job to ensure it is one step forward, not backward.

In less than a month, Tax Day will arrive, and in preparation, the American taxpayers will once again gather around their kitchen tables to take stock of their finances. One can almost hear the collective groan. Unfortunately, it is too late for Congress to make any changes to lighten the tax load this year. It is not too late to enact the tax relief that will fundamentally transform the next.

Mr. President, I did not come to the floor today to draw a line in the sand—at least not at this time. I must admit that I will be hard pressed to support any budget, any budget, that does not call for significant tax relief for the working families of Minnesota and each of the other 50 States. If we, as the majority, cannot deliver on this one, fundamental promise we made to the voters, we will have abandoned the taxpayers. And in doing so, we, the Republican majority, and this Congress as a whole, will have raised significant questions about our desire, and ability, to lead this Nation. It will be hard for us or this generation to explain to our children and to our grandchildren how we failed to provide them with a future as bright as the future that our parents and 200 years of generations left to us.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous-consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MEXICO CERTIFICATION ISSUE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I have a series of unanimous consent requests that may be necessary unless we get some agreement very quickly now from the minority leader.

I just came from a committee hearing, where I just finished testifying so I could come to the floor at 10:30 and call up the agreement entered into last night after monumental efforts by Senators on both sides of the aisle, working with the administration, with regard to the Mexico certification issue regarding drugs and how the drug war is being fought with the United States Government being involved and, of course, with the Mexican Government being involved, but in ways that are very troublesome.

I had hoped we could get started at 10:30, get a time agreement that was reasonable, maybe 4 hours equally divided, so we could have a full discussion about what is happening with regard to law enforcement efforts and dealing with drugs coming from Mexico into the United States, so we could talk about the President's difficult decision to go forward with certification, but also to make sure that the American people understand that the Congress is not satisfied with the status quo. More must be done.

We have a right—in fact, we have an obligation—to get more from our Government's efforts in fighting the drug war and dealing with the flood of drugs that are killing America's children. They are flooding into this country from Mexico. We have a right to expect hardened drug criminals to be extradited into this country. Some of them have, some of them have not. We have a right to expect that our law enforcement people dealing with the drug barons, the drug lords, are able to defend themselves. We have a right to expect some thresholds to be met with regard to what Mexico must do and, frankly, what we must do in our Government. This is a very important issue, one that we cannot leave today or tomorrow without taking action on.

I want to say how much I appreciate the great effort by the Senators here on the floor now—Senator HUTCHISON from Texas, Senator COVERDELL from Georgia, Senator FEINSTEIN from California, and other Senators that have worked to try to do the responsible thing. I want to point out that these Senators, along with others, for a total of 40, wrote a letter to the President of the United States saying, ''Mr. President, don't certify Mexico as doing what needs to be done in this drug battle that we are engaged in.'' The President did that.

Now, the House took an action that will allow them to put down some markers and, after 90 days, look and see if progress is being made and then, perhaps, act further. I believe that is the gist of their action. That resolution is pending here at the desk.

But, again, in a full, good-faith effort, the Senators have worked with the administration, which included a whole variety of people. I was stunned by all the people that got involved. The Secretary of State was involved; the head of our drug effort, General McCaffrey; the head of NSC, Sandy Berger; the Secretary of Treasury was there. It was a long list of people, and a lot of work was done. I think these Senators here gave a great deal. They wanted to say that these are some things that must be done and be certified by the President; when they are, we should have the right to have another vote on whether or not there should be decertification with waivers, or certification, or whatever. They agreed to not insist on that. But what they did do was reach an agreement that requires a report from the President, by September 1, on what is being done by our Government and by Mexico to do a better job.

Now, I finally decided last night that the administration really didn't want any action by the Senate. They want us to just leave and not do anything. We can't do that. The Senate should take action on something this important. So we will act on this. We will vote. We will do it today, or we will do it tonight or tomorrow; it's OK with me. We are going to vote on this issue before we leave here.

