Fathers created the Senate 219 years ago, they carved out a special place for the minority. See, the Framers of this Constitution knew that majorities can always take care of themselves. Majorities didn't need help as defined in the Constitution. But this Constitution takes care of minorities because they can't always take care of themselves. The Founding Fathers created an institution that protects this minority, and we will respect our Constitution and those protections.

I have talked with Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, the senior Senator from the great State of Kentucky. He is the minority leader. He is my friend. In the months and years that go forward, we will become even closer because he has learned, and I have learned, through adversity we grow together. I am committed to working with him, and I know he is committed to working with me. We as Democrats are committed to working with Republicans and Republicans are committed to working with us.

Does this mean there are going to be no bumps in the road? Of course there will be bumps in the road. We are in the Senate. The Founding Fathers wanted bumps in the road.

This morning, at 9 o'clock in the Old Senate Chamber, we held a rare joint caucus. It was an opportunity for us to look across the rows at each other and understand that the Senate is a place where we have to work in a bipartisan fashion.

We in the majority, we Democrats, are committed to working with our President, President Bush. He has pledged to work with Democrats. He has pledged to me personally that he would work to make progress.

We are not going to talk about what went on for the past 6-plus years. What I have discussed with the President, as late as last night, is what we are going to do for the next 22 months together. There are 22 months left in this Presidential term. The President, I know, wants to accomplish things. I want to accomplish things. He has to work with us and we have to work with him or jointly we do nothing to help our country.

As I have said, we are going to work longer hours, we are going to work full weeks, we are going to have votes on Mondays and Fridays. None of us are happy because all but 10 Senators here

participated in the last Congress, the so-called do-nothing Congress. We are not proud of that fact. We spent less time working than any Congress in modern history. Some days the sessions lasted a matter of minutes. In this Congress, legislative days will be real workdays.

The extra days will help our committees. The foundation of this institution, the Senate, is the committee system. It has worked from the beginning of our great Republic, but it hasn't worked so well lately. But it now is going to have an opportunity to work better. Our committees will have the time they need to put their expertise to use.

The best legislation with the broadest possible support always comes from our committees. In the Senate, we have chairmen and ranking members with years of experience: TED KENNEDY and MIKE ENZI on the HELP Committee; MAX BAUCUS and CHUCK GRASSLEY on the Finance Committee; JOE BIDEN and DICK LUGAR on the Foreign Relations Committee; CARL LEVIN and JOHN McCAIN on the Armed Services Committee; PATRICK LEAHY and ARLEN SPECTER on the Judiciary Committee. And on and on. These names speak of their broad experience and their ability to get things done for our country, but it must come through the committee process.

As all my Democrats know, when I assumed the job as Democratic leader, I told every ranking member that those committees had to function and I was going to let them function, and I have done that for 2 years. Now there is going to be more time for them to produce legislation. They are no longer ranking members, they are Chairs, but they cannot succeed unless they work with their ranking members.

Our committees will have the time to do a number of tasks, but the one item they need to do is conduct strong oversight. This is not a negative term. Oversight is good. It is important to find out what Federal agencies are doing, to listen to what the people who work there have to say. Congressional oversight is a responsibility that has been abdicated in recent years. Oversight is important for our country, not so we can point fingers or cast blame, but answer difficult questions and find lasting solutions to the enormous challenges we have. Everyone focuses on Iraq—of course, that is a very difficult problem—but there are many other problems that face this great country. The war in Iraq will cast a long shadow over the Senate's work this year. No issue in our country is more important than finding an end to that war. We will be listening very closely to President Bush when he comes forward with his plan next week. The President's new plan must ensure that Iraq takes responsibility for its own future and remove our troops from this civil war. Completing the mission in Iraq is the President's job and we will do everything to assist the Commander in Chief to ensure his responsibilities.

Finally, the Senate will achieve progress for our Nation by ensuring the Senate calendar reflects America's needs. In the weeks ahead, I look forward to receiving input from the minority. This afternoon, as is the tradition in the Senate, I will present an overview of the Democrats' legislative agenda, bills S. 1 through S. 10. Following the tradition of the Senate, my friend, the distinguished minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, will offer bills S. 11 through S. 20 whenever he feels it appropriate.

In the first 10 bills we will introduce this afternoon, and in our ongoing oversight of the war in Iraq, we intend to address these priorities, basically three of them: one, providing real security; two, restoring transparency, accountability, and responsibility in the United States Government; and three, helping working Americans get ahead by boosting wages and cutting costs in health care, education, and energy.

