

bring a comprehensive lobbying reform package to the floor.

I wish in particular thank our colleague from Pennsylvania, Senator SANTORUM, for his willingness to lead a lobbying reform working group. He has hosted numerous meetings over the last several weeks and spent countless hours on this issue. We are where we are today in large part because of his commitment and his leadership. I wish to recognize him for that.

I also appreciate the work of the chairman and chairwoman of our Rules Committee and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Chairman LOTT and Chairman COLLINS. They have worked expeditiously, both in discussions and holding hearings and markups, so we could in response to my request have available for floor consideration today legislation that centers on commonsense reform. There will be a lot of debate and there will be a lot of discussion, but I think the issues have been laid out and laid out well. Those two chairmen will be co-managing the bill from our side of the aisle, since each of those committees brought forth that legislation from their respective committees.

So that everyone understands how we expect to proceed, we will begin debate on S. 2349, the Legislative Transparency and Accountability Act. The first amendment offered will be a substitute, incorporating the joint text of both the bills reported by the Rules Committee and by the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

I have asked the two managers to move forward in as efficient a way as we possibly can in order to achieve that goal of completing this legislation this week. It is going to take a lot of hard work, a lot of working together, and a lot of cooperation in order to accomplish that. Chairman LOTT and Chairman COLLINS are committed to this timeframe. I encourage all of our colleagues to work with them to ensure that we can accomplish this goal.

If Senators have amendments—and I recognize there will be a number of amendments—I urge them to discuss those amendments, the nature of those amendments, and make the language available as soon as possible with the managers. Let us keep amendments on the issue that is at hand, the issues surrounding ethics and lobbying. Tying up the bill with unrelated amendments, which we call nongermane amendments, is not in anybody's best interest. So let us stay on the bill as much as we possibly can.

A final note. As we enter the debate—I think we will enter it—we are entering it in a tone of working together. It is not a partisan issue we are addressing. People expect us to work together to develop meaningful, non-partisan solutions but bipartisan solutions to the real problems we know we will be addressing. Ethics is not a partisan issue. The rules apply, as they should, to every Senator and every

staff member, regardless of party or stripe. No one gets a special exception.

That is the spirit in which we should approach this bill.

The rules we operate under are bipartisan. The reforms indeed are and should be bipartisan as well. It is my firm belief that as public servants we are obligated to protect the integrity of this fantastic, magnificent institution, and most importantly to represent the genuine interests of the voters—which is our responsibility—who sent us here.

It is time for us to reexamine the rules so that bad apples are exposed before they spoil the whole lot. That is why I have brought this bill to the floor now so we can address it right up front early on in this session. Taking these steps will go a long way to lifting the cloud that threatens to obscure all of our other efforts to offer meaningful reforms and solutions to the problems we now face and that face all Americans.

The issue is something very personal to me. I still consider myself a citizen legislator, coming here for a period of time and going back home. It causes me to reflect on my first vote as a Senator. It was on the Congressional Accountability Act, an act that ensures that Congress abides by the laws it passes.

I believe deeply that we serve the people—not the other way around, and that spirit will be the spirit I believe we will all put forth in this debate over the next several days.

We have a real opportunity before us—an opportunity to make government more transparent, more accountable, and to strengthen the American people's confidence in our body. Once again, I ask my colleagues to join together and deliver meaningful reforms, not only to fulfill our commitment to the American people but to protect and preserve the honor of this great institution we all have the privilege of serving.

I yield the floor.

HONEST LEADERSHIP AND OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in recent months, the public has been shocked and outraged over stories dealing with abusive and, I believe, criminal practices—and so do various prosecutors—by lobbyists, senior administration officials, Members of Congress, and even congressional staff. A number of these participants in these schemes that breached the public trust have pled guilty—Republican lobbyist Jack Abramoff, former staffer for the recent House Republican Majority Leader Michael Scanlon, Republican Member of Congress Duke Cunningham, and one of his coconspirators, Michael Wade. Others are under indictment, including President Bush's political appointee David Safavian.

The guilty pleas, indictments, and documents released to date suggest

wrongdoing or improper behavior by many others, including a former Deputy Secretary of the Interior, other former aides to the recent House Republican majority leader, former aides to Republican Senators; Grover Norquist, a close ally of the Bush White House; Ralph Reed, long-time political operative for the Republicans—in fact, he has been State chair of at least one State party—and, of course, the heads of two other groups closely associated with the Republican Party.

The American people understand these are not one or two isolated incidents. They understand this is a clear pattern of wrongdoing—wrongdoing that can only be explained by an alarming sense of impunity. The public understands these individuals felt that they were above the law. They felt they could ignore the rules. They felt government was not there to serve the people's interest but to serve their own special interests or the interests of some of their cronies.

The public has seen a Republican culture that has distorted government priority and grown into the greatest government scandal since Watergate. So as we begin this debate, it is important to realize this wrongdoing often violated existing laws and congressional ethics rules. It is already illegal to offer or accept a bribe. It is already illegal to defraud your clients. It is already illegal to lie and commit perjury. The rules already prohibit Members from taking trips that have no real business purpose and are just excuses for a golf outing. So much of what went on was already criminal or certainly clearly unethical. The problem, in many cases, was not in the rules. It was in the culture that allowed everyone to believe they could ignore the rules.

But in some cases it was clear, the rules have shortcomings. So even though a number of the things that people did clearly violated the rules we now have, in some of these cases it was clear that the rules had shortcomings and we needed to beef them up. In these areas, we need to expand disclosure and tighten rules that have been abused. We also need to find a way to restore public faith in the integrity of our Federal Government.

The best way to do this is to show the public we take this issue seriously and that we will act aggressively and swiftly to change the culture in the Nation's Capital.

