appreciate that very much. It is good for the American people to see that the first piece of legislation being brought before this body is one that is cosponsored by the Republican leader and the Democratic leader.

In the weeks leading to this new Congress, we have heard Members from both sides of the aisle talk about bipartisanship. S. 1 will have turned that talk into action. This is a bipartisan bill cosponsored by the two leaders, as well as the chairs and ranking members of the relevant committees.

The designation of the bill as S. 1 has symbolic importance. Often S. 1 is a vehicle for the majority party to make a partisan statement to its base. I have asked my staff to ascertain the last time a bill designated as S. 1 was jointly sponsored by the majority and minority leaders. It has been 32 years. In 1975, majority leader Mike Mansfield and minority leader Hugh Scott jointly sponsored a bipartisan criminal justice reform bill. I am very happy to revive the Mansfield-Scott tradition, where we have leaders working together to move this country forward.

There are many reasons ethics reform is the first legislative item the Senate will consider. Most importantly, because no issue facing this body is more fundamentally important. Honest government should not be a partisan goal. It is the key to a strong nation. All our work this year is based upon what S. 1 is to the American people. When we make leaders accountable to the people, not the special interests or lobbyists, there is no limit to what we can accomplish. We can be energy independent. We can have affordable health care. We can build a strong economy and provide real security for our country. Each of these goals can be accomplished if we ensure that the people's needs, not special interest needs, are put first.

Ethics reform is also the first order of business because it is a clear priority of the American people. In election day exit polls on November 7, voters spoke loudly and very clearly about their diminished faith in government. Forty-one percent of voters named corruption as extremely important in determining whom they would vote for. Americans want us to purge the Government of undue influence, and they want us to eliminate the conditions that led to the scandal-making headlines of last year and 2005: headlines about officials being flown to Scotland for rounds of golf; headlines about committee chairmen negotiating lucrative lobbying jobs with the industries they oversee, while working on legislation important to those industries; and, of course, headlines about ''pay to play'' schemes such as the infamous K Street Project, where jobs and campaign donations were traded for legislation and other official acts.

A number of elected officials and lobbyists have been put in jail for their activities that showed a disrespect for the Congress and the country. The American people simply have had enough. This is not the first time the Senate has considered ethics legislation. Last year, in the wake of the scandals of 2005, we debated and passed a reform bill in the Senate. Unfortunately, it fell victim to politics and never emerged from a conference committee, even though that bill passed on a bipartisan basis in the Senate. This year we are not going to let that happen. We will pass this bill, put it into law.

The House of Representatives has already acted on part of this issue, as their rules allow them to proceed faster than the Senate, and that is an understatement. I applaud Speaker PELOSI for making ethics reform a House priority. We will address many of the same issues here. But because of our rules, we will proceed at a much slower pace, not because we want to but that is how the Senate operates.

This bill will not be referred to the committees of jurisdiction. Senator MCCONNELL and I have decided to begin the debate with the same bill that passed this Chamber 90 to 8 last year. It has been through the committees previously, providing us with a strong starting point for action this year.

The reforms in S. 1 are very real, very strong. To begin, it prohibits gifts and travel paid for by lobbyists, such as Jack Abramoff's infamous trips around the world. Under provisions of this bill, no Member or staff would be able to receive any gift or take any trip paid for by a registered lobbyist. Next, this legislation will slow the revolving door that shuffles lawmakers and top staff between Federal jobs and the private sector. We all remember the case of the House chairman to manage the Medicare Part D bill on the floor of the House only to leave shortly thereafter to make $1 million a year as president of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America. This bill will ban former Members from lobbying for 2 years, toughen lobbying bans already in place for senior staff, require public disclosure by Members negotiating private sector employment, and strip former Members who become lobbyists of their floor privileges.

Third, this bill will improve Senate procedures to make our work more transparent to the public. It will require full disclosure of earmarks. It will provide new tools to ensure that Members of Congress and members of the public have a chance to review bills before they are voted on. It will make it harder to insert new provisions in conference reports and hand out special favors in the dead of night.

