

Mrs. GILLIBRAND thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Madam President, following leader remarks, if any, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the New START treaty. Roll-call votes are expected to occur throughout the day in relation to amendments to the treaty. The managers of this bill, Senator KERRY and Senator LUGAR, are two of our most experienced Members, and they will do an outstanding job of managing this legislation.

The current continuing resolution expires Saturday at midnight, so we need to take action to consider a funding resolution sometime in the next few days.

Just an update on the schedule: The tax package which we passed yesterday is now in the House. They are going to consider that very likely today. We have the omnibus or the continuing resolution we have to deal with in the near future because, as I have indicated, the funding expires at midnight on Saturday.

The DREAM Act is something we need to work on. It is an extremely important piece of legislation allowing young men and women to join the military. If they serve 2 years in the military, they would be eligible to get their green cards. It also allows them to continue their education. It is an extremely important piece of legislation.

We have the 9/11 health matter; we need to reconsider that. We hope we can move forward on that matter. There are thousands of people who are desperately ill who need to be helped as a result of the terrorist attack that took place on 9/11.

Yesterday the House passed don't ask, don't tell, and we are going to have to deal with that in some way.

We have nominations, including that of Jim Cole, the Deputy Attorney General, we have been trying for several months now to get cleared—that second ranking person in the entire Justice Department. It seems to me we are having trouble getting even a vote on this individual. So that is going to have to be resolved before we leave. It is extremely important we do that.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

TREATY WITH RUSSIA ON MEASURES FOR FURTHER REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE ARMS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following treaty which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Treaty Calendar No. 7, Treaty with Russia on measures for further reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I want the American people to see something. This is the bill the majority would have us pass, this Omnibus appropriations bill. It is 2,000 pages long. I think the American people should think back to this time a year ago—last December—when the Democrats did the very same thing. At that point, it was a 2,700-page health care bill because, frankly, they didn't want us to see what was in it. Only afterwards did we find out about the "Cornhusker kickback," the "Louisiana purchase," and all the rest.

This is eerily familiar to anyone who remembers the health care debate. We even have snow in the forecast, which is reminiscent of last year. Last year we voted on health care in a blizzard—the 2,700-page health care bill in the middle of a blizzard.

This bill is so enormous it took the Government Printing Office 2 days to print it. It spends more than \$½ billion a page. Let's take a look at it again.

Here is the bill. It spends—right at 2,000 pages in this bill—it spends \$½ billion a page. It has more than \$½ billion in it for the Democratic health care bill we passed last year, the 2,700-page bill that looked pretty much like this. It has \$½ billion in it for that health care bill we passed last year.

An ever-growing number of Americans looking at that health care bill would like for us to repeal it, not fund it. This is exactly the kind of thing the American people voted against last November—just this kind of thing. We had a referendum on November 2 on how the American people felt about what we have been doing for the last 2 years, and right at the top of the list was the 2,700-page health care bill.

Frankly, it is just unbelievable. Just a few weeks after the voters told us they don't want us rushing major pieces of complicated, costly, far-reaching legislation through Congress, we get this 2,000-page bill. They want to ram this gigantic, trillion-dollar bill through Congress, and they are using, once again, the Christmas break as an inducement to vote for it.

Look, we all know this is not the way to legislate. Americans expect more

from Congress and they demanded more on election day. That is why today I am introducing this clean, one-page continuing resolution that would operate the government through February 18. So we have a choice. We can pass this 2,000-page bill spending \$½ billion a page, or we can do this one-page, clean continuing resolution through February 18 of next year. That is the choice we have.

Once the new Congress is sworn in, we will have a chance to pass a less expensive bill, free of this kind of wasteful spending. Until then, we need to take a step back and respect the will of the voters.

I think the message was pretty clear last November. One pundit referred to it as a restraining order. In other words: Quit doing what you have been doing. Here we are 1 month after the election attempting to pass this 2,000-page bill when we could pass a one-pager that would simply continue the government through February 18.

So we are going to have an opportunity to do this. I hope it makes sense on a bipartisan basis, this one-page continuing resolution until February 18, as an alternative to this 2,000-page monstrosity that spends \$½ billion a page. I don't think there is any question it is the right thing to do, and I hope my colleagues decide in the end that is the direction we ought to take. I am going to introduce this, and I just wanted to highlight it for my colleagues.