That is why I am satisfied with what my Democratic colleagues have been able to do with this legislation that will shortly be before the Senate. As soon as we returned from the winter recess, we, as a caucus, acted decisively. We unveiled sweeping reform principles and backed them with legislation. It is one thing to address this issue through quickly called press conferences that offer no details; it is another to put reform to paper and to use a reform bill that has supported virtually the entire

Democratic caucus. That is what we did.

The Honest Leadership Act fundamentally changed the debate on ethics and lobbying reform. It is hard to draft legislation. I called upon my staff, one of my most senior persons, someone who was the chief of staff of the Commerce Committee under Senator Hollings, Kevin Kayes. He has worked hard. Saturday nights, Sunday nights, I have spoken to him. I acknowledge the hard work that he has done on this legislation. I appreciate it very much.

We put on paper what we thought was the best thing for this institution. The Honest Leadership Act, Open Government Act, fundamentally changed the debate on ethic and lobbying reform. Democrats stood united. United we said: We are not going to let this process drag on and hope that people get distracted. We are going to seize the initiative and begin to change the culture that we find in Washington. Democrats established the baseline for reform by getting caucus-wide support for a tough and comprehensively formed bill. Democrats raised the stakes on this issue and forced the Senate to deal with this in a meaningful way.

We have had a number of participants on the Democratic side of the aisle. This is not in the order of how hard they have worked, but I express my appreciation—because they have all worked hard—to Senator DODD, Senator LIEBERMAN, the ranking members of the Committee on Rules and Government Operations Committees. I appreciate the work of Senator FEINGOLD who has been involved in these issues for many years. And a new Senator, Mr. OBAMA, has done such a good job of expressing himself to the American public how we feel on this side of the aisle about the need to change what is going on in Washington. Senator LEVIN has also been a stalwart, helpful from the very beginning. He, like Senator FEINGOLD, has been involved in these issues for a long time.

It would not be fair to just list the Democrats. The work performed in the Committee on Rules was a hard job. It was the first body to take this up. It showed the experience of Senator DODD and Senator LOTT. They had a cordial relationship going into this which helped significantly in moving that bill out of the committee very quickly. Senator LIEBERMAN worked very hard with Senator COLLINS. They came up with another piece of legislation as a result of their ability to work together. I appreciate Senator LOTT very much and Senator COLLINS for their work, working with Democrats. Their work did advance the reform proposals that we introduced.

It goes without saying I am glad we are here today. It is fair to say we would not be here and certainly not with this strong piece of legislation from the Committee on Government Operations and the Rules Committee if not for the efforts of my caucus.

In fact, much of what Democrats supported in S. 2180 has been included in the bills that will come before the Senate today which will be united into one bill. What are some of the things we have done? I will not mention all of them, but I will mention some. Slow the revolving door between government jobs and lucrative private sector employment. Revoke floor privileges for former member lobbyists. A former Member has to decide, if they want to come to the Senate, they are not going to be able to do their work here if they are lobbyists. That is unfair to some who also are lobbyists who certainly never used the floor in any negative way. I think I can say that for most all.

We have to do away with what is wrong and with what appears to be wrong. This legislation will be in the Senate in less than an hour and it eliminates gifts paid for by lobbyists, not just disclosure gifts. There will be more disclosure and scrutiny of privately funded travel. This legislation will stop dead-of-night legislating by making conference reports available on the Internet. This legislation will require more frequent and more detailed lobbyists' disclosure available on the Internet. And there is increased civil rights penalties for violations.

This legislation required ethics training. It will require ethics training for congressional staff and will require disclosure for stealth lobbying campaigns by business coalitions and other organizations that slipped under the radar screen in the past. They will not any more.

Not all of what the Democrats sought is in this bill. I know that. In some cases, the provisions included are weaker than what was in our proposal. But we will offer amendments to strengthen the bill in these areas.

I am pleased that so much of what we worked for as a caucus has now gained broad bipartisan support. We have tried very hard. There are some groups, quite frankly, that there is not enough we could ever do, no matter what we do would never be enough. But it is important to recognize while there may be some outside groups who think we have not done enough, we have done a lot.

During this debate, I hope we remain honest with the American people about an important point. When we approve this legislation—I am hopeful in conference we will—we will not have put the Abramoff scandal behind us. Indeed, it is likely that future indictments and additional revelations will end any confusion on this point. The only way we put the Abramoff and other scandals behind us and restore the public faith in government is by each and every one of us, all 100 of us, and our staffs, conducting ourselves and operating this institution with the highest level of integrity.

This legislation will set parameters that will be easier to follow. The costs of corruption are high, and it is the American people who pay for it. What

has happened in Washington has eroded the ability of our Government to meet the needs of our people.

Look at this administration's response to Hurricane Katrina and the growing national unease about our security, both here and abroad. Just imagine, if Duke Cunningham and his coconspirators had not succeeded in spending tens of millions of taxpayers dollars to give their cronies bogus contracts, that money could have been used to pay for body armor, port security, or some other critical need. This is only one example.

The culture of corruption distorts our priorities and frustrates efforts to address the real needs of Americans, these Americans who are trying to cope with high natural gas prices to heat their homes, high fuel prices for the cars, concerns about their own retirement security, and a growing sense that they are having to work harder and harder to maintain even their current standard of living. Each one of us came here to serve the American people. We have been given a tremendously difficult responsibility. But it is one we all sought. Of course, it is a real privilege.

I am confident we can clean up the situation we now have in Washington so we can get on with the Nation's business. America deserves a government as good as its people. Together, America can do better.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

(The remarks of Mr. SPECTER pertaining to the introduction of S. 2369 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). The Senator from Maine is recognized.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, what is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes.