

Our legislation helps families avoid foreclosure in the future by improving loan disclosures and transparency during the original loan financing process—something Jack Reed has advocated for some time.

Finally, it amends the Bankruptcy Code to allow home loans on a primary residence to be modified, only in certain circumstances with very strict guidelines.

Those are the five things. If the minority was serious about doing something with this legislation, they could offer amendments. If they don't like the bankruptcy provision, which they profess not to, let them move to strike it, let them move to modify it in some way. If they don't like any of these other four provisions—money for counselors, making it more transparent—let them offer amendments to strike them. I can't advocate strongly enough that if they don't like what we have, they can move to change it.

I have people on my side who would like to improve our bill. We can offer amendments. As I said, we can offer three, five on each side. It seems fair. But sadly, when the press conference was held last week on the Republicans' proposal to take care of the housing crisis, they want to lower taxes and they want to have tort reform.

To talk about our budget expending more taxpayers' dollars, we need only go back and look at how I started my remarks today. Today, we will spend \$400 million on the war in Iraq, borrowed money. We don't have enough money under the present standard to have more than one person looking at the consumer safety commission—toys, for example, that come into this country. So we are willing to work. We are willing to legislate. It has been extremely difficult with 72 filibusters so far this Congress. But maybe today will bring a new day. Maybe we can move to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which is a bipartisan piece of legislation, by the way. I would hope after that we don't have to use up the 30 hours. We can start this afternoon offering amendments on this legislation, doing opening statements. But maybe if we spend a couple days on this legislation, we can spend the rest of the week—if the Republicans finally decide what they want to do on the housing stimulus package—and finish that before we start the budget battle next week.

I thank the Chair.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Washington Post just this morning—and I think we can all stipulate the Washington Post is not exactly a mouthpiece for Republicans or conservatism—began their editorial related to the housing issue this way:

It's much easier to identify well-intentioned housing policy proposals that might make a situation worse than to craft ones that will help. An example is the Democratic plan.

This is the Washington Post this morning taking a look at the proposal my good friend, the majority leader, discussed extolling the virtues of.

Now, look, there is a great opportunity to make matters worse. A good way to avoid that is to continue the discussions we can have not actually out here on the floor but the kind of discussions we have every day about a process for getting some kind of bipartisan approach on this bill.

I noted with interest that my good friend, the majority leader, the other day had his chart up with 72 filibusters on it. He is setting a record of his own, voting to cut off debate the first day a bill or resolution reaches the floor more than any previous majority leader, Republican or Democrat. During the first session of the 110th Congress, Senator REID filed cloture on the same day a bill or resolution was introduced nine times. This is three times more than Majority Leaders Frist, Daschle, Lott, Mitchell, and BYRD ever did in a first session of Congress and nine times more than in the first session of the 109th Congress.

Among these 72 Republican filibusters—and I guess, by the way, the vote this afternoon, which is probably going to be close to unanimous, will also make the list of filibusters and make it 73—includes Democratic filibusters—for example, Senator DODD's filibuster of the FISA bill last year; Democrats' filibuster of the McConnell-Stevens troop funding bill last November; Democrats' filibuster of Judge Leslie Southwick. Cloture motions that were filed by Republicans in an effort to end Democratic obstruction are also included. In fact, on more than half of the 72 Republican filibusters, Senate Democrats either voted to filibuster or voted with Republicans. On five of the filibusters, the vote was unanimous. On four of the filibusters, Democrats nearly unanimously voted against cloture themselves. Half the votes described as filibusters were actually successful votes where cloture was invoked and the bill was actually moved forward.

So if we are going to talk about this kind of thing, we at least need to get our facts right. Everybody is entitled to their own opinion, but they are not entitled to their own sets of facts. Those are the facts related to times in which we have had cloture votes in this 110th Congress.

So, Mr. President, back on the issue of housing, I think the best way forward, obviously—even though the Washington Post this morning is suggesting maybe we should delay for a while and see whether the administration's efforts produce some positive results—I think the best way forward in the Senate, as always, is to sit down and talk about some kind of process for going forward. I think the majority leader and I can do that as we do every day on every issue. I would look forward to having further discussions with him on how we might go forward and maybe come up with a bipartisan

housing bill that will actually improve the situation.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the 72 filibusters are Republican filibusters, not Democratic holds of any kind, like Southwick, like FISA.

I would say this: Of course, Democrats voted many times with Republicans to invoke cloture on motions to proceed. We had no choice. The purpose of the filibusters on motions to proceed is to slow things down here. Once cloture is invoked, then they wait for 30 hours, and we can try to do something else after that.

Now, I am told—I learned right here today—that it will be near unanimous that people vote to go forward on consumer product safety. Why couldn't we have, Friday, avoided this vote and just moved to the bill today? That is what has ordinarily been done in the past. The reason we hold the record for moving forward on cloture is because we have had so many objections on so many things, such as the motion to proceed, which has caused us to waste huge amounts of time.

Now, as to the merits of the Washington Post and various newspapers, Mr. President, we have newspapers all over the country, including the New York Times, which say we should do something on housing. They even support our provision dealing with changing the Bankruptcy Code to help people who are in such a desperate situation.

So if the Republicans want to do something on the housing crisis, we are ready to work with them. If they want to do something on consumer product safety, why don't we start legislating and by consent move to it right now. We can avoid the vote this afternoon. We do not need the vote this afternoon. We should not have had to file cloture on it in the first place. It is a tremendous delay. We could have legislated on this Friday afternoon, all day Monday morning.

We are willing to work with the minority. I hope there is a new day, that we do not have to go through all these procedural hurdles every time. But we have had no opportunity to legislate the old-fashioned way here because every step of the way has been procedurally blocked. That is why it has been necessary that we file cloture 72 times on Republican filibusters.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business until 3:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and

controlled between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Tennessee.

ECONOMIC STIMULUS

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. I would like to say, just listening to our two leaders, there are certainly a lot of issues that our country needs to deal with. I would say that this body has lost a great deal of credibility as it relates to stimulus packages by virtue of the one we just passed.

While I know there will be people throughout our country who will be gleefully receiving checks in this election year, which certainly will make them feel good about us for a week or two, I think most of them realize our previous attempts at stimulating the economy did more to stimulate the good will toward us than the economy. I think all of us should be very slow to try to move toward a stimulus package, in that our past efforts, to me, have lacked the kind of credibility necessary in these difficult times.

COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I actually rise today to talk about the Colombia Free Trade Agreement. I had the tremendous opportunity this weekend to travel to Colombia and spend time in Medellin with our Secretary of Commerce, our Secretary of Labor, the head of our SBA, Mr. Steve Preston, and also a bipartisan group of congressional Members.

Mr. President, I know you realize that just this last week, this body passed, on a voice vote, the Andean Trade Preference Agreement, which allows Colombia, along with other South American countries, to actually send goods into this country tariff free. Let me say that one more time. Last week, by voice vote, unanimously, this body agreed to extend the Andean Trade Preference Agreement that was first put in place in 1991 that allows Colombian companies to ship into this country tariff-free products for sale in our country.

The Colombia Free Trade Agreement would actually allow American companies—American companies, which employ Americans—to ship goods into Colombia. It is amazing to me we have not been able to vote on this agreement. I realize this has actually been used as a leverage point, if you will, by some of the major unions in our country to leverage us into maybe doing some other things.

I realize the other body, on the other side of the building, is the body that needs to take up this agreement. But I think most people realize what is taking place at this point in time.

I would like to go back in history and cause the American people to remember that Plan Colombia, where we, as a

country, have invested \$5.7 billion into the country of Colombia, is something that has been done on a bipartisan basis. This was started under President Clinton with a country that had a very fragile existence due to security, due to narcotics. It was something that was put in place to help our country be more secure. This has been carried through with the Bush administration.

Mr. President, I have to tell you, it has been incredible the progress that has taken place in Colombia, especially since the year 2002, under President Uribe's leadership. During that period of time, the country has become far more secure.

We were in a city that just a decade ago we would not have been able to travel to. Economic growth has continued; 32,000 members of paramilitary groups have actually put down their arms and come back into civil society in this country.

So we are at a point in time where this country has made tremendous strides. This country has made remarkable progress. They focused on human rights. Just in February of last year, they set up special prosecutors to focus on violence as it relates to union officials and have made tremendous progress.

As a matter of fact, today in Colombia, a place where union officials in the past had to worry about their safety, it is actually safer—by virtue of violence against union officials—it is safer to be a union official than it is another member of society: a teacher or someone else.

It makes no sense for any of us in this body to not want the Colombia Free Trade Agreement to come into existence because today they are able to sell products into our country tariff free, but we are not able to sell products into their country. If this trade agreement were to come about, Colombia would actually be held to international labor standards. So, in fact, the plight of labor there would be lessened. As a matter of fact, to have American companies playing a role in Colombia would also be something that would enhance human rights.

Over the weekend, a leader of one of the terrorist groups, FARC, which has wreaked havoc on the citizens there, was killed. It was something that was done certainly to create even more security there. We have seen the reaction today and yesterday of the leader of Venezuela, who has 4,000 to 6,000 troops on the Colombian border—in essence, a threat to that country.

Colombia has been a friend of our country for many years. They had people fighting side by side with us in the Korean war. They have been loyal friends. They have lived up to what we have asked them to do and are making even greater progress in some cases than we ever expected. This is about us honoring our friendships. This is about us honoring our commitments.

I will just say, as it relates to my own State, we have increased trade

with Colombia, even under the arrangements that we have now where our companies have to pay tariffs on goods going into their country. In my own State, we would increase tremendously the amount of agricultural exports going into Colombia if this agreement were passed.

In conclusion, we have an ally in South America, an ally that is under immediate threat today but is under continual threat from countries nearby that harbor terrorists who commit terrorist acts against their country.

We have worked with them for years and have invested \$5.7 billion or \$5.8 billion into that country. Trade, we know, is a stabilizing factor. Right now, I think all of us understand that the leadership of the AFL-CIO and other organizations by virtue of their political relationships have been able to keep this treaty from passing, from being a part of our agreement with Colombia.

I think it is important for all of us to understand the negative impact that is having on our own States. As I mentioned earlier, farmers in my own State would benefit tremendously. Manufacturers of equipment would benefit tremendously. Chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturers would benefit tremendously. The fact is, in 2006, our trade with Colombia in my own State was up 49 percent, even with these tariffs in place.

So I hope the leadership of the body across the Hall will very soon allow the Members of that body to vote their conscience on this particular trade agreement; to not have a vote where they, in essence, direct people to vote against this agreement but allow people to vote for it because this is good for people all across America as it relates to employment. It is good for Colombia in that it shows that they are, in fact, our friend. It is good for our national security.

It is important for us to have in South America allies who think like we think and want to see democracy flourish, who want to see free trade, who want to see relationships with our people.

I think at this critical time, especially with the turmoil that is existing in that part of the world, it is important for us to pass this Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. President, I thank you for allowing me to express my views today. I hope we, as a body, will have the opportunity to pass this bill in the near future.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I commend my colleague from Tennessee for bringing up this very important issue. We know from what has happened in Colombia in just the last 2 days that it is so important our country help them in every way as they struggle to get rid of the drug trafficking and trade that has plagued