There is a process where the Democratic leader cannot stop that—it is a privileged resolution, with 10 hours of debate and then a vote. I don't want to do it that way. I want us to come to an agreement. The resolution that I thought we were going to call up at 10:30 requires specific reporting on steps taken by Mexico and the United States to combat illegal narcotics trafficking. It makes clear the Senate view that Mexico has not done enough—and they have not. We have seen that many times. We have seen it with the devastating story recently about the top drug enforcer in Mexico who, as a matter of fact, had to be removed from office because he was, in fact, being involved in what he is supposed to be trying to control. That is as gently as I can possibly put it. I fear there are going to be more devastating reports like that.

The revision allowing for a vote, as I indicated, was dropped last night, after direct involvement by the Secretary of State, head of the NSC, as well as Senators here, and Senator MCCAIN was involved in that. But it makes clear that the administration and the Government of Mexico should provide real demonstrable progress by September. If they don't, under this procedure, we would not have another vote, but we can have more votes. There will be authorization bills, and there will be appropriations bills, like the State, Justice, Commerce bill. If we don't get a response or action here, the Senate has a powerful weapon called the power of the purse. We can withhold funds. We can make our views known.

Based on that, the fact that we can act in other ways with other vehicles, I thought this was a good agreement. I thought that the Senators here on the floor bent over backward to reach an agreement. Now, we have—get this picture—the Secretary of State, who is now in Helsinki, and the head of NSC, now in Helsinki, both directly involved, saying, yes, we can go with this. General McCaffrey, head of the drug administration, who was there and said, yes, we can go with this. Democrat and Republican Senators said yes. The majority leader says this is not perfect, but this is a responsible thing to do. And then what happens? There is a Democratic Caucus this morning. They meet and decide that because they can't dictate the schedule on another issue, because they can't make the majority leader give them a date certain on another unrelated issue, they want the United States Senate not to act on the drug problem in Mexico.

Now, my friends, this is a big-time loser for those that are objecting to this procedure. It cannot stand. We have to find a way to move this forward.

So all these administration officials are for it, Senate Republicans and

Democrats are for it, and now they are saying, ''If you don't give us a guarantee on another issue, that we will do it by a date certain, we are not going to let you bring this up.'' Look, I know we like to play games just before we get to go home. But this is not the way to do serious business. We are not dealing with partisanship here. We are not dealing with some traditional authorization. We are dealing with drugs. How can we not express ourselves on this? We must, and we will.

I am going to ask unanimous consent, when the minority leader arrives, to bring up Calendar No. 29, House Joint Resolution 58, regarding the certification of the President with respect to Mexico, that there be 4 hours total for debate on that resolution, to be equally divided in the usual form, and that one amendment—and only one amendment—be in order to be offered by Senators COVERDELL, FEINSTEIN, HUTCHISON, and others.

I will ask that no other amendments or motions be in order, and following the conclusion or yielding back of the time, the Senate proceed to a vote.

We can take it up, and we can have a calm, cool, nonpartisan debate on a very, very important issue.

I have here the resolution that was the subject of the negotiations and the one that was agreed to last night at about 7:30 or 8 o'clock. I was around and in and out of those meetings. This was interesting, I thought, because I actually have the copy here, or a copy of what was agreed to. See that. These are circled paragraphs the administration had problems with, and the compromise language that was worked out. I don't like this compromise. But it was a responsible thing to do. The same thing on the next page. The work was so intense and so committed right up to the last minute. Here is a paragraph. It circles this, and it is out.

I am going to ask for that. I hope that Senators on both sides of the aisle will agree to that. If that effort fails—and I am going to make this request not later than 11 o'clock—I hope to hear from the minority leader quickly so we can get started.

If I don't get that consent, then I am going to ask unanimous consent that the Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 21 regarding the decertification—this is the decertification process, not certification; this is decertification—with additional waiver language, that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, and that there be a limited period of time—presumably maybe 4 hours—for debate. After that, of course, we go to a vote.

