

to do to protect this Nation from these awful attacks. Osama bin Laden and his No. 2 still remain at large, and al-Qaida has grown in strength and is determined to attack globally. The administration's failed Iraq policy has catalyzed a whole new generation of extremists who can be expected to carry out attacks against the U.S. and our friends around the world. Objective analyses, including the final report of the 9/11 Commission, conclude that this Nation has failed to take the steps necessary to protect America from terrorist attacks.

We need only go back to look at the report card the Bush administration received in implementing the 9/11 Commission Report: Ds and Fs. The threats the 9/11 Commission talked about and are encompassed in this bill are real and growing. When Democrats took control of the Congress at the start of this year, we said we would finally and fully implement the unanimous recommendations of the bipartisan 9/11 Commission. It is something we fought for when we were in the minority, and it was one of the first bills we passed at the start of this session of Congress.

The House passed its version early this year, January 9, by a vote of 299 to 128—broad bipartisan support. We passed our bill on March 13. It, too, had bipartisan support, passing 60 to 38.

As my colleagues know, Democrats and Republicans who serve on the House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over this bill have worked tirelessly to resolve the differences in these two bills. I have had numerous conversations with Chairman LIEBERMAN. This preconference process has carried on for months, on a bipartisan basis, with full transparency and good-faith efforts to produce a final bill. Progress has been made.

The American people, though, don't expect progress. They expect results, and that is what we need. We need to finish the work on this bill yesterday—as soon as possible. That is why I believe we need to take the next procedural step to finish these negotiations, to appoint conferees. That is what we normally would do.

When this bill is finally signed into law, it will make America more secure. It will improve the morale, training, and efficiency of the TSA screening workforce, allowing them to work more effectively to protect air travelers. It will improve the screening of all maritime cargo—all maritime cargo—so Americans can be assured we are doing all we can to prevent the smuggling of weapons—even a nuclear weapon—through America's ports. It will improve the congressional oversight of intelligence to be sure we are building the best capabilities possible to stop terrorist attacks. It will improve communication sharing and communications interoperability among first responders so they can work swiftly to protect us from terrorist attacks. It will ensure that transportation and mass transit infrastructures are hardened against terrorist attacks.

We need to work together to protect the American people from terrorism, and we need to do so immediately. We asked numerous times in the last Congress to be able to finish the 9/11 bill, and we were denied that ability. I would hope that this unanimous consent request allowing us to go to conference would be granted.

I am told the minority is going to object to this request that we go to conference. That is too bad. Although Senate Republicans have thrown procedural hurdles in front of virtually everything we have tried to do in the Senate this year, I was hoping they would reconsider their obstruction when it comes to getting through legislation that makes America more secure. There have been issues raised, but couldn't we handle these in conference?

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1, and that the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of S. 4, as passed by the Senate on March 13, 2007, be inserted in lieu thereof; that the bill be read a third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate, with the above occurring without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, on behalf of the minority, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say to my distinguished friend, the Senator from Oklahoma, we are glad to have you back. We are glad the medical procedure went well and that you are back with the same fighting spirit you had the first day you came here. We are happy to have you back.

Mr. President, I will renew my request at a subsequent time, and probably a few more times, until we get this done. I think a number of people have had calls from the 9/11 survivors, those people who lost loved ones in the 9/11 attack. They want us to get this done. We need to get this done. This is an issue that affects the safety and security of our Nation.

So I would hope that there would be a reconsideration of this objection at a subsequent time because I am going to continue to offer this until we are able to go to conference.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
S. 4 AND H.R. 1

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I would like to propound a unanimous consent request, please.

I ask unanimous consent that it not be in order for the Senate to consider any conference report on the 9/11 Commission legislation; that is, H.R. 1 and S. 4, that compromises the security of America's transportation system by eliminating the flexibility given to the Transportation Security Administration to manage its employees to most effectively counter terrorist threats against Americans.

Before the Chair responds, if I could just make a very brief statement.

The President has clearly said he will veto any measure that makes collective bargaining rights for airport screeners a higher priority than protecting our national security and defeating terrorists. Passing a conference report that includes such a provision would be an exercise in futility and a waste of time, as the legislation would certainly be vetoed. We should be working to write a conference report that we know can be signed into law so we can enhance our national security and better protect the American people from the terrorists we know are plotting every day to harm us.

Mr. President, I renew my request that it not be in order for the Senate to consider any conference report on the 9/11 Commission legislation that compromises our national security by eliminating the critical personnel management flexibility given to the Transportation Security Administration to enable it to respond to terrorist threats.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I very much appreciate the minority coming forward and outlining their objections to the 9/11 bill. It seems pretty clear that the objection deals with collective bargaining, which is in the Senate-passed version of the bill. I appreciate very much that being on the record.

It seems, that being the case, we at least know what we are dealing with. It appears if that weren't in the bill—but it is in the bill—we could go to conference.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
H.R. 2316

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to visit with everyone present for just a few minutes about S. 1, the ethics and lobbying reform bill. We hope to appoint conferees on this important bill today. By doing this today, we would enact this critical legislation that is so important to be done. It is the most significant lobbying ethics reform, I believe, in the history of this country. It makes tremendous reforms—long overdue. It will restore the people's confidence in their elected officials.