We begin with S. 1, our plan to change the way Washington works. It was late 2005 when scandals involving lobbyists and lawmakers shocked the very core of this Nation. Despite the Senate's best attempts on a bipartisan basis, here we are 2 years later and still no reform of ethics, lobbying, and earmarks. The American people deserve better. That is why as our first order of business we will seek to give Americans the open and accountable government they deserve. We will start Monday with a bipartisan bill cosponsored by REID and MCCONNELL. I think that is a pretty good start. We will start with the ethics bill that passed the Senate last year. Now, had that bill passed, which it didn't, it would have been the most significant reform since Watergate in lobbying and ethics reform. It didn't pass. Some people minimized our starting point. I maximize our starting point. This bill included important provisions in many areas, but it was not allowed to proceed because of what took place on the other side of the Capitol. This year, we will improve that legislation and make additional reforms.

This legislation will include reforms to slow the revolving door between Government jobs and lucrative employment with special interests. It will eliminate gifts paid for by lobbyists and interests that hire lobbyists. It will limit privately funded travel such as that of the notorious golf junkets to Scotland. It will increase disclosure requirements so the public will be better informed about the activities of lobbyists. And it will increase penalties for those who seek to break the rules. I lay and spread across this RECORD how grateful I am that the distinguished minority leader has agreed to cosponsor this legislation. I think it sends the right message to America.

With these reforms, which I am confident will pass, we will help ensure America has a government that is good and honest as the people it serves.

Mr. President, I send S. 1 to the desk and ask for its appropriate referral.

The bill is at the desk. I am told that the bill is at the desk and we choose not to rule XIV it at this stage.

**THE PRESIDING OFFICER.** The bill will be received and appropriately referred.

**MR. REID.** Mr. President, S. 2 is our plan to increase the wages of working families by raising the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour. It has been 10 years since the minimum wage was last increased. In that time, the cost of gas, to say the least, has increased. The cost of food has increased. The cost of health care has increased. Even the salaries of Members of Congress have increased. In fact, the salaries of Members of Congress in the last 10 years have increased 9 times, by more than \$30,000. But through all of this, the minimum wage has stayed the same. It is long past time America's workers received a raise as well.

Today, a mother or father can work full time for the minimum wage but still live \$5,000 below the poverty level. Adjusted for inflation, the minimum wage is at its lowest level since 1955. S. 2 will directly raise the pay of nearly 7 million Americans by more than \$4,000 and by setting a new salary floor that will indirectly boost the wages of 8 million more workers. That increase is enough to provide nearly 2 years of childcare, full tuition for a community college degree, over a year's worth of heat and electricity or more than 9 months of rent.

During the minimum wage debate we will also likely consider giving small businesses some tax relief. In fact, as we speak, Senator McCONNELL's staff and my staff are working, along with Senator ENZI, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator KENNEDY, and Senator BAUCUS, to see if we can have a minimum wage bill that he and I will cosponsor and bring before the Senate. We are working on that.

S. 2 is at the desk, and it will be reported at the appropriate time.

S. 3 is our plan to reduce drug costs for seniors. The flaws in the Medicare drug program are well documented, but many can be traced back to one simple fact: The law as written puts drug companies ahead of America's aging. No matter whether we supported or opposed that law—that is, the one that created Medicare drug benefits—we all want to improve the program for older Americans and people with disabilities. It is our obligation to do so. Now the Federal Government, with the millions of seniors it represents through Medicare, is unable to negotiate for lower drug prices. As a result, Medicare beneficiaries are hostages to insurance companies, drug companies, and managed care entities like HMOs. S. 3 is at the desk.

S. 4 is our plan to make America safer by fully implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. Following September 11, 2001, the country turned to a respected, bipartisan group—the 9/11 Commission—to review the lessons of that terrible day and to

recommend better ways to fight the war on terror. Two American patriots chaired that independent bipartisan commission: Congressman Lee Hamilton of Indiana and former Governor Tom Kean of New Jersey. They did a remarkably good job in a period of 1 year. We realized we didn't need Democratic solutions or Republican solutions to keep people safe; we needed bipartisan American solutions to keep us safe. The Commission did a wonderful job and made a number of recommendations. Some were implemented, others weren't. I was the manager, along with my distinguished colleague, the minority leader, of the bill that was brought before the Senate.

One year ago, the Commission delivered a report card grading the Government's progress in implementing its solutions. Among the grades given by that commission were 12 Ds, 5 Fs, and two incompletes. I say, try taking those grades home to your parents. These grades made clear we still have not done enough to make America safe. We have work to do, and this legislation will step toward in fulfilling the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. Specifically, it will reinvigorate the fight against Osama bin Laden, al-Qaida, and the ideologies of violent extremists. It will enhance the security of our transportation system and our ports. It will provide America's first responders with the technology they need to communicate with each other during a crisis, and it will make it a priority to secure loose nukes around the world.