If that is objected to, then I am going to go to the privileged resolution, which is not amendable, provides for 10 hours of debate, and a vote. I do not want to do this. It provides for 10 hours of debate in the law. This is a privileged resolution that sets out very tightly how we would vote on this privileged resolution issue. This is dangerous. It is not good for the administration. I don't think it is good for the country because the vote that is taken would be on decertifying Mexico as being seriously involved in this drug-fighting effort with us.

It might pass. And if we are going to have games played here on other unrelated issues, it puts me under extraordinary pressure.

I have indicated that I do not want to vote for decertification. But I might.

Also, even if it does not pass, what if the vote is 60 to 40? What does it say about the administration's effort? What does it say about the President's effort? What does it say to Mexico that 40 United States Senators voted to decertify Mexico? Then that would have to go—unless the House just accepts that—to conference. And then here is what will be pending in conference: decertification, or 90 days of delay and a vote. Neither one of those should look very tempting to those that want to do the right thing.

So I do not want to go on at length. I want us to get started. We need to get started. But I hope we can get an agreement to move forward on the agreement that was entered into last night. It is the right thing to do. It is the right thing for the Senate. It is the right thing for the administration. And, on a close call, I guess it is the right thing in our efforts to control drugs coming out of Mexico.

But, Mr. President, I am in good spirits today. I understand we have to do this positioning around here. I understand you have to try to drag the majority leader into doing something he might not want to do, or cannot do. But I think this is the wrong place and the wrong time to be playing this game.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I want to, first of all, thank the distinguished majority leader because last night he played a very key role in assisting us in making what I thought was an extremely difficult agreement.

I also want to thank the Democrat leader, Senator DASCHLE, who also was in agreement that he would move forward on this issue, get it resolved, and have it done. I was prepared to come over here shortly before the vote in praise of really what was an outstanding bipartisan effort. The administration, the Democrats, and the Republicans worked together to come up with something which required significant compromise on the part of all sides in order to come up with an agreement that we could move forward and get this issue behind us, which we know has extraordinary dimensions associated with it, given the emotion associated with the issue of drugs and the explosiveness of our relations with Mexico.

Now, I understand that one of the Members of this body wants to tie this hard-fought agreement, of which he was not a party, to the Chemical Weapons Convention. I hope that the individual who wants to block moving forward with this resolution understands that we are working on a Chemical Weapons Convention and an agreement to move forward on it. There are active discussions and negotiations that are going on. But to tie that to this, in my view—and I say this with careful consideration—is totally irresponsible.

The Senator from California, the Senator from Georgia, the Senator from Texas, the Senator from Connecticut, Senator DODD, and the Senator from Massachusetts, Senator KERRY, the President's National Security Adviser, the Secretary of State all joined together. I again applaud the Senator from California who had a very tough position on this, and a very principled one, I might say. And now we are being hung up on a Thursday before going into a recess, which a lot of us would like to go on, because one Member of this body who was not a part of the negotiations, nor, by the way, is a part of the Chemical Weapons Convention negotiations, of which I am a part, is going against the direct agreement of the majority leader, the Democratic leader, and all of us.

Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to get this thing done. And I hope that the majority leader will move this unanimous-consent agreement, and let whoever objects come to the floor and move forward in a parliamentary fashion with a live quorum call.

This is an important issue that we have to get done with today. The majority leader has described this scenario of what happens if we went to conference, and what happens if we go ahead on a direct vote for decertification. This flies directly in the face of a completely bipartisan agreement.

Mr. President, there is a lot of conversation about the rancor and partisanship. We just went through a very bitter situation on the point of the CIA Director. We proved that we can work together for the good of the country, and now it is about to be derailed. I strongly object to it.

I yield to the Senator from Texas for a question.

I apologize for taking time from the Senator from California. Again, I have the utmost praise for her, not only on agreement on the compromise last night, but for her constant attention and concern over this vitally important issue.

I don't know of anything right now that is more important than our relations with Mexico and the war on drugs, which is destroying young Americans as we speak.

