

[Rollcall Vote No. 54 Ex.]

## YEAS—95

Alexander	Gardner	Perdue
Baldwin	Gillibrand	Peters
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Bennet	Grassley	Reed
Blackburn	Harris	Risch
Blumenthal	Hassan	Roberts
Blunt	Hawley	Romney
Boozman	Heinrich	Rosen
Braun	Hirono	Rounds
Brown	Hoeben	Rubio
Burr	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cantwell	Inhofe	Schatz
Capito	Isakson	Schumer
Cardin	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Carper	Jones	Scott (SC)
Casey	Kaine	Shaheen
Cassidy	Kennedy	Shelby
Collins	King	Sinema
Coons	Klobuchar	Smith
Cornyn	Lankford	Tester
Cortez Masto	Leahy	Thune
Cotton	Lee	Tillis
Cramer	Manchin	Toomey
Crapo	Markey	Udall
Cruz	McConnell	Van Hollen
Daines	McSally	Warner
Duckworth	Menendez	Warren
Durbin	Merkley	Whitehouse
Enzi	Murkowski	Wicker
Ernst	Murphy	Wyden
Feinstein	Murray	Young
Fischer	Paul	

## NAYS—1

Sanders

## NOT VOTING—4

Booker	Stabenow
Moran	Sullivan

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

## SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2019

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

## FREE TRADE RESOLUTION

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, for the last 3 years, the world has watched with rapt attention as the United Kingdom has debated and negotiated that country's exit from the European Union after the historic Brexit vote in June of 2016.

There have been multiple deals proposed since then, and now the deadline for withdrawal fast approaches this Friday. As the special ally of Britain for a very long time—a very close ally for well over 100 years—this is and it ought properly be of great interest to us in the United States of America.

Throughout times of change and tumult, the UK has been one of our staunchest and most loyal allies. We stood beside each other through two world wars and throughout the Cold War. Now, in the 21st century, the United States and the United Kingdom have become even stronger friends and partners, both in the fight against global terrorism and for freedom, peace, and prosperity.

The United Kingdom, significantly, is the seventh largest trading partner the United States has. In 2017 alone, we are talking about \$232 billion in goods that were traded between our two countries. Now, Britain's impending exit from the European Union presents an enormous opportunity to strengthen and to preserve our special relationship.

As the Brexit deadline approaches, the United States should stand ready and willing to negotiate a free trade agreement with the United Kingdom, which is the purpose of the resolution that I want to bring before this body today. Prior to this, we haven't been able to have true free trade with Britain, precisely because the UK was a member of the EU and, therefore, had to play by its rules.

Yet once the UK leaves, it will reclaim the authority to make its own trade agreements, opening up a window of opportunity for genuine, bilateral free trade with our own country. Such an agreement would advance prosperity on both sides of the Atlantic as an engine of economic liberty.

This resolution—the one I would like to bring up and plan to bring up either later today or Monday, based on the schedule I am trying to negotiate with Senator WYDEN—is a good deal. It is a good deal for the United States and for the United Kingdom. I think it is such a no-brainer, in fact, that most Americans would probably be surprised to find out that we don't already have a free trade agreement with our friends on the other side of the pond.

Yet there are some objections to this resolution. Some of my colleagues have argued that by encouraging a free trade agreement with Britain, we would somehow be meddling in this affair or picking sides, or that we would somehow be affirming Brexit. Yet this resolution that I want to offer and am suggesting that we call up and pass by unanimous consent, itself, says nothing about whether or not Brexit should or should not happen—not at all. That is not a decision that belongs to this body, and it is not a decision that I am even suggesting that this body make. It is not ours to make. It is a decision for the British people to make—the people of the United Kingdom—and they, of course, have made it. They have decided to stand on their own. We should stand with them just as they have stood beside us in conflict after conflict, in cause after cause, defending the dignity of the immortal human soul and the cause of freedom throughout the world.

Others have claimed that the point of this measure is somehow to lambaste the EU, but this, too, badly misses the point, which is simply to preserve a unique and important alliance and to promote America's interests in the world.

Finally, some have suggested that this resolution that I want to propose and call up and pass before this body did not go through the Finance Committee. First of all, this is not a com-

plicated resolution. It is simple. It is a straightforward, 2-page resolution declaring the sense of the Senate that No. 1, the United States has and should have a close, mutually beneficial trading and economic partnership with the United Kingdom without interruption and, No. 2, that the President, with the support of Congress, should lay the groundwork for a future trade agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom.