TRIBUTES TO RETIRING SENATORS

JIM BUNNING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I know there are others on the Senate floor seeking to speak, but I wish to bid farewell to one of our colleagues. Few people can say they have had the same range of experience and successes in life as Senator JIM BUNNING. In fact, there isn't even another Major Leaguer who can say he struck out Ted Williams three times in one game. JIM accomplished that notable feat in just his second year in the majors.

Thirty-nine years after that, he had become the only member of the Baseball Hall of Fame to serve in Congress. For the past 12 years, I have been honored to work alongside this remarkable American in the Senate. We followed different paths in life, but we sure have deep love for Kentucky and its people. It has been my honor over the years to work closely with JIM to advance our common goals.

So today I wish to say a few words about my good friend as we honor his remarkable life and his remarkable service.

JIM was born and raised in Southgate, KY, and it wouldn't surprise anybody to learn he excelled in school and in sports growing up. He played baseball as a teenager at St. Xavier High School in Cincinnati, but it was for his skills as a basketball player that would earn him an athletic scholarship to Xavier University.

Baseball interrupted his college education, but at his father's insistence,

JIM would return to Xavier and earn a degree in economics that would serve him well in Congress over the years. He entered the majors in 1955, and over the course of a storied 17-year career he would play for the Detroit Tigers, the Philadelphia Phillies, the Pittsburgh Pirates, and the Los Angeles Dodgers. JIM is a pretty imposing force at committee hearings—just ask Chairman Bernanke—but he was a dominating presence on the mound long before that.

At 6 feet 4 inches, he was a hard-throwing sidearm who would tumble off the mound with every pitch he threw. By the end of his career, JIM could boast he was the first Major League pitcher to win 100 games, rack up 1,000 strikeouts, and throw no-hitters in both leagues. He finished with an impressive 224 wins, 184 losses, 2,855 strikeouts, and a 3.27 ERA—the career stats that would earn him a spot in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

JIM's two greatest pitching achievements were his no-hitter in 1958 and the perfect game he threw on Father's Day, 1964, a feat that has only been accomplished 20 times in baseball history. Another little known feat was JIMMY's so-called "immaculate inning" in 1959 when he struck out three Red Sox on nine pitches, a feat that has only been achieved 43 other times in baseball history.

Around here we joke that JIM likes to throw the high hard ones, but he developed the skill early. Over a 4-year period with the Phillies, JIM hit more opposing batters with pitches than any other pitcher in the league. In fact, over a 17-year career, he plunked 160 batters or nearly 10 batters a year, making him the 13th most dangerous pitcher of all time, ahead of such other well-known head hunters as Roger Clemens, Nolan Ryan, and Don Drysdale.

JIM has never been afraid of a little chin music, and he brought that same competitive mentality to his life in public service. After baseball, public service seemed like a logical choice. It was JIMMY's turn to give back, and give back is exactly what he did.

When JIM walks out of this Chamber for the last time at the end of this session, he will be able to say with justifiable pride that he has given 33 years of his life to public service and to Kentucky.

Over those three decades, JIM has served in all levels of government—from the Fort Thomas City Council to the Kentucky State Senate, to both Chambers in this building—12 years in the House and 12 in the Senate. He has dedicated his life to serving the people of Kentucky, and Kentuckians are grateful for his service.

In the House, he made a name for himself, among other things, by working tirelessly to strengthen and protect Social Security as chairman of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security.

And then, in 1998, he decided to make a run at the U.S. Senate seat which at

the time was held by Wendell Ford. It turned out to be a pretty close election, but once he arrived in the Senate, JIM set out to become one of the hardest-working and most influential Members of this Chamber.

He has been a staunch social and fiscal conservative, and a budget hawk who for years has sounded the alarm on the kind of concerns about spending and debt that drove so many Americans to the polls this month. JIM spoke for many Americans when he said in a recent statement that, being a grandfather to many he worries that future generations will be saddled by the poor decisions that are being made today. "For the first time in my life," he said, "I question if my grandchildren will have the same opportunities that I had . . ."