I yield to her for a question.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, the Senator from Arizona just touched on an important point, and that is, all of us are trying to avoid a vote directly on decertification. No one wants that

to happen. But, in fact, if the Senator from Arizona is correct—what all of us worked so hard to put together was a positive, productive statement that we could work from to make progress in the war on drugs between our countries—if what he is saying is true, then we are all going to be forced to make the worst of all votes because we just can't get our bill on the floor for debate.

Is that correct?

Mr. MCCAIN. That is correct.

I appreciate the efforts of the Senator from Texas. All of us understand the importance of the war on drugs. Those of us from border States perhaps—I emphasize perhaps—appreciate it a little bit more because of the direct involvement that we have.

I am not going to speak on this again in the Chamber and take time. I think we are going to work this out. We have to. I want to especially express my appreciation to the Senator from California, the Senator from Texas, the Senator from Georgia, Mr. COVERDELL, and the Senator from Connecticut, Mr. DODD, Senator KERRY of Massachusetts, and others, and members of the administration who sat down with us and negotiated, I think, an important and positive agreement and a way around this issue.

Mr. President, I appreciate the courtesy of the Senator from California, and I yield the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I really rise to lament the situation we are in. I believe the people of this Nation sent us to the Senate to work across the aisle, to work in a bipartisan way and particularly on issues of major concern. Whether Mexico is certified or not is an issue of major concern. It is of major concern certainly to Mexico; it is to America; it is to the cities of America; it is to every Representative in the House and to every Member of this body as well.

I wish to pay tribute to the senior Senator from Georgia, with whom I have worked, with the junior Senator from Texas, with whom I have worked, Senator KERRY of Massachusetts, to the administration team, and to many others. I believe we have demonstrated we can, in fact, work across party lines.

We have developed a resolution which I think is a major achievement; it is law—it is not a sense-of-the-Senate resolution; it is a law—in which we state our concerns; we make findings; we ask the administration to move forward; we ask the President to move forward in his trips to Mexico and other Latin American nations to work in a multilateral way to bring back a new agreement; we indicate 10 areas where we would like to see progress; and we ask the administration to report to this Congress on September 1 on the progress made.

We did not start here. Senator D'AMATO and I began this a year ago. Not many people listened. We said we do not really believe that Mexico has fulfilled the test of a friend and neighbor and an ally who has been fully cooperative as the law calls for to be certified. At that point he and I put forward certain tests that we felt had to be met prior to certification.

A year went by, and we saw very little progress, if any. And then the President made the decision to certify Mexico. In his mind, he had many good reasons to do so. It was a decision that was spiritedly debated within the White House. It was debated within the Department of State. And that was the ultimate decision of the President.

There were those of us in this body, myself included, who had a profound difference of opinion with this decision. We thought that the Colombian model was the appropriate model and that Mexico should be decertified but with a national interest waiver as was the procedure with Colombia 2 years ago because we felt certification was not the appropriate vehicle. But it is the vehicle that we have, and therefore Mexico should be treated in the same way Colombia was if the findings were as we believe them to be.

We have had meeting after meeting after meeting. The senior Senator from Georgia and I find ourselves in real agreement. The Senator from Texas and the two of us have worked together. Democrats came in; Republicans came in; the administration came in; and we forged an agreement which I believe, based on a conversation at least on my side with the Democratic leader of the House of Representatives last night, can be acceptable to the House and can be a clear statement which gives the President certain—not directives—but I think certain clear requests from this body to follow on his trip to Mexico which is upcoming and from which I believe our Nation, our big cities, our streets can derive significant benefit.

I am profoundly disappointed to find ourselves in this situation and really urge colleagues on my side who are rightly concerned with the Chemical Weapons Convention treaty, rightly concerned, to please let this resolution go, let us have the debate, because absent that debate and given no opportunity in law to express ourselves, you leave us with no choice but to move for decertification because that is the only direct resolution that can come to the floor on an expedited procedure, as the majority leader has just said.