Also, the vast majority of resolutions that simply specify a general sense of the Senate do not normally go through the full-blown legislative committee process. A straightforward assertion of friendship, support, and economic partnership with one of our oldest and closest allies in the world should not be controversial—not in the least. America's special relationship with the United Kingdom is special because we make it so—our two peoples, our two governments.

It is not our job to decide whether or not the UK stays in the EU. It is up to the British people to decide whether to stick with the EU or not. It is up to us to decide whether we stick with the British, and we should. We should do that by supporting this resolution today.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

## WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, I want to be able to talk about a couple of subjects today, but I want to be able to set the context on these with the recognition of Women's History Month. A lot of fairly remarkable ladies in Oklahoma have set American history and world history into a different pace based on what they have done in the past.

I can't help, when I am talking about Women's History Month, to be able to talk about my own mom, who is a pacesetter in her own leadership. She was a student, librarian, and mom. She went through elementary school librarian and high school librarian and then became the director of libraries for a very large school district.

She led the way for our family and community. She even led the American Association of School Librarians around the country. She was a pacesetter there.

There are other pacesetters that I would highlight who are Oklahoma pacesetters. The first is Claire Luper. Born in Okfuskee County, OK, in 1923, Claire Luper was the first African-American student to enroll in the History Department at the University of Oklahoma. She was a civil rights leader. She led Americans at lunch counters in 1958 as she was seated there and helped to train youth to be seated at lunch counters to break through the racism that was existing in Oklahoma City and in Oklahoma.

Claire Luper herself was arrested 26 times for just eating lunch—for just

leading for the rights of what every single human being should be allowed to do in our great country.

After 26 arrests and the breakthrough leadership that she experienced, she now has been recognized with over 500 different awards and honors in her lifetime. She taught in the Oklahoma City area for 41 years, was a senior adviser for the NAACP Youth Council in Oklahoma City, and is now a member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Another great leader from Oklahoma is Shannon Lucid. She was raised in Bethany, OK. In 1979 she became an astronaut in a time period when ladies did not become astronauts. She set the pace. She was the chief scientist at NASA from 2002 to 2003. She served as the capsule communicator for numerous space missions. She was the first woman to receive the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.

Jeanne Kirkpatrick is another Oklahoman. Born in 1926, she was the first woman appointed to serve as a Permanent Representative to the United States for the United Nations. She served from 1981 to 1985. She served on President Ronald Reagan's Cabinet, was a political science professor at Georgetown University, and was a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. She made Oklahoma proud.

Let me tell you about a current one now. LaRita Aragon. LaRita Aragon was born in Shawnee, OK, but she was raised in the big town of Dale, just outside of Shawnee. She became the first woman to hold the rank of brigadier general in the Oklahoma Air National Guard and the first female commander of the Air National Guard.

Before her military career, she was an elementary school teacher and a principal. After retirement from the military, she returned to education. She served as the director of advanced programs in the University of Oklahoma College of Continuing Education. Then, in January 2011, she started serving as secretary of veterans affairs for the State of Oklahoma. She is a remarkable military leader from our State and a tremendous role model for people in our State—boys and girls.

Maria Tallchief was born in 1925 in Fairfax, OK. She was a member of the Osage Nation. At age 17, she did a crazy thing. She moved to New York City to pursue her dream of becoming a dancer. As her career began to take off, people tried to persuade Maria Tallchief to change her last name so that she wouldn't face the prejudice of being Native American. She refused to do that. She continued to work and to prove herself. In 1947 she became the first American to dance with the Paris Opera Ballet. She led the way, and she set the pace.

Oklahomans are proud of these ladies and many, many others who have done great work and made remarkable advances. We are proud of them.

#### LONG-TERM BUDGET PLANNING

Mr. President, from recognizing Women's History Month, let me make

a comment on something currently happening in the Senate. Right now in the Senate, the Senate Budget Committee is continuing to work on a budget.

The President turns in a budget. As many people know, since 1974, the President's budget has been just a document of ideas. The Senate and the House agree together on a budget, set a number, and then do appropriations bills. That is how we actually do the spending for the Federal taxpayers' dollars. Since 1974, it has typically begun with a budget document from the Senate and from the House.

They are working on that budget document right now in the Budget Committee, but here is the difficult thing. In all likelihood, that budget document that will come out of committee will never come to this floor and will never be voted on because of the difficulty we face right now in our deficit and the challenges the budget will have in order for it to move through the process. In all likelihood, this body will deem a budget number, where there will be no real plan. It will just set a budget number and then move on and start heading toward appropriations.

Layer upon layer of debt and deficit will be added to where we are as a nation. Our simple challenge is, how do we get around this?

Last year, 16 Members met—eight Senators, eight House Members; eight Republicans, eight Democrats—to try to strategize how we could change the budget process. Though I commend Chairman ENZI of the Budget Committee and his remarkable work, thought, and incredible staff, once again that document will not make a difference on this floor, and once again it will not set us on a long-term path to getting back to solvency. We have to change the process of what we do.

These 16 Members met all last year to establish a set of ideas of how we could change the process, but it failed in December. I am challenging this body to step up to it again and to re-engage on some simple sets of ideas of how we can get our budget back in balance and how we can do better planning. Though we do budgets and though we will do the deeming of a budget number, there is no real plan for how things can get better. We have to get better at planning, so let me give you some simple ideas that were birthed out of the conversation last year.

We hold debt ceiling votes, which are supposedly to limit our debt, but they never do. They did decades ago, but they have not for decades. We will have 12 appropriations bills in some form and in some way so as to actually do the spending in the next several months, but there will be no bill to deal with how we can reduce spending.

A simple idea that came out of that conversation last year was this: How do we add a 13th bill?

As simple as I can say it, we have 12 spending bills. In every single Con-

gress, the 13th bill would be set aside for how we will reduce our deficit. We have a structure with which to do that. It is the reconciliation process. It will certainly take work to reform this. We have a process in place right now that we could use but that we don't. What if we mandate it each year? We would have our 12 spending bills in whatever form they would take, but in every single session of Congress, we would have to have some conversation about what we would do to reduce spending or to fix our deficit. It is not an unreasonable proposal. It is an opportunity for us to sit and plan, to actually think about things, and to work things out.

Senator MAGGIE HASSAN and I also have another idea for working through the process. How do we end government shutdowns? How do we stop the perpetual cliffs of budgeting issues? There is a simple way to do that.

The simple way to do that, as odd as it may sound, is for Members of Congress and our staffs, as well as for members of the staff within the Office of Management and Budget from the White House, to not travel if you get to the end of a budget year and the budget is not done. You can't leave until the work is done, is as simple as I can say it. That may sound overly simplistic, but I guarantee you, if this body has to work through 2 weeks, no one would have the opportunity to travel. Everyone would have to be here days and weekends. There would be no official travel. There would be no opportunity to head back and see your family. There would be no codels or staffdels or any kind of other opportunity to leave. Each day, we would also have to have a quorum call and be here until the work gets done. Then we would solve this.

Last December, we had this protracted shutdown that began when Members of Congress left for Christmas. They just left with there being an unresolved budget issue here. If Senator HASSAN's and my idea were to pass, we would have finished that work last December, and Americans would never have experienced that protracted government shutdown.

We have differences of opinion. It is who we are as Americans, and that is what we represent in the U.S. Senate, but we should not punish Federal workers and the American people because we have not worked out our differences here. We should stay until the work is done, and we should keep negotiating until we are finished. That is a simple, straightforward way to resolve this.

With our adding a 13th bill to enable our having to plan for how we will actually deal with debt and deficit, there will be some moment created every year to compel us to actually be here until our work is done as well as having a more systematic structure of how we are going to do budgeting. All of these are simple ideas, but they are ideas that will help us get on top of a \$22 trillion debt and an approaching \$1

trillion yearly deficit. It is as if we have lost the importance of this, and we cannot.

My challenge to this body is to make the budget mean something again. Let's actually do long-term planning, and let's figure out how to make a process work for the taxpayers. We can figure this out, and we can work together to do it.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. H.R. 268, the supplemental appropriations bill.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk for H.R. 268.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on H.R. 268, making supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019, and for other purposes.

Mitch McConnell, Josh Hawley, John Thune, Shelley Moore Capito, Johnny Isakson, Mike Crapo, Richard Burr, James Lankford, Tom Cotton, Roy Blunt, David Perdue, Mike Rounds, Bill Cassidy, John Cornyn, Rob Portman, Steve Daines, John Kennedy.

S. RES. 50

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I come to the floor to discuss the unprecedented obstruction that has faced President Trump's nominees for the past 26 months—and counting—and to announce that the Senate is going to do something about it.

The systematic, across-the-board delay and obstruction that have crippled this administration's nominations are unique in American history.

Every Presidential election since Adams beat Jefferson in 1796 has left some Senators disappointed that their side lost. There is always a losing side, and they are never happy about it. But the past 2 years have been the first time—the first time ever—that the unhappy party has used Senate procedure to systematically blockade the new President's nominees and prevent him from even staffing up his administration. Let me say that again. Since January 2017, for the first time in the 230-year history of the U.S. Senate, a minority of Senators have used Senate procedure to systematically prevent

the President of the United States from putting a full team in place.

