

Now is not the time to raise taxes, add mandates, and put jobs in jeopardy. This massive, all-at-once approach is a very risky experiment with 16 percent of our economy. It is a huge gamble. It is a dangerous risk being taken with our health care.

Common sense tells us that change is needed in this arena, but how about a step at a time to see if that change works, and then we can move forward to the next step. We can take positive steps. But opt-outs, out-ins, co-ops, exchanges, triggers—they are illusions and not solutions.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 5½ minutes remaining in morning business.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask the Presiding Officer to inform me when I have 30 seconds remaining.

Mr. President, the House of Representatives passed, by just five votes, a health care reform bill over the weekend. Some said it was historic. It is, indeed, historic. It is a combination of higher premiums, higher taxes, Medicare cuts, and more Federal Government debt.

Millions of Americans, if it were to pass, will be forced into government plans when their employers stop offering health care insurance.

As a former Governor of Tennessee, I simply do not see how Tennessee can pay for its part of the Medicaid expansion without imposing a new State income tax and damaging higher education or both.

Health care reform is supposed to be about reducing costs, not increasing costs. Instead of raising taxes, raising premiums, Medicare cuts, more debt, and transferring new costs to States, we should be taking steps toward reducing health care costs.

On the Republican side, we proposed a number of those, starting with small business health plans which would allow small businesses to pool together their resources and offer insurance to their employees. That would be a good place to start. The Congressional Budget Office has said that the small business health care plan which Senator ENZI has proposed and is waiting for us to pass would reduce the cost of Medicaid, would increase the number of insured by 750,000 at least, and would lower the cost of insurance for 3 out of 4 small business employees.

So instead of this 2,000-page bill that raises premiums, raises costs, cuts Medicare, and increases the debt, why

don't we start step by step to reduce costs?

I was privileged to attend the White House fiscal responsibility summit in February. The President invited me, and I was glad to go. He talked then about what is obvious about our country's fiscal situation and said that putting America on a sustainable fiscal course "will require addressing health care."

Then, at the President's White House health reform summit in March, the President himself introduced the "b" word, the "bankruptcy" word, which I am beginning to hear more and more about as these bills come toward us. The President said:

If we don't address costs, I don't care how heartfelt our efforts are, we will not get this done. If people think we can simply take everybody who is not insured and load them up in a system where costs are out of control, it's not going to happen.

This is President Obama talking in March:

We will run out of money. The Federal Government will be bankrupt; state governments will be bankrupt.

Well, that is the "b" word. That is our President talking. I think we should listen to those words and the repeated warnings from careful advisers that the cost of these health care proposals is going to get us in a state of fiscal ruin.

Here in Washington, we hear more about the Federal deficit, not so much about the condition of our States. At one time, maybe half the Senators were former Governors, as the Presiding Officer is and I was. Today, I think it is 12. But those of us who can remember those days remember what it was like trying to control Medicaid costs.

Governor Bredesen, a Democrat of Tennessee, told us over the weekend, our State—he told all of us that the House-passed bill will add \$1.4 billion to the State budget over 5 years. If that is the case—and I know it is hard to put billions, trillions, jillions together up here and make them make sense, but let me try to make sense of what that could mean for our State, which is a conservative, well-run State. I don't see how the State of Tennessee could pay for its State share of the expanded Medicaid Program without instituting a new income tax or without seriously damaging higher education or both. And that is just one part of the new cost.

So what we are saying to the American people is, let's read this bill, let's know what it costs, and let's see how it affects you.

We will be seeing a Senate bill coming out from behind the closed doors of the majority leader within a few days. We look forward to debating it. We look forward to moving ahead with health care reform. But to us, raising premiums, costs, and taxes and cutting Medicare is not health care reform. Reducing costs with small business health plans, competition across State lines,

reducing junk lawsuits against doctors—that is the direction we ought to go if we want to avoid seeing that "b" word show up on the front pages of our newspapers more and more.

I yield the floor.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3082, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3082) making appropriations for military construction, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Johnson/Hutchison amendment No. 2730, in the nature of a substitute.