I cannot tell you how strongly I feel about the cooperation I and others have had from the Republican side of the aisle. I have had an opportunity to work very closely with the senior Senator from Georgia, with his excellent staff, certainly with my excellent staff, with the Senator from Texas, Senators MCCAIN, KERRY, DODD, DOMENICI, all of whom came at a very critical time last night into these discussions and played a very helpful role. The administration has agreed in the areas of consensus. I think some things they did not want to be forced to put forward in law they have agreed to. We have agreed to take out something that the administration did not want, which was a September 1 expedited procedure giving us the opportunity to comment again in law on progress made between March 1 and September 1. We removed that. We have consensus. The administration has said the President would sign this; we believe the House will pass it; and we have a strong policy document with which to move forward.

It would just be tragic if we fragment, if we have to use the only thing we have, which is a decertification, a straight and outright decertification, as the means to express ourselves. So I am very hopeful we would have an opportunity today, now, to bring this resolution to the floor. If we cannot achieve unanimous consent, as the majority leader has just said, it leaves him with no alternative but to call up the decertification resolution, and once that debate begins it would take unanimous consent to stop it, and unanimous consent to bring this resolution up during that 10-hour period, which I see really fraught with great difficulties.

Once again, I cannot tell you how many hours the Senator from Georgia, the Senator from Texas, I and a number of other people have been involved in this effort. We have consulted the Democratic leader as we moved along. I believe he is pleased with this outcome.

So I plead with colleagues on my side not to hold this resolution hostage to an agreement on the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is too important. Please, do not do it.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SNOWE). The Chair recognizes the distinguished minority leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, let me begin by associating myself with the remarks of the distinguished Senator from California. She speaks for many on our side as well, who want very much to bring this issue to closure today. It is because of her efforts and the efforts, as she has indicated, of the Senator from Texas and the Senator from Georgia and others who have dedicated an extraordinary amount of time in the last couple of weeks to working with the administration and others to bring us to a point where, on one of the most contentious issues we have had to confront in this Congress, we have actually come to a point where Republicans and Democrats can reach agreement. That does not happen very often in this Congress, and especially in this session of this Congress so far. I hope we can avail ourselves of the opportunity it presents and come to an agreement on procedure and allow this resolution to be taken up and voted upon sometime by early afternoon.

I did not hear a lot of what the majority leader has indicated is his position with regard to the chemical weapons treaty. He knows of the great concern on our side of the aisle about achieving a process that will allow us consideration of that treaty no later than the 19th of April so that, by the 29th of April, that treaty can be ratified and that we can be full-fledged members of the Chemical Weapons Convention. If we miss that small window, from April 7 to April 19, we will have lost the opportunity, that 125 other countries have already taken, that we have sought for decades to have an international agreement on chemical weapons. Our failure to become part of the convention will put us in the company of Iraq, Iran, Libya, and countries that in every way, shape, and form and by any definition are rogue states today. Do we want to be in that position?

I would think there would be an unequivocal, unanimous verdict that, no, we do not want to be in the company of Libya, Iraq, and Iran. But we are in a position which, in a very short period of time, will force us into that company if we do nothing. That is why my Democratic colleagues feel so strongly about this issue and believe that there are very few other issues out there more important, and if we do not turn up the pressure and find ways in which to assert our determination to get this convention considered, we will have lost an opportunity, not only for the Senate, for the country, but perhaps for the convention itself. This is why it is so critical.

Having said all of that, and I could say a lot more but in the interests of time, let me say I believe the majority leader is doing as much as he can at this point to bring us to a set of circumstances that will allow us consideration in due time. I believe there is a great deal of difference within the Republican caucus on this issue. I understand that. There are many issues that divide the Democratic caucus. So it is not out of the ordinary to be divided on an issue of this importance and controversy. But I do believe that the majority leader has given me adequate reason to be confident that we will take this treaty up in a time that will accommodate ratification on the Senate floor prior to the 19th of April.

