

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). The Senator from Maryland.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period of morning business be extended until 6:30 p.m. today, and that all provisions of the previous order remain in effect.

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

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first, let me compliment Senator HARKIN for his incredible leadership in bringing to the attention of this body something I think everyone understands; that is, with the procedures of the Senate and the way it is operating today, there is a problem. There is a very serious problem.

All one needs to do is to turn on C-SPAN to see the Senate in a quorum call for hours to know there is a better way for us to operate. All one has to do is to look at a week that goes by where there are very few recorded votes to know there is opportunity for debate and action that is being lost in the Senate. We can do better. The procedures we are following today, the way that is being honored by the Members of the Senate, we need to change the rules and procedures of the Senate.

I want to thank the majority leader and the Republican leader for negotiating and getting together to understand the frustrations that are out there in both of our caucuses and to try to come up with reasonable changes in our rules. I see Senator MCCAIN is on the floor, and I acknowledge his leadership, along with that of Senator LEVIN. I was honored to work with that group, along with Senators PRYOR, SCHUMER, BARRASSO, ALEXANDER, and our former colleague, Senator Kyl. We sat for hours debating, and it was very educational for me, Mr. President, because I listened to the concerns of my Republican colleagues—and it was a lot different than what I heard in the Democratic caucus—and I think we both learned a lot from each other.

But there was general agreement that there is a real problem in the operation of the Senate, and we have an obligation to take a look at our rules and see whether we can't modify the rules so we can have the type of deliberation, debate, and voting that is expected of the Senate.

One of the problems that became very apparent to all of us is that individual Senators are able to block the consideration of amendments and bills on the floor of the Senate indefinitely. That is wrong. My colleague from Arizona pointed out that someone could be in their home State and offer an objection, and a bill could be brought to a standstill. That is not how the Senate should operate. We should be able to consider legislation, and individual Senators should not be able to block the consideration of that legislation.

I could give examples of hundreds of bills that have been reported out of our

committees in the Senate that have never reached the floor of the Senate. Quite frankly, the reason is an individual Senator blocked consideration, and it would take the majority leader too much time to go through cloture motions in order to bring those issues to the floor of the Senate.

We also have seen an abuse of the 60-vote threshold. The 60-vote threshold shouldn't be the standard working procedure of the Senate. A simple majority should control our actions. Yet in too many cases we have used the 60-vote threshold in order to move legislation forward.

We have also seen that it is very difficult to bring amendments up for consideration. It has been very difficult to get action on individual amendments on the floor of the Senate. So we need to change our procedures. We need to be the great deliberative body which historically the Senate has been.

I want to compliment many of my colleagues—I already mentioned the group that worked on some suggested rules changes and made those recommendations to the majority leader and the Republican leader—but I also want to thank my colleague, Senator HARKIN, who just spoke, for his leadership on this issue, as well as Senators MERKLEY and TOM UDALL, who have been leaders on this matter. We have brought this to the attention not only of our colleagues but to the attention of the American people, and they expect us to take action to improve the operation of the Senate.

Let me talk a moment about the negotiated agreement between the Democratic leader and the Republican leader—between the majority and minority leaders—and what I understand will be recommended to us very shortly, and I hope we can act on it as early as this evening.

First, one of the frustrations is that we find it difficult to bring a bill to the floor of the Senate in a motion to proceed. The threat of a filibuster on the motion to proceed has denied us the opportunity to even start debating an issue. Under the agreement I expect will be brought forward, the majority leader will have two additional opportunities to start debate on an issue.

First, if the Republican leader is in agreement, they can bring that bill to the floor immediately, without any preconditions. That could particularly work well on institutional issues that need to be dealt with, such as appropriations bills, so that we can get onto appropriations bills a lot sooner than we can today.

There is then another opportunity where the majority leader could bring a bill to the floor without the fear of a filibuster, without having to file cloture, by offering amendments. There would be a guaranteed right to offer up to four amendments: two by the minority, two by the majority. That gets us started on legislation.