One particular issue that has been close to JIM's heart is the issue of adoption. In 2001, JIM introduced legislation to make adopting more affordable to American families. And in 2007, he introduced legislation to make those tax incentives permanent.

And, of course, if there was ever a controversial issue regarding the national pastime on Capitol Hill, JIM was right at the forefront, including the 2005 hearings related to steroid use in baseball. In one memorable exchange from that hearing, JIM offered the following testimony, from his own experience as a player: "Mr. Chairman," he said, "maybe I'm old-fashioned," [but] I remember players didn't get better as they got older. We all got worse. When I played with Hank Aaron and Willie Mays and Ted Williams, they didn't put on 40 pounds to bulk up in their careers and they didn't hit more homers in their late 30's than they did in their late 20's." It was just this kind of straightforward, commonsense approach to the issues that has won JIM a legion of admirers not only on the baseball diamond, but off of it. And on this issue in particular, JIM's passion and personal perspective helped shed light not only on the dangers of steroid use at the professional level, but on the growing steroid epidemic among young athletes at all levels.

Despite his high profile, JIM never forgot about the issues that mattered most to his constituents back home. He's been a staunch supporter of clean coal technologies as an effective, efficient way to use coal, improve our environment, and bring jobs to Kentucky. Another issue that was extremely important to all Kentuckians was the failed clean up of radioactive contamination that was found in the drinking water wells of residences near the Department of Energy's uranium enrichment plant in Paducah, KY, in 1988. In 2004, JIM harshly criticized the DOE's cleanup efforts, as well as called several hearings on Capitol Hill to draw attention to DOE's failure to compensate many workers that had been stricken with radiation-related diseases.

In every issue he has taken on, whether national, statewide or local,

JIM has been a man of principle from start to finish. He has stayed true to himself. And in a truly remarkable life, he has got a lot to be proud of. But if you were to ask JIM to list his greatest achievement, I don't think he would say it was his election to the U.S. Senate or his induction to the Hall of Fame. They would both come in a distant second and third to the day he married his high school sweetheart, Mary. JIM and Mary still live in the northern Kentucky town where he grew up. They have been married for nearly 60 years. Together, they have raised nine children. And they enjoy nothing more than spending time with the next generation of Bunnings—which last time I checked included 35 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. JIM will tell you there's no secret to his success. He is happy to give all the credit to Mary. As he put it in his Hall of Fame induction speech, she is his "rock."

Today, we honor and pay tribute to our friend and colleague for more than three decades of public service. JIM will be remembered for his two Hall of Fame-worthy careers, for his example of principled leadership, and for his devotion to God, country, and family. On behalf of myself and the entire Senate family, JIM, we thank you for your service, and we wish you the best in the next chapter of your life.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. KYL. Madam President, I join Senator MCCONNELL in a tribute to my friend and colleague, JIM BUNNING. JIM and I came into the House of Representatives at the same time as parts of the 100th class. I have enjoyed being with him as well in the Senate. JIM and Mary are counted as among the best friends my wife Carol and I have. I agree with Senator MCCONNELL that while people may disagree with JIM BUNNING, no one has ever doubted his courage, his sincerity, his love for this country, his desire to do what is right, and his commitment to all those efforts. So I will greatly miss JIM when he is no longer part of the Senate. I think it is probably time for JIM and Mary to have a little bit of time to spend with all those children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Obviously, we all wish them both well.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Madam President, I will speak for a few moments about the matter Senator MCCONNELL brought to our attention; namely, this almost 2,000-page Omnibus appropriations bill. I know the majority leader has turned to the START treaty, and I think it is fairly obvious why. The American people are focused like a laser beam on this spending bill. I can't turn on the TV without hearing comments by both the commentators as well as people in public life about what this spending bill will do for this country's future.

I think it is time we devote some attention to this spending bill, rather than put it under the table and talk about the START treaty instead, which, after all, we could accomplish at any time.

As the majority leader said, spending for the U.S. Government runs out at midnight Saturday night. I can hear the cries at that time: We have an emergency on our hands. You don't want to shut down the Federal Government, do you? We have to do something.