So, given all of his cooperation and his willingness to work with us, I think the most important thing for us to do today is to pass this compromise to allow us to work with Mexico to deal with the drug issue in a meaningful way without slapping them in the face. So I hope, as the Senator from California has so articulately pointed out just a moment ago, that we recognize how important this opportunity is for all of us, that we seize the moment, that we get an agreement, and we move forward.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 58

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now turn to the consideration of Calendar No. 29, House Joint Resolution 58, regarding the certification of the President with respect to Mexico, that there be no time restraints for debate on the resolution and an amendment. Further, I ask unanimous consent that there be only one amendment in order to be offered by Senators COVERDELL and FEINSTEIN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BINGAMAN. Madam President, without objecting, I would like to ask a question of the majority leader before proceeding or determining whether to object.

As the majority leader and the Democratic leader both know, I have been very concerned that we get some agreements or understanding about how the Chemical Weapons Convention is to be handled in April. We have a deadline coming at us. I think the convention, as I understand it, goes into effect on the 29th of April. We have to, if the United States is to participate, if the judgment of the Senate is we should participate in that, we would have to make that judgment several days before that. At least that is what I have been informed.

I am just concerned that time is running out. We seem to be taking one legislative or executive matter up after another here without really having an understanding about how we are going to dispose of this Chemical Weapons Convention.

I wondered if the majority leader could assure me about how this is going to be brought to the Senate and dealt with in the coming month?

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, if the Senator from New Mexico will yield. First, I would like to just briefly clarify what we have in this consent request. It is to bring up this certification issue and to allow an amendment that would put in place the agreement that was entered into last night by a bipartisan group of Senators and the administration.

So this just basically sets up a process to begin the debate and get a vote on the agreement with regard to certification, with the understanding it does set out some markers as to what we think should be done, and it does require the President to report by September 1 as to the progress that is being made there. But it does not have a subsequent date where a vote could occur. This is going to be the vote on certification, or decertification, depending on your point of view. So I want to clarify what I was asking for there.

With regard to the inquiry of the Senator from New Mexico, first of all, let me assure him I understand there is concern about the April 29 date and the need for some action before that date by a number of Senators.

There is disagreement on how essential it is we act before the 29th. As a matter of fact, whenever the United States should ratify such a treaty, certainly we would be sort of the big kid on the block and we would be involved in the process. But there are arguments on the other side of it, and I certainly understand that.

I acknowledged to the Senator from Michigan, I believe it was yesterday or the day before, that I also understand that in order to get a treaty completed and the subsequent actions that go along with it, enacting or enabling legislation——

Mr. DASCHLE. Reform.

Mr. LOTT. Reform legislation—it takes some time after the actual vote.

So it is my intent for this issue to come up when we come back after the Easter recess.

There is a statute or bill that has been introduced that we hope to get up and get a vote on. Very serious. I think good efforts are underway to deal with the parallel issues of U.N. reform. The administration is working with a bipartisan group of House and Senate Members. I think everybody is beginning to understand, themselves, and we may be able to get some reforms and some process on how we deal with what is the number we may be indebted to the United Nations for and how that ever would be addressed.

We are also working with the chairman of the committee, Senator HELMS, and Senator BIDEN, the ranking member, on this reorganization of the State Department issue. The new Secretary of State has indicated some encouraging things there, and I believe there is going to be good faith by all to try to address this issue.

There are some legitimate concerns about the treaty—the verification question, search and seizure questions, how it affects different things in America. On some of those, the administration this year came back and said, ''You're right. We have some concerns about this issue.''

So a number of them have been worked out. An equal number are within the range of being worked out. Again, Senator BIDEN has been working with Senator HELMS to address some of those concerns.

There are some we just will not be able to get worked out. I mean, we will have to have votes on amendments on the floor or there will probably be a substitute. But my intention is to continue to work with all involved, including the chairman and ranking member, to get this issue to the floor in April. That is why I had our list of items. It is not my intent to stonewall or delay this.