Now, it is very interesting, if one looks at the process that has been used

where bills come to the floor and where we are most pleased by how the process has worked—such as in the case of the national defense authorization bill, postal reform, and the Agriculture bill in the 112th Congress—in each of those cases the committees voted on the bills, they came to the floor with the managers, we started on the bills, and we completed the bills. I think we were all pretty proud with the manner in which those issues were handled on the floor of the Senate.

Under this process, the majority leader could get us started. The managers can get us started on legislation. Once we start on legislation, once we start debating the issues, we can see what amendments are out there, and we can try to manage the time appropriately and actually get action and debate and votes on the floor of the Senate on the amendments and on final passage.

I do think this empowers our committees. We all spend a lot of time in our committees. We are there for the hearings, we want to see committee markups, but we also like to see the products we bring up in the committee be the major work on the floor of the Senate. Well, now, with this reform and the ability of the leader to bring forward a bill that has come out of our committees, our committee products will be more respected, and we will have a better legislative process because we are using the products that come out of our committee. We are respecting the work of our committees. We are rewarding our chairmen and ranking members working together and bringing legislation to the floor of the Senate.

I think that is a real major improvement and something that will allow the Senate to operate in the way it should.

We also allow for conference committees to be formed in a more expedited way. Right now it could take three cloture votes to get into conference. We contract that into one. I think that is going to be the recommendation.

I had the honor in the 112th Congress to serve on a conference committee that dealt with the payroll tax extension. We got our work done, brought a bill to the floor of the Senate and the House, and got it enacted into law because we were able, in a very open and transparent way, to work with our colleagues in the other body, resolve our differences, and bring legislation forward. I might be wrong, but I think that was the only conference committee that operated in the 112th Congress. There haven't been many. I think most Members of this body would be hard-pressed to remember when they last served on a conference committee. Yet we know there are significant differences between the products that come out of this body and the products that come out of the other body. We need to reconcile those differences. Being able to go into conference allows us the opportunity to let

the legislative process work the way it should.

One of the procedures the majority leader is going to talk about is that once cloture is invoked, if you have to use cloture, you have 30 hours. But you don't guarantee 30 hours. That 30 hours is the maximum. Each Member is entitled to only 1 hour to speak, and a quorum call during postcloture can be considered dilatory if we have already established a quorum.

The majority leader and the minority leader are going to talk about the fact that postcloture, if you want to speak, come to the floor and speak. If you don't, the Presiding Officer should put the issue to the membership for vote so we can expedite issues and not waste a full day letting the 30 hours expire.

There will also be recommendations to deal with nominations. We were extremely frustrated. I served on the Judiciary Committee. I had the opportunity to recommend to the President several appointments to the Federal bench. It took months for these non-controversial nominees to be approved on the floor of the Senate. It truly affects our ability to recruit the very best to serve on our courts.

The same thing is true with the President on his team to have in place, and there will be recommendations to shorten the postcloture time if a cloture vote is needed on judicial nominations to, I think, 2 hours, and sub-Cabinet appointments to around 8 hours. That allows the leader to be able to bring these issues to the floor without the threat that it would tie us up for weeks to take up just a couple appointments.

These are all major improvements. Let me make it clear. If I were writing the rules of the Senate, I would go a lot further. I know I might be in the minority in this body, but I happen to believe in majority rule. I happen to believe the majority should make the decisions. I think there should be adequate time for debate, et cetera. The Senate is different than the House. I accept that. But at the end of the day, I am in favor of majority rule. But I am also in favor of trying to get our rules done in a bipartisan manner because, quite frankly, the Democrats may not be in the majority forever.

If we look since 1981 through the end of this Congress, but for Senator Jeffords' decision in May of 2001 to become an Independent and caucus with the Democrats, the Senate would have been divided as follows: Sixteen years under Democratic control, 16 years under Republican control, and 2 years split 50-50.

I think it is very important we all understand these rules need to work regardless of which party is in the majority. That is why it is the right thing to do to negotiate between the Democrats and Republicans rules that can withstand the test of time and be fair to both the majority and the minority.