Well, the something is apparently this 2,000-page, over \$1 trillion bill, which will not have had adequate time for debate or exposure to the American people. Apparently, under the schedule, as it now is, it would not even entitle us to try to amend it. Think about that for a moment. That which is most important to the American people and the subject of the message conveyed in this last election—to stop the wasteful Washington spending—we are not even going to be able to amend the \$1 trillion-plus bill that has been laid before us.

I know—and I think most people in this body know—how important international relations and treaties are, including the START treaty. But I also agree with the colorful comment by James Carville, a former adviser to President Clinton, who has a way with words. He said the American people don't give a pig's patooty about the START treaty.

Obviously, those of us in the Senate do. We understand its importance. But at this moment, the most important thing on the minds of the American people is how we are going to fund the Federal Government without continuing to waste billions of dollars of their money. That is what we ought to be focusing on in the last few hours we have.

Let me address a little bit about what we have found so far is in this bill and why so many of us are so concerned about it. The first point I will make is, I don't think ever in the history of the modern Congress that Congress has failed or the Senate has failed to pass a single appropriations bill. The American people should understand that, ordinarily, Congress passes a budget and we each—both bodies—pass about 12, sometimes 13 bills, to fund the different agencies and departments and functions of the U.S. Government. We didn't do that this year. We didn't pass a single one. We didn't pass a budget. So now the emergency that occurs, because we will run out of funding on Saturday, obviously, is laid at the feet of the majority, which didn't do its work earlier in the year, and that forces us into the position of having to act in this emergency way.

As the Republican leader said, ironically, this is at the same time we were considering the health care legislation last year, the week before Christmas, in a situation in which Members have very little time and ability to change

the legislation that is before us, a bill that will cost more than \$1 trillion. Very few Members will have time to analyze it, let alone read it.

Funding of the government, of course, is one of the most important responsibilities that we as Senators have. But as I said, this bill is going to get short shrift on the floor because it appears we will not even have an opportunity to amend it, if the majority leader's schedule holds.

Let's talk about some of the specifics in it. As I said, it costs more than \$1 trillion. There is nearly \$18 billion more spending in this legislation than in the temporary continuing resolution that was enacted last September. In other words, at that time, we understood we needed to begin the process of funding the government, even though not a single appropriations bill had been passed. So we passed legislation that, over a 12-month period, was \$18 billion less than the bill that comes before us now. I don't think this is responsible, and I think most Americans who have had to trim their budgets would agree it is not responsible.

The bill contains more than 6,700 earmarks. Think about that for a moment. There are only 535 Members of Congress. Most of us don't have earmarks in this bill. So at 6,700 earmarks, you are talking about some legislators in the House and Senate having numerous earmarks. The total is \$8 billion worth of earmarks. There is a debate about whether earmarks are good or bad, and some who believe they are OK say it is not that much money. But \$8 billion is a lot of money no matter who is doing the counting—even in the Federal Government. It includes things—and I don't like to make fun of these things because they all have some purpose—like \$247,000 for virus-free wine grapes in Washington. I am sure it is important to have virus-free wine grapes, but the last time I checked, the people who grow grapes are doing fairly well financially and could probably afford, if all the wine growers pool their resources, to come up with \$200,000 to try to make sure their grapes are free of virus.

There is a \$100,000 appropriation for the Edgar Allan Poe Visitor Center in New York. Edgar Allan Poe is certainly an iconic American literary figure, but for the Federal Government—I mean the taxpayers in Arizona probably don't appreciate the need to pony up money for the Edgar Allan Poe Visitor Center in New York.

The omnibus bill contains upward of a \$1 billion increase in spending for the vastly unpopular health care bill Americans said they didn't want and continue to strongly oppose. Here are a couple of the details on that. There is an allocation of \$750 million for the Prevention and Public Health Fund slush fund for a variety of programs—not named; a \$175.9 million adjustment in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services program management account to implement the massive

Medicaid expansion, as well as cuts to Medicare Advantage—something my constituents strongly objected to; an \$80.7 million adjustment for HHS program management, on and on.