During the first 2 years of the last six Presidential administrations before President Trump, 24 total cloture votes had to be held to advance a nomination, but in President Trump's first 2 years, there were 128 cloture votes on nominees.

For 42 different executive branch positions, cloture votes have been required for the first time in history—the first time ever. Uncontroversial Assistant Secretaries and Agencies' general counsels never required cloture votes before—ever—until this particular Democratic minority.

Just compare President Trump's first 2 years to President Obama's. Overall, we have confirmed 22 percent fewer nominations for President Trump and sent more than twice as many back to the White House.

Take just the Foreign Relations Committee as one example. The share of nominees sent to the Foreign Relations Committee who were still not confirmed after President Trump's first 2 years was more than three times—three times—what it was for President Obama.

To be clear, the lion's share of all of these are not controversial, high-profile figures. In most cases, they are unambiguously well-qualified nominees for critical but lower profile jobs.

For example, it took more than 6 months—6 months—and several tragic railroad accidents that made national news before a minority of Senators would allow us to confirm the President's nominee to head the Federal Railroad Administration. That is 6 months and several railroad accidents to get us to confirm the President's nominee to head the Federal Railroad Administration.

He had worked in railroads as an engineer, manager, and executive for 45 years. Our colleagues on the Commerce Committee voice-voted him out of committee. Actually, when Democrats finally allowed his nomination to come to the floor—when they finally allowed that—he was confirmed by voice vote. Despite the fact that nobody actually objected to this nominee, this important job was held empty for 6 long months. It is obstruction for obstruction's sake.

It is the same story with even the least controversial judicial nominees. Last January, it took more than a week of floor time to confirm four district judges, all of whom had been voice-voted out of the Judiciary Committee the previous autumn, but there were still months of delays. Then cloture votes were required for each, but once we finally plowed through to the confirmation votes, they were all confirmed unanimously.

There were months of delays and procedural roadblocks for four bipartisan nominees whom not a single Senator actually opposed.

This is not a principled maneuver, not thoughtful use of minority powers,

but obstruction simply for the sake of obstruction.

This historic campaign isn't fair to our duly elected President, and, more importantly, it is not fair to the American people. The American people deserve the government they elected. They deserve important positions to be promptly filled with capable individuals, not held open indefinitely out of political spite.

As we all acknowledge, from an institutional perspective, this is completely unsustainable, but if we allow it to persist, it seems guaranteed to become standard operating procedure for every administration going forward.

Let's assume 2 years from now that my side is in the minority, and there is a Democratic President. If we allow this to persist, we will be doing the same thing to those guys that they have been doing to us. It will be the new norm.

Some of our colleagues who are leading the systematic obstruction are actually running for President themselves. Well, these tactics will virtually guarantee that any future Democratic administration is subjected to the same paralysis. Everybody will be doing it.

Is this how the American Government is supposed to work from here on out—whichever party loses the White House basically prohibits the new President from standing up an administration?

We can't accept this. This just can't be allowed to continue. We need to restore the Senate to the way it functioned for literally decades.

Remember, the idea that nominees would regularly require cloture votes was completely foreign to the Senate until this sad chapter began during the administration of President Bush 41, in the early 2000s.

As of 1968—1968—cloture had never been required for any nomination—any nomination. As of 1978, it had been required for two—two as of 1978.

Until 2003, in no conference—none—had more than 12 cloture motions ever been needed for nominations. But now, again, President Trump's chosen nominees faced 128 cloture votes in the Congress that just past. So this entire conversation is a modern aberration. This hasn't been going on forever. This is a fairly recent thing. This behavior is new. We need to restore the Senate's tradition in this area. Fortunately, we have a clear roadmap to do just that.

In 2013, immediately after President Obama's reelection, 78 Senators, including me, passed a bipartisan standing order to speed up the consideration of many Presidential nominees. Seventy-eight Members of this body passed a standing order to help President Obama speed up the Executive Calendar.

It reduced the postcloture time for most nominations without touching the Supreme Court, circuit courts, or the highest levels of the executive branch. Essentially everything else got

a more streamlined process so nominees could be confirmed more efficiently.

Again, President Obama had just been inaugurated for the second time days earlier. You better believe Republicans were disappointed we had lost, but we did not throw a systematic tantrum. Instead, a sizable number of us came over and joined the Democrats to help the Senate process noncontroversial nominations, as it had for the vast bulk of the history of the Senate. I was a Republican leader in the minority, and I still supported it. We judged if it was the right thing to do, and we did it. The standing order passed 78 to 16.