Once again, I would have majority rule. That is what I believe and I know

there will be a chance to vote on that and that is how I will express my vote. But I do believe it is best for us to work together, Democrats and Republicans, and come together with a true compromise on the rules changes. I think that is exactly what Leader REID and Leader MCCONNELL have done. They have taken the recommendations of many of us, they have listened to a lot of us, they have listened to both caucuses, and they will come forward with recommendations that will allow this body to carry out its responsibilities in a more effective way—in a way that is better understandable to the American people, where we can get on legislation a lot sooner, debate issues a lot quicker, take up amendments and actually vote on amendments and be able to move legislation that comes out of our committee and approve nominations in a much more efficient way.

To me, that gives us an opportunity for a new start in the Senate as we begin the 113th Congress. Let's hope the cooperation we see developing on the changes of the rules will allow us to work together to deal with the problems of the Nation in a more collegial way, recognizing that compromise is how this country was formed, listen to each other, and move legislation in the best traditions of the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, before the Senator from Maryland leaves the floor, I would like to tell him how much I appreciate the remarks he just made. I think he gave a very accurate depiction of the agreement we reached after many hours of always pleasant conversation. The fact is we showed our colleagues and many others it is still possible for a group of us to join together on a very difficult issue and a very complex one.

The Senator from Maryland stated his preference just a minute ago that he is for majority rule. But he also understood that in order for us to come together, that we had to move—each of us—in a more centrist direction. Without his input, his efforts, and his willingness, in my view, it is very likely we would not have agreed.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Maryland and I engage in a colloquy.

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

Mr. MCCAIN. I think the Senator from Maryland and I would agree that even though this is not a headline-grabbing issue and a lot of people in America have no real idea what was at stake, that if we hadn't reached this agreement amongst us, it could have had repercussions for a very long period of time in the Senate; would the Senator agree to that?

Mr. CARDIN. I certainly agree with my friend from Arizona. They may not have understood what caused the problems, but when they see the type of

gridlock where the Senate can't take up amendments for 1 week or can't take up a bill for 2 weeks or debating how to proceed on a motion to proceed, not only on substance, they wonder what is going on here. So the Senator is absolutely right.

Also, we are going to be in a much better start to this Senate with Democrats and Republicans agreeing on the rules collectively. That is certainly a better place for us to start to work with this Congress, and it gives us the opportunity to work together with more confidence, beyond just rules but also dealing with the difficult issues this country faces.

Mr. MCCAIN. Wouldn't the Senator from Maryland agree that the whole purpose of this is not to block? In fact, with our numerous meetings with the Parliamentarians, I think we reached a greater and fuller understanding that if someone really, really wants to block progress in the Senate, given the incredible—if the word isn't "arcane," it is certainly "detailed"—rules of the Senate, they can.

But the real purpose of this and the outcome that the Senator from Maryland and I and Senator Kyl, Senator BARRASSO, Senator LEVIN, Senator SCHUMER, Senator PRYOR—and I note the presence of the Senator from Michigan on the floor; I think he would agree that this fix, this compromise we have all now agreed to—and hopefully we will agree to and pass shortly—is also intended to change an attitude in the Senate.

Instead of blocking everything moving forward and blocking amendments, perhaps we could create a new environment in the Senate where we will let the minority have their amendments, but also the minority party will let the process move forward. I think that is the tradeoff that was the fundamental aspect of the negotiations we continued in the office of the Senator from Michigan for many days and many hours.

I think the Senator from Michigan and the Senator from Maryland would agree; if someone wants to block the Senate from moving forward, they can at least do it for some short period of time. What has happened, looking back 10, 15 years ago, the tree wasn't filled. But at the same time, on the other side, amendments were not produced by the hundreds. I believe the object and I believe the outcome of this hard-earned compromise will be that there will be a greater degree of comity in the Senate which would allow us to achieve the legislative goals that all of us seek.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Michigan join the Senator from Maryland and me in this colloquy.

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

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, first, let me thank my dear friend from Arizona for helping to lead this bipartisan effort, where eight of us spent weeks to

try to come up with a bipartisan proposal to our leaders. Senator CARDIN was one of the eight, and I am grateful to him and to all the eight Members, including one who has now left, Senator Kyl.

Its purpose was twofold. The first purpose was to address the specific hurdles that have created gridlock, the specific mechanisms which have been overused in this Senate that have led to gridlock. There are a number of things that have led to gridlock, but the most significant problem we have faced is the excessive use of the threat of the filibuster on the motion to proceed to a bill.