Last year, Americans rightly got sick and tired about story after story of corruption, the culture of corruption some called it, here in Washington led by Jack Abramoff, who is now in prison; Randy Cunningham, who is now in prison; Bob Ney, who is now in prison; Safavian, the head of Government contracting, led away from his office in handcuffs; Scooter Libby—numerous people who worked for various House Members who were involved in corrupt activities, airplane trips to golf in Scotland and places that are hard to imagine.

The American people responded at the polls last November with a clear message that they wanted a new direction, and we, the Democrats, responded by passing the most sweeping ethics and lobbying reform in a generation. We did it with the help of the minority. I do not say that lightly. But let's see what is in this bill. Let's review it for a bit to find out what this bill does.

It prohibits lobbyists and entities that hire lobbyists from giving gifts to lawmakers and their staffs. It prevents corporations and other entities that hire lobbyists from paying for trips for Members or staffs. And it prohibits lobbyists from participating in or paying for any such trips. It requires Senators to pay fair market value prices for charter flights, which put an end to the abuses of corporate travel.

Many people in this Chamber flew in corporate jets and paid first-class airfare. That did not corrupt any Members of Congress, but it was corrupting. It didn't look right, and therefore it is important it be stopped. And I hope it stopped. We need legislation to make sure it is stopped.

This legislation also slows the so-called revolving door by extending a ban on lobbying by former Members of Congress and senior staffers, and prevents Senators from even negotiating for a job as a lobbyist until their successor has been elected. This legislation puts an end to pay-to-play schemes, such as the notorious “K Street Project.” It provides dramatic improvements to disclosure and lobbying activities by doubling the frequency that lobbyists must file reports on their activities, requiring disclosure of contributions and bundled contribu-

tions, requiring that lobbyists' disclosures be publicly available on the Internet in a searchable form. This is for the first time ever.

This legislation requires lobbyists to certify in writing that they have not violated House or Senate gift and travel rules. It ends the practice of corporations hiding their lobbying activities behind bogus coalitions with friendly sounding names, and increases civil and criminal penalties for lobbyists who violate the law.

The bill has brought about a revolution in earmark disclosure.

For the first time ever, the Senate will identify all earmarks in bills, the Senator who requested it, and the entity or location that receives it. Further, every Senator has certified that he or she has no monetary interest in their earmarks. Let me say that. This disclosure is the first time ever that this information will be disclosed. The Senate could have required the disclosure last year or the year before or the year before that, while the number of earmarks was exploding under a Republican Congress, but it did not. This year we took the lead and changed the way we do business around here. At the beginning of the year, we sent a message that ethics and lobbying reform was our No. 1 commitment by designating the bill S. 1. We worked hard to make this a bipartisan bill. Now we must take the next step by appointing conferees. I look forward to moving the ethics bill forward so we can reassure the American people that Congress is as good and honest as the people it represents.

I have gone over most everything in this bill. There are other things in it, but this is strong, important information the American people deserve. It is a law that should become a reality as quickly as possible.

I, therefore, ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 182, H.R. 2316, lobbying disclosure; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of S. 1, as passed by the Senate on January 18, 2007, be inserted in lieu thereof; that the bill be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate with a ratio of 4 to 3, with the above occurring without intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
S. 223

Mr. BENNETT. Madam President, reserving the right to object, on behalf of the Republican leader, I would add an additional unanimous consent request that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with

the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 96, S. 223, under the following limitations: That the committee-reported amendment be agreed to and that the only other amendment in order be a McConnell or his designee amendment, with 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form on the bill and 1 hour equally divided on the McConnell amendment, and that following the use or yielding back of the time, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the McConnell amendment, followed by a vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Madam President, here we go again, doing their best—that is, the Republicans—to stop us from going ahead on ethics and lobbying reform. The suggestion of the distinguished Senator from Utah is reasonable, but it should be a different matter. In fact, once we look at the amendment, we may be willing to accept it. But it is only an effort to divert attention from ethics and lobbying reform, those matters—corporate jets, what lobbyists can do, what they can't do, bundling, what we need to do with earmarks. It is an effort to divert attention from that. Attention may be diverted for a few minutes this afternoon, but we are going to continue to focus on it. We need to pass this legislation. It is important we do so.

We, the Democrats, support what the Senator has suggested, basic electronic filing of FEC reports. There is no problem with that. Senator FEINSTEIN moved it through the Rules Committee and has been seeking consent to pass it on the floor unanimously. We have never seen the amendment Senator McCONNELL wishes to stick on this. Once we have a chance to review it, we will be able, perhaps, to move forward on this consent request. In any event, let's not muddy the waters on the ethics bill. We want to move forward on that comprehensive bill, the most sweeping reforms in a long time, probably ever.

I wanted everyone to know there has been objection made by the minority to going forward on a conference. The conference will be led by JOE LIEBERMAN on our side, a man who is certainly fair to both sides. Why would we not go to conference on this important legislation?

I will be back. I will be back and hope there will be the revelation to the Republicans that we are going to do everything we can on this legislation. We are going to focus attention on why it is not going to conference. It is not going to conference because the Republicans are stonewalling our ability to do so, coming up with something as diverting as FEC reports being filed electronically.

I object to the request of my friend.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.