There are millions included for implementation of the very controversial Dodd-Frank financial reform bill, including a Securities and Exchange Commission funding increase of \$189 million. That is 17 percent more than last year; a Commodity Futures Trading Commission funding increase of \$117.2 million or a 69-percent increase over last year's funding; Treasury gets increase of \$32.35 million or a 10-percent increase. It goes on and on.

The omnibus also contains \$790 million for an increase in education stimulus programs. A thorough examination of those programs reveals that, at least in some cases, they advance the cause of the teachers unions—at least in my view—more than the cause of educating American children.

Some claim that at least you can say this bill's top line—its gross amount of spending is consistent with the budget proposal advocated by Senators SESSIONS, McCASKILL, and many of the rest of us, including myself. But that is not true, as it turns out. It excludes numerous parts, such as multiyear spending caps, enforcement mechanisms, and limitations on emergency spending designations—something I will talk about in a second. In addition, the majority is using a budgetary sleight of hand to ostensibly meet the spending caps for 2011. This is what I was going to mention. They do this by a trick of retroactively declaring spending in last year's supplemental appropriations bill for Agent Orange claims as an emergency. So that money is spent. It was last year's funding. Now we are going to call that money emergency funding. What is the effect? It doesn't count and reduces the baseline and, like magic, by treating it as an emergency—to the tune of almost \$3.5 billion—they have been able to secure a lower CBO score on the bill and, therefore, not exceed the spending caps. Without the gimmick, they obviously would have exceeded the spending caps proposed in the Sessions-McCaskill legislation.

I will mention process briefly. This bill is being considered under a deeply flawed process, as the Republican leader said. Voters made a very clear statement, I think, last month. They do not like wasteful Washington spending. They want it to stop. They didn't like the health care bill. They do not want us—here, a week before Christmas—to rush very complex, very large bills through the Congress without time for their representatives to read them, to study them and have an opportunity, potentially, to amend them. But under the schedule laid out, as I said, an open amendment process for this bill would be impossible.

At the very least, one would think Republicans should be entitled to 1 or 2 amendments to each of the 12 appropriations bills that are included within

this giant Omnibus appropriations package. Under regular order, each of these bills would take at least several days of floor time and we would consider numerous amendments. That is not going to happen with this bill. Instead, we will do the equivalent of more than a month's work of floor time in a couple of days, with no amendments. And some wonder why Congress' approval rating has fallen to 13 percent. Someone said: Who is the 13 percent? And the answer was: Well, it is our staff and our families. Maybe.

Let me conclude here with a little bit about jobs and energy prices. This bill will raise energy prices in the United States and destroy energy jobs through and including some of the following provisions:

There is a ban on shallow water drilling. I thought the whole idea—especially after the gulf, where we had deepwater drilling problems—was to encourage drilling in shallow waters to make up for that other loss of production. The bill changes the law to triple the time for the Department of the Interior to approve exploration plans for offshore operators from 30 to 90 days. This provision could lead to huge financial penalties to the government, breach of contracts, and add further impediments to creating jobs and energy here at home.

The bill reduces the State's share of Federal onshore oil and gas production revenues to 48 percent, down from the 50-50 split required under current law, and it raises fees for onshore and offshore oil and gas production on Federal lands. These fees amount to a tax that will make domestic energy production more expensive to produce, especially for the small businesses that do so.

There is much more—much more the American people should know—but we are supposed to be talking about an arms control treaty with Russia instead. I want to remind everyone that we are in a lameduck Congress, and my view is that trying to enact such a huge and complex bill within the narrow postelection timeframe shows disrespect for the democratic process. For that reason and the others I have discussed, I urge my colleagues to oppose cloture on this bill and to pass a sensible continuing resolution of the kind the Republican leader has introduced.

I want to leave no doubt about this final point. Those who are watching this process carefully and who understand how the process works understand that the important vote here is on cloture. It is the first vote. It is, in effect, the vote to consider this omnibus bill. Our constituents will not be fooled by Senators who vote "yes" on cloture to go to this bill—ensuring it will be considered under this rushed process without amendment—but then who vote "no" on final passage, after it is too late to stop the flawed process and say, well, I voted "no" on the bill. Well, of course, they voted "no" on the bill, but then it was too late.