The reason it was used—according to many Members of the minority—was because of a fear that the tree would be filled by the majority leader and then there would be no opportunity to offer amendments. So what the eight of us strived to do was to find a balance where we could protect the minority's rights to offer some amendments at the same time that we finally got rid of a roadblock which was being abused, which was a threat to filibuster a motion to proceed. So we devised this approach which is now part of the leadership proposal to do exactly that.

The other purpose is the one which my friend from Arizona has just identified; that if we could come together, the eight of us, four Democrats and four Republicans—Senator SCHUMER is now on the floor and he was one of the eight. If we could come together and come up with a bipartisan proposal on this issue, we could hopefully begin to change the dynamic that has so divided this Senate. That is, hopefully, a very important and, I hope, successful outcome of those discussions and of the leadership then coming together, because those two leaders have to come together if this Senate is to come together and be able to move legislation in the ordinary course.

I agree with Senator MCCAIN's assessment as to the second goal we had, which was to show that on the thorniest procedural issue we face, that four Democrats and four Republicans, meeting in a very thorough and personal way, without a lot of staff around, could find a way through this procedural thicket and then make recommendations to the majority and to the Republican leader. I do agree with the Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. I think my friend from Maryland would also agree that we have found, for example, on the Defense authorization bill, that once we get onto a bill and once we have some amendments—in the case of our agreement it was four—that now the Members are sort of invested in moving the process forward. The logjam has always appeared before the bill is ever taken up for debate and amendments. By expediting that process, without depriving Members of their rights but expediting that process, hopefully, we will get onto the bill and some amendments that are already—four in one option—

are already agreed to, and then we can move forward.

I would like to point out one other thing, and I think my two colleagues would agree; that is, we are fairly well paid around here, and maybe sometimes we should work a 5-day workweek; and maybe, if absolutely necessary, God forbid, a 6-day workweek. We should be taking up legislation and completing that legislation before the end of the week or, depending on how massive the legislation is, at least 2 weeks. But there should be dates certain. It is funny how this body operates when there are deadlines as opposed to just extended periods of debate and amending.

Mr. CARDIN. Could I inquire because I want to use the two Senators as the example. They did that on the Defense Authorization Act. They were able to get the bill to the floor. They started on the bill, had a little rough start, but started on the bill and then set up a series of votes. We were able to vote on I don't know how many amendments. But it is interesting, if my memory is correct, there was no requirement for a 60-vote threshold on any of those amendments. You voted them all on majority so there was no need for a cloture vote because we started on it and people believed the process was fair. They had the opportunity, they had a chance to debate. So we had full and open debate on many issues.

National defense authorization opens a whole host of issues which are very controversial: What do we do with detainees? What do we do with our civil liberty rights? What do we do with our troop levels? There were a lot of issues that could have divided us, and we had the type of debate that I think was in the best interests of the Senate and we completed that bill in a timely way.

I think the way the two Senators were able to come forward—there are a lot of other committees. I serve on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We talked today, yesterday, during—Senator MCCAIN is also on that committee. We talked—Secretary Clinton—wouldn't it be nice to get a State Department authorization bill on the floor of the Senate?

Mr. MCCAIN. It is a disgrace that we have not—in how many years?

Mr. CARDIN. A long time. Certainly, I have not been in the Senate since that happened. But I do think now we have a better opportunity. If our committee could mark up a Defense authorization bill—and maybe it would take a week or two. Maybe we would have to work Friday or Saturday to get it done, but we should do that. But we now have the opportunity for the leader to bring that to the Senate floor immediately and allow the amendment process to start. Once it starts, normally we can get the type of consideration by all of us as to a reasonable number of amendments, and we can get the bill, hopefully, through the Senate. That is what I think is the real plus of the type of reforms we are talking

about that allow the right legislative process to work.

As I said, it doesn't cover everything I wanted to cover. I would have gone further. But I do think it does give us a chance, allows us to do our work in the way that we should.