Finishing the job of implementing 9/11 Commission recommendations will not by itself win the war on terror or guarantee 100-percent complete security for the people of our country, but we hope with our legislation to improve on the worst of those grades, those Ds and Fs and incompletes, so the American people can have every confidence that Congress and the White House are taking every step—every step possible—to keep America safe. S. 4 is at the desk.

S. 5 is the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of this year, 2007. It is legislation we seek to pass so that American scientists will find cures—allow them to find cures for dread diseases that affect millions of our fellow countrymen. Today, there are people all across America suffering from debilitating diseases that stem cell research would cure. For these Americans, stem cell research is an area of science that offers hope, if only we in Washington would allow this hope to flourish. Last year, Congress passed legislation promoting stem cell research, only to see it vetoed by our President. This year, we will consider the legislation again, and on behalf of millions of Americans looking for cures, looking for relief, we urge our President to reconsider his veto. S. 5 is at the desk.

S. 6 is our plan to promote energy independence so we can enhance Amer-

ica's security and begin to deal with the threat—the threat—of global warming. I, with five of my Senate colleagues, traveled last week to the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Bolivia. We were in Ecuador and Peru. They told us, the most diverse Nation in the world, the most ecologically diverse Nation in the world—Ecuador—that the glaciers are melting Ecuador, rapidly. For too long our country's energy policy has had only one concern: oil company profits—\$34 billion for Exxon and the other companies, international cartels, not far behind. We have allowed Exxon's bottom line to take priority over families struggling at the gas pump and the harmful effects of global warming. So in an effort to begin to solve this energy crisis, our sixth bill takes an aggressive approach to reducing America's dependence on oil, especially foreign oil, and putting more advanced technologies in the hands of consumers. It will boost production of electricity from solar, geothermal, and other renewable resources that are abundant in States such as Nevada, and it will grow our Nation's renewable energy jobs and manufacturing base. Freeing ourselves from oil is a tremendous challenge, but it is one we cannot afford to ignore. Remember: Unstable regimes around the world use our petro dollars to pay for international terror, to fund it, and pursue their despotic goals. So energy independence is not only energy independence, it is security. S. 6 is at the desk.

S. 7 is the College Opportunity Act, our plan to make college more affordable for middle-class families. In America today, a college education is more important than ever. Unfortunately, it is also far more expensive than ever. Today, too many families are being squeezed trying to put their children through school. In the last 6 years, the cost of college has increased by 52 percent. Federal assistance has declined, especially in the form of Pell grants. Our legislation will reverse this trend by raising the maximum Pell grant award. It will also assist families by lowering interest rates for student loans and expanding tax breaks for college costs. S. 7 is at the desk.

S. 8 is Rebuilding America's Military Act. As we speak, there is not a single nondeployed Army unit that is battle ready. The wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq, the war on terror, have been terribly devastating to our military. These brave men and women have done the very best any fighting force could do. But because of Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. militarily is strained to levels not seen since Vietnam. While our troops remain the finest in the world, infrastructure is crumbling around them. Nearly all of our combat divisions have been deployed and two-thirds of our Army combat brigades are not ready for combat. GEN Peter Schoomaker, the Chief of Staff of the Army, testified last month, "At this pace . . . we will break the active component" of the U.S. Army.

We, also, have National Guard, Reserve and Active-Duty veterans coming back in droves to America without sufficient help for their health care and certainly not their education.

If we want real security, we must rebuild the U.S. military and ensure it remains the best fighting force in the world. S. 8 is at the desk.

S. 9 will secure America by undertaking comprehensive immigration reform. I had friends and colleagues, staff, ask: Why are you bringing up this controversial subject on the first day of Congress? It has to be brought up. Immigration is a problem that affects this Nation. Last year, we passed a solid immigration bill in the Senate. There are parts of that bill I didn't like, but we passed a bill. Unfortunately, it fell victim to politics, again in the other body. Immigration reform is too vital to our security and our economy to fall by the wayside, so we must deal with it again this year. Our immigration system is broken. Does anyone dispute this? Our borders remain unsecured. Does anyone dispute that? Our laws remain underenforced. Does anyone dispute that? Does anyone dispute the fact that we have 11 million people with bad papers who are here illegally? Does anyone dispute that? No. So our bill will take a comprehensive approach to repairing this broken system. With tough and smart reforms, it will secure our borders, crack down on enforcement, and lay down a path to earned legalization for undocumented immigrants already living here. There is no amnesty. If there were ever an example of the need for bipartisanship, it is on immigration because it is going to be hard, but it is something that we have to do. S. 9 is at the desk.