So, today, I am filing cloture on a resolution that takes that bipartisan effort as its blueprint. This resolution from Senator BLUNT and Senator LANKFORD would implement very similar steps and make them a permanent part of the Senate going forward.

The Supreme Court, circuit courts, Cabinet-level executive positions, and certain independent boards and commissions would not change, but for most other nominations—for literally the hundreds of lower level nominations that every new President makes—postcloture debate time would be reduced from 30 hours to 2 hours.

This would keep the floor moving. It would facilitate more efficient consent agreements, and, most importantly, it would allow the administration—finally, 2 years into its tenure—to staff numerous important positions that remain unfilled with nominees who have been languishing.

This resolution has come up through the regular order, through the Rules Committee, and next week we will vote on it. It deserves the same kind of bipartisan vote that Senator SCHUMER and Senator Reid's proposal received back during the Obama administration.

I understand that many of my Democratic colleagues have indicated they would be all for this reform as long as it doesn't go into effect until 2021, when they obviously hope someone else might be in the White House, but they are reluctant to support it now. Give me a break. That is unfair on its face.

My Democratic colleagues were more than happy to support a similar proposal back in 2013 under President Obama. They whisper in our ears privately that they would support it now if it took effect in 2021, oh, but they can't support it now, especially under these unprecedented circumstances, simply because we have a Republican President.

Fair is fair. Members of this body should only support reforms that they would be as ready to support in the minority as they are in the majority.

Put another way, if my side is in the minority 2 years from now, I don't think this will be unfair, and it will not disadvantage us in the wake of a new Democratic President. This is a change the institution needs—a change the institution made already, basically, with a 2-year experiment when

President Obama was in office. This is reform that every Member should embrace when their party controls the White House and when it does not control the White House.

I urge every one of my colleagues: Let's get the Senate back to a normal historical pattern for handling Presidential nominations. Let's give President Trump, as well as all future Presidents, a functional process for building their administrations. Let's give the American people the government they actually elected, and let's seize this chance to do so through the bipartisan regular order that we are pursuing here, both in committee and now on the floor.

The status quo is unsustainable for the Senate and for the country. It is unfair to this President and to future Presidents of either party. It cannot stand, and it will not stand.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, will the minority leader yield for a question?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I still have the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader has the floor.

Mr. MERKLEY. Will the majority leader yield for a question?

#### IMPROVING PROCEDURES FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF NOMINATIONS IN THE SENATE—Motion to Proceed

Mr. MCCONNELL. I move to proceed to Calendar No. 24, S. Res. 50.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to S. Res. 50, a resolution improving procedures for the consideration of nominations in the Senate.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 24, S. Res. 50, a resolution improving procedures for the consideration of nominations in the Senate.

Mitch McConnell, Roy Blunt, Mike Crapo, Richard C. Shelby, Johnny Isakson, Lamar Alexander, Pat Roberts, Ron Johnson, John Barrasso, Steve Daines, John Hoeven, John Thune, Mike Rounds, John Boozman, Shelley Moore Capito, Tom Cotton, David Perdue.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Sen-

ate proceed to executive session for the consideration of Calendar Nos. 130 through 156 and all nominations on the Secretary's desk; that the nominations be confirmed; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the Record; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MERKLEY. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. MERKLEY. The majority leader has said he is going to put a rule change on the floor, and we are going to return to historical norm. The historical norm has been that when such issues are on the floor, amendments will be allowed.

Does the majority leader intend to allow amendments?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand the Senator from Oregon is propounding a question. If he would repeat it, I would appreciate it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Referring to historical norms, it has been a historical norm to allow amendments on the floor of this Chamber so that they could be debated, and I recall very well listening to you complain a great deal about Harry Reid's blocking of amendments, blocking the tree, and he did, in fact, do that as the majority leader.

Then he would negotiate with that whole set of amendments on both sides. It took some time, but there were amendments.

We have had a historic lull in amendments, and now we are proposing a rule change on how this Chamber operates. So isn't it the right thing to do, before returning to historical norm or trying to restore that sense of making this a functioning Chamber—

Mr. MCCONNELL. Is the Senator asking me a question?

Mr. MERKLEY. Yes.—to allow amendments when this comes to the floor? I am asking if he would allow such amendments.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me say that we have had a number of bills that were brought to the floor open for amendment. One of the things we devolved into here, another unfortunate precedent, is Members objecting to time agreements on amendments from either side. So even if the majority leader calls up a bill and has it open for amendment, unless Members of the Senate in both parties will allow there to be time agreements so that we can actually have votes on amendments, it gets bogged down.

I think the complaint of my friend from Oregon is legitimate. I have been very frustrated by the fact that when I