Udall (NM) amendment No. 2737 (to amendment No. 2730), to make available from Medical Services \$150 million for homeless veterans comprehensive service programs.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am here to discuss a very important matter that I had intended to bring up in the Judiciary Committee last week but the agenda did not allow it. It is about the oversight of the Department of Justice and the responses provided by Attorney General Holder to questions from the Judiciary Committee. Two weeks ago, Chairman LEAHY—and I thank him for participating—and I sent a letter to the Attorney General asking him to stand by his statements made during his confirmation and answer a number of outstanding requests for information. That list includes questions submitted by members of the Judiciary Committee to an FBI oversight hearing over 1½ years ago. We all agreed no committee should have to wait that long to get answers to oversight questions.

Last Friday, the Judiciary Committee received answers from the Attorney General following his June 17,

2009, testimony. I hoped he would uphold his commitment he made during his confirmation hearing to “fully and in a timely fashion” answer Judiciary Committee inquiries.

The questions I submitted to Attorney General Holder addressed a number of important issues, including a series of 24 questions related to the Department’s involvement with the termination of Inspector General Walpin at the Corporation for National and Community Service. The answers I received were totally inadequate. Instead of answering the 24 questions, the Department responded with a five-paragraph recitation of publicly available facts and information. The Department also said it would respond under separate cover to the document requests. I appreciate the Department’s comments that it intends to respond to my requests, but I am very concerned this is more of the same problem Chairman LEAHY and I were trying to get at with our letter 2 weeks ago.

My questions were more than just requests for documents and asking for a recitation of public facts. They were serious inquiries about the role the acting U.S. attorney played in the termination of that inspector general. I requested specific answers to questions that have arisen in my investigation. For example, I asked about communications between the U.S. attorney and the Office of Professional Responsibility and whether the referral by the U.S. attorney complied with the ethical requirements outlined in the U.S. Attorneys’ manual for misconduct by non-Department of Justice attorneys and judges. While this is only one example of the questions I asked, none of the questions were specifically answered.

While the Department did say it was going to provide the documents I requested under separate cover, the response seems to indicate that all my questions were answered. They were not answered. I intend to get these answers.

This is a prime example of what is wrong with the inadequate responses to all our questions. They avoid the question and filibuster with public facts.

I have previously stated that unless the Department of Justice starts answering our questions completely and in a timely manner, I will start holding up nominees. I have done nothing but patiently work in good faith with the chairman and the Department to get answers. Yet despite these threats, it is business as usual.

This culture of not answering questions timely, in an evasive manner, and putting document requests to future separate cover letters is unacceptable. We have a constitutional duty to oversee the bureaucracy, and the executive branch is thumbing its nose at the Congress. I know Chairman LEAHY agrees oversight is an important part of what the Judiciary Committee does. I hope he will continue to work with all members to get answers from the Attorney General. He has surely helped me.

I am tired of wasting time having to raise these concerns publicly, but shaming the Department seems to be the only way they will respond, and even that doesn’t work all the time. This administration rode into town on a campaign of accountability and transparency. Attorney General Holder told all of us he respected congressional oversight. Yet in his first set of oversight questions submitted by the committee, he gave us the same non-response we have seen from the Department. That is not the accountability or transparency the American taxpayers deserve.

This is yet another public warning to the Department. It is time to start responding fully to our requests in a timely manner or face the consequences. I hope the Attorney General and his staff will hear this and provide complete answers to our questions prior to his scheduled appearance in the Judiciary Committee later this month.

I see my colleague, Senator KYL. I think he has interest in this oversight matter as well.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes to continue the discussion Senator GRASSLEY has commenced.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I rise to join in the comments Senator GRASSLEY has offered. I voted for Attorney General Holder, and we had several conversations about being forthcoming in responding to our requests for information. I thought at the time he would be able to work with us and provide those kinds of answers and support. I have been disappointed, as has Senator GRASSLEY.

A couple of examples: June 17, we had a hearing at which Attorney General Holder was present. It was an oversight hearing. He was asked a number of questions. He took many of those questions for the record which, of course, is perfectly fine. But his answers were not submitted to us for another 4½ months. It was October 29 when we received the answers.

I wish to cite two examples of questions and answers which demonstrate the unresponsiveness of the Attorney General.

