

from Florida who intends to at least at this time challenge on the issue of germaneness the amendment that the Senator from North Dakota, the Senator from Oregon, I, the Senator from Wyoming, and others had agreed to, which has to do with the definition of what are discriminatory taxes.

This, obviously, germane point of order would carry, or there is a likelihood that it would. That would reduce the effectiveness or the impact of this bill to the point where it would be nearly meaningless.

The Senator from Florida has told me that he will work overnight with us and with others to try to craft some agreement or relook at the entire issue. I hope that he will do so.

After the vote at 11 tomorrow on VA-HUD, I will then propose amendment No. 3711. At that time, if the Senator from Florida still wishes to, obviously he can challenge the amendment on point of order concerning whether the amendment is germane or not.

Mr. President, I think everybody realizes how important this legislation is. I would very much hate to see it derailed at this point in time.

But the amendment, 3711, is vital to this legislation. Some may ask why we didn't propose it earlier. That is because it was part of a package of negotiation that we were in with the Senator from North Dakota, and others.

I respect the right of the Senator from Florida to object on germaneness grounds. That is his right as a Senator. I do not challenge that.

Mr. WYDEN. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. MCCAINE. I ask unanimous consent to yield to the Senator from Oregon without losing my right to the floor.

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

Mr. WYDEN. I will be very brief, I say to the chairman and colleagues. The hour is late.

All we seek to do is to have technological neutrality. We are not going to tax catalogs. We also don't want to tax web sites. That is all this is about—preventing that kind of discriminatory tax.

I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. MCCAINE. Mr. President, these things happen as we consider legislation. There are very strongly held views on this issue, especially by the Senator from Florida who, as a former Governor, understands the impact of these issues on his State. I understand that and appreciate that. But I want to be clear that my interpretation and that of the Senator from Oregon and the proponents of this legislation are that if we do not allow the amendment 3711, then the legislation itself would be rendered largely meaningless.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCAINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

GOVERNMENT PAPERWORK ELIMINATION ACT

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about S. 2107, the Government Paperwork Elimination Act, a bill I introduced in April along with Senators WYDEN, MCCAINE and REED. This bill has been added as an amendment to the Internet Tax Freedom Act and I want to thank Senators MCCAINE and HOLLINGS and Senator THOMPSON, for taking the time and effort to work with me in advancing this legislation. Without their active support and participation, this bill would not have progressed as far as it has.

This bill amends the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980 to allow for the use of electronic submission of Federal forms to the Federal government with the use of an electronic signature within five years from the date of enactment. It is intended to bring the federal government into the electronic age, in the process saving American individuals and companies millions of dollars and hundreds of hours currently wasted on government paperwork.

The bill also includes provisions to protect the private sector and ensure a level playing field for companies competing in the development of electronic signature technologies. It mandates that regulations promulgated by the Office of Management and Budget and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration be compatible with standards and technologies used commercially. This will ensure that no one industry or technology receives favorable consideration.

The bill also requires Federal agencies to accept multiple methods of electronic submission if the agency expects to receive 50,000 or more electronic submittals of a particular form. This requirement will ensure that no single electronic signature technology is permitted to unfairly dominate the market.

This legislation also takes several steps to help the public feel more secure in the use of electronic signatures. If people are going to send money or share private information with the government, they must be secure in the knowledge that their information and finances are adequately protected. For this reason, my bill requires that electronic signatures be as reliable as necessary for any given transaction. If a person is requesting information of a public nature, a secure electronic signature will not be necessary. If, however, an individual is submitting forms which contain personal, medical or financial information, adequate security is imperative and will be available.

This is not the only provision providing for personal security, however. Senator LEAHY joined me to help establish a threshold for privacy protection in this bill. The language developed by Senator LEAHY and I will ensure that information submitted by an individual can only be used to facilitate the elec-

tronic transfer of information unless it has the prior consent of the individual.