Mr. MCCAIN. I, again, would like to express my appreciation to Senator SCHUMER and Senator CARDIN, Senator PRYOR and my Republican colleagues, Senator Kyl and Senator BARRASSO. But I would especially like to thank Senator LEVIN. We have known each other and worked together now for many years. We had very spirited and open and honest disagreements, but there is a level of trust and friendship that allows us, when committed to the same goal, to be able to—I believe, hopefully, in a very short period of time—achieve it.

Maybe I am being a little bit too optimistic. Hopefully, because of this, we can start moving legislation through the Senate. The record that we have achieved over the last 2 years is less than admirable. We know that filling the tree has dramatically increased, but we also know the objections to moving forward also have. I am not placing any responsibility on either side. I am placing the responsibility on both sides. Maybe we can start a new day, take up some legislation, pass it, and do the people's will. Maybe we would improve our favorability ratings to exceed that of—I saw a poll the other day; I don't know if my colleagues did. A colonoscopy is more favorable than Members of the Congress. I don't know if they saw that.

I hope we can at least raise it to some level above that. By getting things done around here I think that will probably enhance our chances of regaining some more favorability amongst the American people.

Again, I thank the Senator from Maryland and my friend from Michigan and, hopefully, in a couple of hours we will have achieved something that, in my view, could avert a fundamental change in the Senate which maybe could never have been repaired. I view it with the utmost seriousness. I have never been involved in an issue that impacted this body to the degree that the nuclear option would have caused. We would have regretted it for a long time. Hopefully, in a few hours we will have avoided it.

I just want to remind my friend from Maryland and the Senator from Michigan, this is going to be for 2 years. So we are in kind of an experimental phase. If we are unable to do the things that we aspire to, then I think you could see further Draconian measures considered by the majority. It is up to both sides to make this work.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, first of all, let me comment on what Senator CARDIN said about one of the purposes of this effort, which is to get a bill to the floor so the managers can work on it.

As we have proven in the last couple of months on a number of bills, and the Senator has pointed this out, if we can get the bill to the floor for the managers to be able to work with our colleagues on amendments, we can legislate. The problem has been that we have not been able to get bills to the floor because of this blockage, the blockage caused by the overuse of the filibuster and, more accurately, the threat of a filibuster on the motion to proceed, which, in turn—and my Republican friends believe this very keenly—was caused by the use of filling the tree, which meant that they would not have the opportunity to offer amendments. So they would then use that threat of a filibuster in order to try to gain assurance that they would be able to offer some amendments.

That is the heart of the compromise we proposed. There are a lot of other aspects to it, including trying to get rid of these filibusters on going to conference; including these filibusters that tied up nominations with postcloture 30-hours, nominations that were going to pass with votes of 90 to 0.

There are a lot of other parts to the recommendations and what the leaders are recommending to us, but the key thing—and Senator REID said it to us repeatedly—the key thing that this compromise addresses, and it is a bipartisan approach, is trying to overcome that barrier to getting legislation to the floor. We know—the Senator from Maryland has pointed out and Senator MCCAIN knows it because we have lived it—if you can get a bill to the floor with managers, they can work out amendments, sometimes by the hundreds.

I think Senator MCCAIN and I probably had over 100 amendments filed to our bill.

Mr. MCCAIN. I think it was about 383.

Mr. LEVIN. OK. I am glad I exaggerated in the downward direction. In any event, we were able not to work through all of them but to deal with that challenge, to probably deal with about 100 of them, as I remember. We did it in about 3 days.

That doesn't mean we are magicians. It means we are capable, all of us are capable, if we can get the bill to the floor. Particularly when the bill has come out of committee with broad bipartisan support, we can get bills passed here. So the heart of what we have proposed to the leadership, this group of 8, and what they have adopted and incorporated in their bipartisan approach to the Senate and to the country, is exactly what Senator CARDIN has talked about: getting bills to the floor. We can then watch the momentum work.

I want to add one other thing. Senator MCCAIN just made reference to it. That has to do with the so-called nuclear option, or the constitutional option, depending on what your view of it is. I have always believed the threat of that option was troublesome. I was

troubled by it because it is inconsistent with the rules of the Senate which require a two-thirds vote for amendments to the rules and because we are a continuing body, not just by our rules but by even a Supreme Court opinion which so ruled.