The key vote is on the cloture vote, whenever that might occur, and I am

told it might occur at actually 12:01 on Sunday morning—in other words, one minute after midnight. Well, that would be very reminiscent of last year's consideration of the health care bill, where through all the procedural gimmickry this body did not distinguish itself in adopting legislation under a process the American people saw through, objected to, and continue to criticize the legislation adopted as a result of the process as well as its substance.

If we want to do the same thing with this legislation, then it will demonstrate in the very first act relating to spending after the election that this Senate did not get the message sent by the American people.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, are we in morning business at this point?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. We are on the treaty.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for no more than 10 minutes.

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

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to respond to what has been said by my friend Senator KYL from Arizona, as well as Senator MCCONNELL of Kentucky, about the appropriations bill, which we are going to consider in a very short period of time.

I am a member of this Appropriations Committee. I remember what happened, and I want to put it on the record right now so that some of the things that have been said can be compared to what I think is the reality. This is the reality: The Appropriations subcommittees—each and every subcommittee of that full committee—met with Democrats and Republicans and prepared a bill. I have the Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government. Senator SUSAN COLLINS of Maine worked long and hard in preparation of that bill. Other subcommittee chairs did the same thing. There was full bipartisan cooperation in the preparation of each of these subcommittee bills—every single one of them. And the appropriations bill that we will vote on is the combination of all of that effort.

Let me also talk about the amount of money we are going to appropriate to continue to fund the operations of our Federal Government.

It is true, it is over \$1 trillion. In fact, it is \$1.1 trillion in this bill. But what hasn't been said by Senator MCCONNELL and Senator KYL is that is exactly the amount they asked for. Senator MCCONNELL came to the Senate Appropriations Committee and said Republicans will not support this bill unless you bring the spending down to \$1.108 trillion. That is exactly what we bring to the floor to be considered.

So to stand back in horror and look at \$1.1 trillion and say, where did this

figure come from, well, it came from Senator MITCH MCCONNELL in a motion he made before the Senate Appropriations Committee. It reflects the amount that he said was the maximum we should spend in this current calendar year on our appropriations bills. He prevailed. It is the same number as the so-called Sessions-McCaskill figure that has been debated back and forth on this floor, voted repeatedly by the Republicans to be the appropriate total number. So we have a bipartisan agreement on the total number. Yet now the Republican leader comes to the floor, stands in horror at the idea of \$1.1 trillion—the very same number he asked for in this bill. You can't have it both ways.

Secondly, they say, well, this is a 2,000-page bill. Well, allow me to explain why.

When you take the work of 12 subcommittees, instead of separate bills and put them in one bill, the total number of pages is going to increase. Maybe the best thing we can give as a Christmas gift to the Senate Republican Caucus is a speed reading course so they can sit down and read these bills. It turns out their fingers get smudgy and their lips get tired if you have more than 100 pages in a bill. Over and over we are told, don't worry about the substance, just count the pages, and if it gets up to a thousand pages, it is clearly a bad bill. Wrong. This 2,000-page bill reflects the work of 12 subcommittees and 12 Republican Senators who helped to assemble and to devise the contents of that bill. It is no surprise that it would reach that number when we put all of the spending bills—the Appropriations subcommittee bills—into one document.

Another point that is raised—what a surprise—we have this thing thrown at us. We have not seen this before. We don't have time to look at this.

This bill was posted 2 days ago, and will be available not only for every Senator and every staff member but for every citizen of this country to look at in detail. The reason Members have been coming to the floor talking about its contents is they have access to it, and have had for almost 48 hours, and will for an even longer period of time before it is finally considered.

I also want to say that the schedule we are facing here now, which is putting us up against some deadlines—deadlines for the funding of government, a lot of personal family deadlines, which trouble all of us, but we accepted this job and its responsibility—many of these deadlines have come to be because of an exercise of the Senate rules. Time and time and time again the Republican minority has forced us to go into a cloture vote, into a filibuster—record-breaking numbers of filibusters over the last several years.

If Members of the Senate were to go back home and ask the cable TV viewers who watch C-SPAN what their impression of the Senate is, their impression is an empty Chamber—an empty