Also included is a provision establishing legal standing for electronically submitted documents. Such legal authority is necessary to attach the same importance to electronically signed documents as is attached to physically signed documents. Without this provision, electronic submission of sensitive documents would be impossible.

Finally, Mr. President the Government Paperwork Elimination Act requires that Federal agencies send individuals an electronic acknowledgement of their submission when it is received. Such acknowledgements are standard when conducting commerce online. A similar acknowledgement by Federal agencies will provide piece-of-mind for individuals which conduct electronic business with the government.

As much as individuals will benefit from this legislation, so too will American businesses. By providing companies with the option of electronic filing and storage, this bill will reduce the paperwork burden imposed by government on commerce and the American economy. It will allow businesses to move from printed forms they must fill out using typewriters or handwriting to digitally-based forms that can be filled out using a word processor. The savings in time, storage and postage will be enormous. One company, computer maker Hewlett-Packard, estimates that the section of this bill permitting companies to download copies of regulatory forms to be filed and stored digitally rather than physically will, by itself, save that company \$1-2 billion per year.

Efficiency in the federal government itself will also be enhanced by this legislation. By forcing Government bureaucracies to enter the digital information age we will force them to streamline their procedures and enhance their ability to maintain accurate, accessible records. This should result in significant cost savings for the federal government as well as increased efficiency and enhanced customer service.

Each and every year, Mr. President, Americans spend 6.6 billion hours simply filling out, documenting and handling government paperwork. This huge loss of time and money constitutes a significant drain on our economy and we must bring it under control. The easier and more convenient we make it for American businesses to comply with paperwork and reporting requirements, the better job they will do of meeting these requirements, and the better job they will do of creating jobs and wealth for our country. That is why we need this legislation.

The information age is no longer new, Mr. President. We are in the midst of a revolution in the way people do business and maintain records. This legislation will force Washington to catch up with these developments, and

release our businesses from the drag of an obsolete bureaucracy as they pursue further innovations. The result will be a nation and a people that is more prosperous, more free and more able to spend time on more rewarding pursuits.

I want to thank my colleagues in the Senate for their support and urge the House to support this important legislation.

COMMERCIAL SPACE ACT OF 1998

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I would like to engage the Chairman in a colloquy regarding a provision of the Commercial Space Act of 1998. It is my understanding that Section 202(b)(6) of the Land Remote Sensing Policy Act of 1992, which requires any company receiving a license to operate a remote sensing system to "notify the Secretary [of Commerce] of any agreement the licensee intends to enter with a foreign nation," is amended by the Commercial Space Act of 1998 by inserting the words "significant or substantial" after "Secretary of any." This is intended to limit the agreements which are reported to the Department of Commerce. As you know, the Congress has acted in the past to limit imagery of Israel. I would like to clarify that any agreement or contract permitting any imaging of Israel using commercially available, satellite-based remote sensing technology would fall under the definition of "significant or substantial." Is this the Chairman's understanding?

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank the Senator. It is certainly my intention that any agreement permitting the imaging of Israel using commercially available, satellite-based remote sensing technology will continue to be reported to the United States government for review. The Congress has indicated that it viewed imaging of Israel to be a significant matter, and the intent of this legislation is to make sure that any agreement that could lead to imaging Israel will be reported.

Mr. KYL. I thank the Senator.

ALLEVIATING INTERNATIONAL FAMINE WITH AMERICAN SURPLUS

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President. Today I address an issue of extreme importance to both citizens of the United States, and people around the globe.

It is not often that we have the opportunity to help those in other countries and Americans at the same time. I believe that one of these occasions presents itself now.

In every area of the world, there are men, women and children in desperate need of food. Some of them are refugees from wars and other forms of political violence. Some of them are displaced because droughts or floods have interfered with their ability to grow food and destroyed their homes. Others are simply too poor to be able to afford

the tools and seeds necessary to plant crops.