Finally, S. 10 will reinstate pay-as-you-go rules to the budget process. This does not sound very politically sexy, to talk about pay as you go. But as most know, the Senate used to operate under a rule called pay as you go. This simple proposition demanded that when we increased spending or cut taxes we had to pay for it. It is a commonsense principle families all across America practice when they balance their checkbooks. Pay-go was in place in the Senate in the 1990s, when our country experienced unprecedented levels of economic growth and vitality. Remember, it can be done. In the last years of the Clinton administration, we paid down the national debt by almost a half trillion dollars. Unfortunately, the rule disappeared in recent years and the results have been disastrous: \$9 trillion in debt; the largest deficits, of course, in our history; foreign debt that has more than doubled, giving unprecedented control to countries such as Saudi Arabia and China. We are even borrowing money from Mexico. These countries should not have the unprecedented control of our economic destiny. We are facing a fiscal nightmare that will not go away this Congress, and it will handicap our ability in all we need to do in so many different

areas. With pay-go in place, we will begin to set America on the right track.

I have been in Congress going on 25 years. In my 25 years, I witnessed many fine moments in our Senate's history. But I believe in my State, in the Senate, and in the House, the days following 9/11 are what America is all about. It was a national tragedy, but it brought out the best in us, the best in Members of Congress, the best in the American people. Democrats and Republicans from all over America put aside our differences and worked with the administration to protect our country. That day showed the Government working as the Founders intended. This year we must work on the same bipartisan basis, the same fashion.

It should not take a national tragedy for us to work together. We should be equally united by our ability to make a positive difference in the lives of the people who sent us here. Today is that beginning. This year let us work side by side and succeed together.

The future lies with those wise political leaders who realize the great public is interested more in government than politics.

—Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1940.

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#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PRYOR). The Republican leader.

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#### THE 110TH CONGRESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, we have heard my good friend, the majority leader, describe the first 10 bills of the majority in the new Congress. I would say for the information of all of our colleagues, the procedure in the Senate Republican conference is for the conference itself to designate our first 10 bills. We will be doing that at a meeting to occur in the next few weeks. We have essentially reserved the numbers S. 11 through S. 20 which will reflect our priorities for this Congress.

Let me say at the outset, before giving my opening remarks, how much I value the friendship and relationship I have with the distinguished majority leader. I believe we had an excellent session this morning in the old Senate Chamber, and we look forward to getting off to a good start.

Today is the 110th time in our Nation's history that we begin a new session of Congress. This is a day to renew our purpose, to set a sturdy course for the important work ahead, and to ask ourselves: What will future generations say of the 110th Congress? This is the first day of that Congress. What will they say of us on the last day?

The Senate has a unique role in our Government. It always has. It is a place where the two great political parties must work together if a common goal is to be reached. It is the legisla-

tive embodiment of individual and minority rights, a place where the careful design, crafted by our Founding Fathers, pretty much operates today the way they planned it 220 years ago.

We saw this 43 years ago with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, when the two parties forged a difficult alliance to reach a great goal. Segregated buses and lunch counters are difficult to fathom now, but their end only came about through the kind of cooperative resolution that has marked this body from the start.

At its best, the Senate is a workshop where difficult challenges, such as civil rights, are faced squarely—and addressed—with good will and careful, principled agreement. At a time such as our own, when so many issues of consequence press upon us, it must be nothing less.

Yet the challenges ahead will not be met if we do nothing to overcome the partisanship that has come to characterize this body over the past several years. A culture of partisanship over principle represents a grave threat to the Senate's best tradition as a place of constructive cooperation. It undermines the spirit and the purpose of this institution, and we must do something to reverse its course.

The Senate can accomplish great things over the next 2 years, but this opportunity will surely slip from our grasp if we do not commit ourselves to a restoration of civility and common purpose. So as we open this session, I stake my party to a pledge: When faced with an urgent issue, we will act; when faced with a problem, we will seek solutions, not mere political advantage.

The Framers thought a lot about the kind of people who would sit behind these desks on the floor and they set down some simple rules. Senators should be older than their House colleagues. They should serve longer terms, and proportional representation ensures that all States have an equal say, regardless of size. The Senate was also conceived to be a place of civil debate and good will.

Mike Mansfield showed grace and humility in his efforts to expand civil rights. Working with Republicans to offset resistance in his own party, he guided passage of the great Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s and even let a Republican take the credit. In fact, today the name Everett Dirksen may actually be better known, but historians know better.

Mansfield's collegial spirit didn't just surface when it served his purposes. Historians tell us his first appointment each day was breakfast with Senator George Aiken, a Republican from Vermont. The two men met when one of Aiken's aides spotted Mansfield alone, pushing a tray down the cafeteria line in the Capitol. She asked the new Senator if he wanted to join her and her boss for lunch, and he did. The two men remained close friends for 25 years. A small act of kindness set the tone.