I asked him to identify the legal basis the Department of Justice could invoke to prevent a Gitmo detainee from being released into the United States if found not guilty in a Federal court—an important question because the administration apparently intends to bring Gitmo detainees to the United States for trial. Here is the response:

Where we have legal detention authority, as the President has stated, we will not release anyone into the United States if doing so would endanger the national security of the American people. There are a number of tools at the government’s disposal to ensure that no such detainee is released into the United States, all of which are currently

being reviewed by the Special Interagency Task Force on Detention Policy created pursuant to Executive Order 13493.

I asked the Attorney General to identify the operative legal authority that could be used to detain acquitted detainees. He responded by saying the administration probably would not release someone “where we have legal detention authority.” It is like a cat chasing its tail. What is legal authority? That was the question. Do you have legal authority? Releasing a detainee into the United States obviously could have grave consequences. I think we deserve more than just the Attorney General’s vague and rather meaningless reference to tools at our disposal.

Similarly, I asked the Attorney General to explain whether the crimes committed by those presently held in U.S. prisons for conviction on terrorism charges are comparable to the terrorist acts of high-value detainees at Gitmo. The reason I asked was, they said we have several convicted terrorists in our prisons here in the United States. My question was, Well, but are those really serious crimes as opposed to the 9/11-related crimes committed by those we are holding at Gitmo?

His response was:

A number of individuals with a history of, or nexus to, international or domestic terrorism are currently being held in federal prisons, each of whom was tried and convicted in an Article III court.

We knew that.

The Attorney General considers all crimes of terrorism to be serious.

Well, so do I. I am glad the Attorney General considers all crimes of terrorism to be serious. But that does not answer my question: How do these crimes compare to the crimes of those high-value detainees at Gitmo?

So these are examples of the kind of nonresponses we get from the Attorney General when we ask questions.

Let me close with one final point, and then if Senator GRASSLEY would have anything else to say, I will certainly yield to him.

We know for several weeks we have had on the Judiciary Committee agenda a bill called the media shield bill. It is a bill that has a lot of problems with it. Many members of the past administration had written in opposition to the bill, pointing out the problem of convicting people who were engaged in espionage or acts of terror against the United States, in the event this legislation were to be passed.

So I was curious about this Attorney General’s views on that. He finally got us a views letter last week, and he said “the result of a series of productive and cooperative discussions with the sponsors and supporters of the legislation” is how they put this latest draft together. Obviously, absent is any discussion with those of us who have expressed our longstanding concerns.

This is one of those matters I had raised with the Attorney General at his confirmation hearing, and his reply was:

The concerns you raised are legitimate ones.

So I am glad my concerns were legitimate.

He also said at his hearing that he would—I am quoting now—“work with both Republicans and Democrats on this Committee on a federal media shield law.”

Further, during my questioning of Attorney General Holder on the media shield bill, he again stated his willingness to “work to address the concerns raised in” views letters issued in the 110th Congress.

In response to my questions, he testified:

I want to talk to you and to people who worked on this bill and who might have a contrary view of it.

I never heard from him again. I met with him on May 4 to reaffirm my strong interest in the legislation. I never heard from him after that meeting.

This is despite the fact that in response to a question I asked, Attorney General Holder testified:

I want to talk to you and to people who worked on this bill and who might have a contrary view of it. As I said before, I guess in my opening statement, you know, knowledge doesn't reside only in the executive branch. The experience that you've had with this, the obvious knowledge that you have of these issues are the kinds of things that I need to be educated about. It may change my mind, frankly.

Well, maybe it would have. But by not talking to me, he was able not to change his mind.

I heard that a new version of the bill had been written, and I reviewed it. So, finally, on November 2 I called the Attorney General myself to express my concerns about it. I asked if I could get an explanation of why this version satisfied all of the objections that had been previously raised, and I interpreted his response to be that he would testify before the committee if he were called upon to do so.

Well, 2 days later, as I said, this views letter was sent to us. To put it charitably, it is extraordinarily light on analysis.

I, as I said in the beginning, voted for Attorney General Holder. I thought at the time he would keep the commitments he made to us under oath at his confirmation hearing. He assured us he wanted to work with us and he would be forthcoming and cooperative.