I believe if the constitutional or the nuclear option were utilized here, if we ended up with the utilization of that option, that what we now have, which is gridlock, would have resulted instead in a meltdown. I want to remind my Democratic friends and folks around the country that not too many years ago when the Republicans threatened to use a constitutional option, the reaction on this side of the aisle was intense. The words of Senator Kennedy, Senator BIDEN, Senator Byrd resonated through this Chamber in strong opposition to the use of a nuclear option.

I have just a few examples of what our reaction was on this side of the aisle when there was a threat to use the nuclear option when it was threatened relative to judges. What I am not going to do tonight is go through the history of the constitutional or the nuclear option, what happened over the century when it has been threatened, how it has not been adopted by the Senate. It is a long, detailed history.

I know some of my colleagues have argued that the constitutional option is based on the Constitution. It is very much the opposite in terms of the history of this Chamber and the rejection of any idea that the Constitution somehow requires that at the beginning of a session of a Senate that rules can be amended by majority vote. It is a long history.

I want to just quote, if I can find these quotes, what the reaction was on this side of the aisle when there was a threat on the Republican side of the aisle to use this approach of getting a ruling from the Chair, somehow, that the rules, although they say they can only be amended by two-thirds, can in fact be amended by a majority.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, while I am looking for these quotes, let me ask unanimous consent the period for morning business be extended until 7 p.m. today and that all provisions of the previous order remain in effect.

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

I wish to quote Senator Byrd as to what he said when the actual issue was before the Senate. He said:

Now, if we go down this road—

That is the road which says rules can be adopted by a majority vote, even though the rules say it takes 67 votes.

He said:

Now, if we go down this road, I can guarantee that every Senator in this body will rue this day . . . Senators, do we want to do it this way? If this is done today, it can be done any day. If it can be done on the con-

stitutional question, it can be done on any other constitutional question. It can be done on any other point of order which the Chair wishes for the Senate for decision . . . I believe that there is a danger here that, if Senators will reflect upon it for but a little while, they could foresee a time when they say that we went the wrong way to achieve an otherwise notable purpose . . . Put this power in the hands of a tyrannical leadership, and a tyrannical majority of 51 Senators, and we are going to be sorry on both sides of the aisle.

This is what Senator Inouye said in his maiden speech in this Chamber. They were discussing civil rights legislation. The question was whether there would be a ruling of the Chair which would allow the rules to be changed by the majority vote. This is a Senator who had been discriminated against in probably one of the most dramatic and massive ways that anyone could be discriminated against, being denied freedom because of his Japanese-American ancestry while he was fighting to defend this country.

What he said in his maiden speech was the Senate needs to preserve its protections for minority views, even though those protections allowed a misguided minority to obstruct our Nation's progress.

He supported the civil rights legislation, but he would not allow it to be addressed in violation of the rights of the minority of this body. This is what Danny Inouye said in his maiden speech:

The philosophy of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights is not simply to grant the majority the power to rule, but it is also to set out limitation after limitation upon that power. Freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion: What are these but the recognition that at times when the majority of men would willingly destroy him, a dissenting man may have no friend but the law? This power given to the minority is the most sophisticated and the most vital power bestowed by our Constitution.

He was not willing to end a grave injustice, which is what civil rights legislation would have achieved, by a method that he felt ran roughshod over the rights of the minority. He warned us against the attempts, in his words, "to destroy the power of the minority . . . in the name of another minority."

Mike Mansfield, leader of the Senate, supported a modification in the rule to reduce the number of Senators needed to end debate from 67 to 60. Although he supported the change in the rules, he opposed the use of the nuclear option, or the constitutional option, to achieve it.

This is what Mike Mansfield said in arguing for the reform:

[The] urgency or even wisdom of adopting the three-fifths resolution does not justify a path of destruction to the Senate as an institution and its vital importance to our scheme of government. And this, in my opinion, is what the present motion to invoke cloture by simple majority would do.

He added:

I simply feel the protection of the minority transcends any rule change however desirable. . . . The issue of limiting debate in this body is one of such monumental importance