Fourth, it will improve lobbying disclosures. Today lobbyists must file reports semiannually. Our legislation will require them quarterly. Not only that, we will post the reports on the Internet, and we will require lobbyists to include their campaign contributions and fundraisers. Those who don't follow the rules will be subject to stiff new penalties.

Fifth, this bill will make partisan efforts to influence private sector hiring, such as the K Street Project, a violation of Senate rules and mandate ethics training for all Members and staff.

The bill I have outlined, in a broad sense, is a starting point. If we did nothing else other than pass this bill, we would have enacted the most sweeping ethics reforms in a generation or more. But we will not stop with this bill that has been introduced. Very soon I expect to offer a substitute amendment that will strengthen this legislation even more. I hope to do that sometime tomorrow. Then we will have ample time for other Senators to improve the bill through further amendment.

Our two Democratic managers, Senators FEINSTEIN and LIEBERMAN, will oversee a strong bipartisan debate. And together we will pass the strongest Government reform bill to come out of the Senate since Watergate.

Some of the improvements I expect to be approved this week include extending the gifts and travel ban to companies and groups that hire lobbyists, not just the lobbyists themselves. I also expect we will approve earmark disclosure and that we will toughen penalties for those who set up fraudulent, corrupt lobbying schemes such as the ones Mr. Abramoff created.

We have tremendous challenges facing us this year, but our first is to restore the people's faith in their government. With the bipartisan reforms I have outlined today, we can accomplish that task.

There is no better way to start this new Congress than by showing the American people that we will answer only to them.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I believe we are in morning business; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. What is the length of time for each Senator?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. A 10-minute time limit.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I thank the Chair.

LOBBYING, ETHICS, AND EARMARK REFORMS

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, the majority leader has asked if, as the new chairman of the Rules Committee, I would come down and briefly say a few words about the bill we will be placing on the floor tomorrow. That bill is S. 1. This bill has passed the Senate before by a vote of 90 to 8. It offers the opportunity for the Senate to come

together, in a bipartisan way, and pass lobbying reforms, some ethics reform, some earmarks reform, and take a real step together in an important way.

As we all know, the House has passed a set of rules, and so the conference is going to be an interesting one because the Senate will have its own bill. The House will have its own exclusive rules and hopefully will present some bill language from relevant committees in the House that we will be able to reconcile in the conference committee.

Tomorrow, with Senator BENNETT as the ranking member, as well as Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS, we will formally present this bill. I hope that the presentation will reflect our commitment to work together to see that the discussion is full, that we understand that there are differences of opinion within the Senate on some of the points, but that it is critically important that action be taken.

We all know what has happened this past year. We all know that the results of the election have indicated that corruption is an important concern of the electorate, some say the most important concern, even with Iraq, that was voted on in this election. So the voice of the people calling us to move ahead, pass legislation, and see that our House is clean and scrupulous is increasingly important. I believe we will measure up.

The base bill that will be on the floor tomorrow is identical to the bill that was passed last year. It came to the floor in the early part of the year and was then passed by the Senate. It was held up in the House over a difference of opinion on 527 reform. And from that point on, it was stymied and went nowhere.

It is also my understanding—and my staff has been a party to the discussions—that there will be a leadership amendment. That leadership amendment will be concurred in by the majority leader, the minority leader, the chair and ranking member of Rules and others. It will essentially toughen the bill that was presented last year. We will deal with a number of issues, including strengthening the earmark language.

Now, I want to make a couple of personal comments on earmarks. In my view, this is the most difficult part of the entire bill, to reconcile feelings, to be able to develop some form of a consensus. An earmark is an appropriation placed in the budget by Members of Congress. I believe earmarks should exist. We have big States, and I come from a big State of 38 million people. We pay far more in taxes than we get back in services. Therefore, to be able to place in the budget certain critical items that benefit California's infrastructure and California's programs is important.

I also strongly believe that my name should accompany the earmark. I have no problem letting anyone know what earmark I have suggested.

I strongly believe that—and this is where I think I probably differ from some of my colleagues—if an earmark is added in the dark of night, if the earmark is not voted on by a subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, it should be subject to a 60-vote point of order. Right now, rule XXVIII, according to the Parliamentarian, does not apply to earmarks per se but out-of-scope matters only—for example, ANWR. So I think the discussion in the ensuing week and a half is going to be an interesting one.

Secondly, are earmarks just non-Federal additions, congressional additions to a budget, or do they also encompass funds that go to State entities or private entities? As we work on this issue, I say to the Members that I would very much like to know your views. I would like to work with every Member. It is my intention as the new chairman of the Rules Committee to work openly and, hopefully, in a bipartisan way not only with the ranking member but with other Republicans and Democrats on that committee. The first hearing we will have in the Rules Committee will be on the subject of the past election—specifically, the undervote in Sarasota, FL, on certain items on their ballot, e-voting, and what we might be able to do to assure people who vote that their vote is recorded accurately; that there are actually no switchovers; that there is no difference between how you press the button and how your vote is recorded; and that you can corroborate with a paper trail that, in fact, that is the way you voted.

I come to the Senate floor to make very brief opening remarks and signal my intention to work with the Rules Committee on this bill in a bipartisan way and, hopefully, to make as much progress as we can.

I have been an appropriator for 13 out of my 15 years in this body. I have served in different capacities, as we all have. We work our way up through the chairs in Appropriations. I think the time has come for earmarks, and for holds as well, to stop the anonymity, give them the full light of day; for Members who produce earmarks to be willing to defend them and that when earmarks are placed in the dark of night by a Member, they would be subject to a 60-vote point of order.

I will say one other thing about holds. A hold is something that a Member does to essentially indicate that they have a concern about a vote. It is difficult, from a parliamentary perspective, to take action because you may just want to hold a bill so that you have an opportunity to read it, which would just be 24 hours or so. Or you may have some mischief in your mind when you produce a hold. I have seen holds that were put on virtually everything that came out of a committee because one Member wanted to make a point. I have seen Members put holds on every bill another Member had to make a point. It seems to me that along with the era of the anonymous earmark, the era of the anonymous hold ought to be put to rest with a big sign that says ''rest in peace.''

This is a new day. I do agree that transparency and full disclosure act in the best interest of this body. I look forward to presenting the bill tomorrow, along with Ranking Member BENNETT, Senator LIEBERMAN, and Senator COLLINS, and to the ensuing 6 or 7 days of discussion and amendments.

I want to ask one other thing, and that is that when the bill comes to the floor, Members come down and file their amendments so that in addition to the leadership-proposed substitute, we will have knowledge of what is about to come to the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I understand we are in morning business with Members granted approximately 10 minutes apiece, if they so choose; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the Presiding Officer.

WESTERN KANSAS SNOWSTORMS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today to call your attention to what can only be described as a major disaster in my home State of Kansas and surrounding States—certainly the State represented by the distinguished Presiding Officer—along with New Mexico and eastern Colorado, more especially in western Kansas.

In the last days of December, a large winter storm spread over 30 inches of heavy snow and up to 3 inches of ice in much of my State of Kansas.

As you can see from this picture of what used to be a row of electric towers—a very idyllic scene in Kansas, where we produce the food and fiber this Nation needs—and then from the following picture—I will take this picture down and basically show you what happened after the blizzard—of what remains, this storm has caused overwhelming destruction all throughout the region. There are 21 towers in this condition, as shown in the picture. These are major towers of power, of electrical grid that have been destroyed all across my State of Kansas, more especially in the western part.

As a result, 15-foot snowdrifts closed highways and left over 60,000 customers without power. Over 10,000 downed utility poles litter the area. We did not get that picture blown up in time, but it is a marvelous picture of a road—you can see the snow here—that goes by with a whole bunch of telephone poles snapped off like matchsticks. And that has happened all throughout that area. Residents who are lucky enough to have