Mr. President, I think it is time for the Attorney General to keep the commitments he made in his confirmation hearing.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, two things. I thank the Senator from South Dakota for giving us this opportunity to make this point. I hope the Attorney General will respond to our questions. We are just doing our constitutional job of oversight, checks and balances of our system of government.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, the MILCON-VA appropriations bill is very important to America's military forces and veterans.

On Wednesday, the Nation observes Veterans Day. There is no reason this bill should not be completed before Veterans Day. But if we are to achieve that goal, we cannot wait until Tuesday to start the debate and amendment process.

We have a choice. We can go home for Veterans Day with a speech in our pockets or we can go home for Veterans Day with a solid accomplishment for our veterans: passage of the fiscal year 2010 MILCON-VA appropriations bill, to our credit. I vote for the latter, and I urge my colleagues to join with me in working to make progress on this bill today so we will be able to move to final passage tomorrow.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2733 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2730

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 2733 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Dakota [Mr. JOHNSON] proposes an amendment numbered 2733 to amendment No. 2730.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To increase by \$50,000,000 the amount available for the Department of Veterans Affairs for minor construction projects for the purpose of converting unused Department of Veterans Affairs structures into housing with supportive services for homeless veterans, and to provide an offset)

On page 52, after line 21, add the following:

SEC. 229. (a)(1) The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this title under the heading “CONSTRUCTION, MINOR PROJECTS” is hereby increased by \$50,000,000.

(2) Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by this title under the heading “CONSTRUCTION, MINOR PROJECTS”, as increased by paragraph (1), \$50,000,000 shall be available for renovation of Department of Veterans Affairs buildings for the purpose of converting unused structures into housing with supportive services for homeless veterans.

(b) The amount appropriated or otherwise made available by title I under the heading “HOMEOWNERS ASSISTANCE FUND” is hereby reduced by \$50,000,000.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, this August I had the opportunity to accompany Secretary Shinseki in South Dakota to meet with the many South Dakotans who have served our Nation. During this trip, the Secretary outlined for me his ambitious plan to end homelessness among veterans and im-

pressed upon me how this is one of his top priorities for the VA.

The fiscal year 2010 MILCON-VA bill before us provides a significant amount of resources to help him accomplish that goal, including over \$500 million for direct homeless programs. However, after returning from the August recess, I began to look into other efforts the VA could undertake to further address this issue. As many of you know, the VA has 153 hospitals, many on expansive campuses which include numerous buildings, some used and others sitting empty.

The amendment I have just offered would add \$50 million to the VA's minor construction account specifically for the VA to renovate unused, empty buildings sitting on VA campuses for the purpose of providing housing with supportive services for homeless veterans. In today's economic climate, many of the community organizations and nonprofits that run homeless shelters for vets cannot come up with the capital needed to renovate unused VA buildings. This amendment would allow the VA to make those renovations and then pursue public-private ventures that address the problem of homelessness among vets.

The amendment is fully offset and does not exceed the subcommittee's allocation for budget authority or outlays. I would urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators BYRD and FEINSTEIN be added as cosponsors.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2745 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2730

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and to call up my amendment No. 2745.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Minnesota [Mr. FRANKEN], for himself and Mr. JOHNSON, proposes an amendment numbered 2745.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(Purpose: To ensure that \$5,000,000 is available for a study to assess the feasibility and advisability of using service dogs for the treatment or rehabilitation of veterans with physical or mental injuries or disabilities)

On page 52, after line 21, add the following:

SEC. 229. Of the amounts appropriated or otherwise made available by this title for the Department of Veterans Affairs, \$5,000,000 shall be available for the study required by section 1077 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, the amendment I offer today would fund a vital new initiative within the Department of Veteran Affairs that was authorized by the recent National Defense Authorization Act. This initiative is a VA program and study for the provision of service dogs to disabled veterans, which began as an amendment I offered to the Defense authorization bill and is now a provision in the enacted law.

This 3-year program will study the benefit of using service dogs to help treat veterans with physical and mental injuries and disabilities. It is meant to provide the VA with one more tool to raise the quality of life for those who have given so much to our Nation.

Under this program, the VA will partner with nonprofit organizations that provide service dogs free of charge to veterans. The government will offset some of the costs of providing the dogs, which are currently funded largely through private donations. This will allow roughly 200 veterans to be paired with dogs and to participate in the study. In this way, the program will amount to a public-private partnership where donors to those nonprofits will know their money will go further, thanks to public matching funds.

The veterans who participate in the study will be veterans with physical disabilities and with mental disabilities such as PTSD. It was one such veteran, CPT Luis Montalvan, who initially sparked my interest in this effort. I met Luis, who had been injured while serving in Anbar in Iraq, along with his service dog Tuesday, at an inaugural event. Luis explained to me that he could not have been there if it weren't for Tuesday who eases his PTSD in numerous and very impressive ways.

After meeting Luis, I undertook research and learned about all of the benefits that service dogs can provide individuals with disabilities. I saw the wonderful work of the nonprofits which give their time and the donors who give their money to undertake the intensive training and the provision of these dogs. I learned there were more veterans out there who feel they could benefit from such a service dog if they had access to one.

I introduced my legislation shortly after coming to office. The VA program it establishes will study—scientifically—the benefits to veterans of the service dogs, so we are proceeding based on evidence. The VA will also provide funds to veterans who partici-

pate in the study to cover some of the costs of maintaining their service dogs.

Today I am offering this amendment to the Military Construction and Department of Veterans Affairs appropriations legislation so the fully authorized VA initiative may now be fully funded. The amendment is straightforward and reasonable. My amendment today would simply make \$5 million available for this study that passed by unanimous consent. In this way, we can both provide more service dogs to the veterans who want them, and we can study the benefits they can provide to those veterans and the most effective ways to provide those benefits.

Our Nation owes a profound debt to those who have served in the military. For those veterans with disabilities, we need to make sure the VA has as many effective tools for raising their quality of life as possible. My amendment would make sure that one of those tools is funded.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PROVIDING FOR A CONDITIONAL ADJOURNMENT/RECESS OF THE HOUSE AND SENATE

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H. Con. Res. 210, the adjournment resolution, received from the House and is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (H. Con. Res 210) providing for a conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives and a conditional recess or adjournment of the Senate.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the concurrent resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 210) was agreed to, as follows:

H. CON. RES. 210

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That when the House adjourns on any legislative day from Friday, November 6, 2009, through Tuesday, Novem-*

ber 10, 2009, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand adjourned until 2 p.m. on Monday, November 16, 2009, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first; and that when the Senate recesses or adjourns on any day from Friday, November 6, 2009, through Tuesday, November 10, 2009, on a motion offered pursuant to this concurrent resolution by its Majority Leader or his designee, it stand recessed or adjourned until noon on Monday, November 16, 2009, or such other time on that day as may be specified in the motion to recess or adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 2 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first.

SEC. 2. The Speaker of the House and the Majority Leader of the Senate, or their respective designees, acting jointly after consultation with the Minority Leader of the House and the Minority Leader of the Senate, shall notify the Members of the House and the Senate, respectively, to reassemble at such place and time as they may designate if, in their opinion, the public interest shall warrant it.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MILITARY CONSTRUCTION, VETERANS AFFAIRS AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2010—Continued

Mr. INOUYE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside so I may say a few words.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INOUYE. Mr. President, let me begin, first, by thanking Chairman JOHNSON and Senator HUTCHISON for their fine work in preparing this measure before us. Similar to the other appropriations bills for fiscal year 2010, this bill, which provides the necessary funding for military construction and veterans programs, was prepared by the subcommittee on a bipartisan basis.

I am very pleased to advise my colleagues in the Senate that the committee endorsed the bill unanimously and forwarded this matter to the Senate for consideration.

As my colleagues are aware, we are already more than 1 month into the new fiscal year, and we simply need to complete our work on this measure.

Moreover, Wednesday is Veterans Day. It would truly send the right message to our veterans for the Senate to pass this bill before November 11.

Again, I wish to commend the chairman and Senator HUTCHISON for their fine work on this measure and urge its adoption.