This year has been particularly difficult in a variety of places. Most recently, hurricane Georges has ravaged the Caribbean. Nations such as Haiti, where the population is barely able to feed itself, and the Dominican Republic have been heavily damaged by the storm's onslaught.

Countries in Eastern Europe are experiencing food shortages. Winter is coming to Kosovo, where the Serbian Special Police and Yugoslavian army continue a terrorist policy that has destroyed more than three hundred villages, and driven more than 300,000 ethnic Albanians from their homes, with an estimated 50,000 forced into forests and mountains. With good reason, these people are afraid to return to the villages which have been destroyed and vandalized by the Serbian army. They have left the only means they have of supporting themselves behind. As a result, if we in the international community do not help them, they will not be able to feed themselves.

Russia faces a sharp decrease in agricultural production, due to drought and other poor weather conditions. Approximately twenty-five percent of farmland was damaged. Consequently, this year's harvest will be Russia's worst in four decades. Collective farms have harvested only a little over half the amount of grain in this year's harvest as they did in 1997. The potato crop, one of Russia's staples, is down significantly due to potato blight.

The Asian economic crisis is having a significant impact on the ability of those states to feed themselves. Indonesia, with its current financial turmoil is in need of food. Asian countries which normally import American commodities are unable to do so this year, exacerbating our farmers' woes.

The situation in North Korea remains grave. Floods, droughts and other natural disasters in the past four years have left many without the ability to feed themselves. Malnutrition and related diseases are common throughout the land. One million people have died in North Korea over the past two years.

Due to climactic conditions and political unrest, there are many in need in Africa. In Sudan alone, experts have indicated that as many as 2.6 million people may go hungry. Mozambique is facing a food crisis which will affect 300,000 people until April of next year. In the northern portions of Sierra Leone, thousands of internally displaced people will face hunger, if not starvation, unless they are provided with aid.

Here in the United States we face a challenge of a different sort. Far from suffering from a lack of food, American farmers are producing an abundance. Unfortunately, U.S. agricultural exports are expected to decline 4.6 percent from projected 1998 levels, mainly because of the collapse of global markets.

One third of the family farmers in this country may go out of business in the next several years, with net farm income projected to decrease by \$7.5 billion in 1998. We have the food. All we are lacking is strong markets to buy what we are producing.

Common sense tells us that it is time to bring together our oversupply of domestic agricultural products and the growing international need for food aid. One way to do that is to increase shipments of U.S. agricultural products to countries in need.

In July of this year, the President took steps to do just that, creating the Food Aid Initiative. This initiative directs the Department of Agriculture to purchase 80 million bushels of grain for distribution to poor countries overseas. The Secretary of Agriculture announced the first disbursement of wheat and wheat flour under the Initiative to the World Food Program on September 15th. I applaud the Administration's creation of this Initiative. The potential of this program in combination with other U.S. food assistance programs to provide relief to hungry people is great, and I support the President's efforts.

However, we can and should do more. To begin with, the list of countries that the administration has targeted through the Initiative should be expanded. Last week I wrote to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman and Brian Atwood, the Administrator of the Agency of International Development. In those letters, I indicated among other things, that threatened food shortages in Kosovo and Russia must not go unaddressed.

Not only must we be sure that more countries are being given much needed food, we must be assured that those who are hungry are actually receiving the food. Unfortunately, in some instances, access to food donations is prevented by people in needy nations who either want the food themselves, wish to profit from victims of famine or wish to control the needy population by denying them life's most basic necessities.

In addition to donating to more countries, we should donate more food. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, in the United States today there is a surplus of 6.3 million metric tons or 233 million bushels of wheat. There are several programs through which we can help solve both our domestic and our international problems.

The first is the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, commonly referred to as P.L. 480, Food for Peace. This legislation contains three food aid titles. Title One's objective is to make it easier for lesser developed countries to buy American commodities. To this end, commodities are sold to certain countries for US dollars on concessional credit terms.

Title Two is the Emergency and Private Assistance Programs. This is