

free recreational trips. We do not need them. It is time to put an end to them. If we are going to increase public trust in this institution—and it is our sacred obligation to do so—we have to end business as usual when it comes to these kinds of gifts.

Mr. President, this issue has been thoroughly debated. It was debated at great length last year and in the years before. We came close last year. These are difficult issues. Again, if they were not difficult, they would have been resolved a long time ago.

Now is the time that we can resolve these issues. If we address these issues in the spirit in which we run for office, if we address these issues with the same thoughts in our mind and in our heart as we have when we address the people of the United States seeking to reach this place, we will adopt tough gift rules, we will enhance public respect for this institution, and we will carry out what I believe is an obligation to ourselves and to the Constitution that we are sworn to uphold.

When the public believes—public opinion polls show that the public believes—that lobbyists have the power in this town and that Congress and the President come second and third, when public confidence has reached that low, we must act. One of the things we must do is to adopt strong gift reform. We must have a gift ban which affects all gifts except for certain, obviously excluded categories, which are set forth in this bill.

We have to end the free meals, the free tickets, the free recreational trips. I believe it is our obligation. If we address this again in the same spirit with which we came here and with which we sought to sit here, we can successfully address this in a way which I believe the American people will applaud and finally say that Congress is acting in the area of political reform the way the people want Congress to act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

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#### APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NUCLEAR WASTE REPOSITORY AT YUCCA MOUNTAIN

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I rise today to address an issue of great national concern—this country's nuclear waste policy. In 1982, Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which directed the Department of Energy to develop a permanent repository for highly radioactive waste from nuclear power plants and defense facilities. Congress passed amendments to that act in 1987, which limited DOE's repository development activities to a single site at Yucca Mountain, NV. Since 1983, electric consumers have

contributed \$11 billion to finance the development of a permanent storage site. Despite DOE's obligation to take title to spent nuclear fuel in 1998, a permanent repository at Yucca Mountain will not be ready to accept this waste until the year 2010, at the earliest.

Mr. President, the House of Representatives recently passed the energy and water development appropriations bill for 1996. This bill recommends that \$425 million be made available for DOE's spent fuel disposal program, \$200 million below the level needed to continue developing a permanent site. Furthermore, the committee report to this bill directs DOE to "concentrate available resources on the development and implementation of a national interim storage program," and to "downgrade, suspend or terminate its activities at Yucca Mountain."

Mr. President, I am greatly concerned by the action of the House. We have already spent 12 years and \$4.2 billion to find a permanent repository site and conduct development activities at Yucca Mountain. No other viable site for permanent storage has been considered since 1987. If we terminate or suspend activities at Yucca Mountain now, we will be wasting the time and money invested since 1982 toward finding a suitable location. As I have already stated, the electric consumers of this Nation have contributed \$11 billion, and we are still behind schedule. How can we, in good conscience, discontinue our efforts at Yucca Mountain when so much time and money has been invested there. To do so would eradicate the progress we have made and abolish any hope of developing a permanent site in the near future. It is our obligation to the American people to develop a permanent repository as quickly as possible and, therefore, we must persist with the efforts at Yucca Mountain. It is our only alternative.

Mr. President, I realize that continuing development of the permanent site at Yucca Mountain will not completely solve the spent fuel problem. In 1998, 23 nuclear reactors will run out of space to store spent fuel. At that time, storage will become DOE's responsibility. Therefore, we need to designate an interim storage site to use until the permanent facility at Yucca Mountain is available. The most logical location for an interim site is Yucca Mountain. Transportation of spent nuclear fuel is a delicate undertaking, so it is sensible to locate an interim facility as near to the permanent facility as is possible. Likewise, the proximity of an interim site to the permanent site would save money on transportation costs between the two sites. Comprehensive legislation has been introduced in both the Senate and House that offers a solution to the spent fuel problem, including the construction of an interim facility at Yucca Mountain.

Building a central interim storage facility at Yucca Mountain by 1998 and continuing to develop a permanent re-

pository at Yucca Mountain by 2010 is our most reasonable course of action. Too much time and money has been invested to change directions now. As my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee consider funding for the project at Yucca Mountain, I urge them to remember the commitment we have made to the citizens of this Nation. Any efforts to abandon this program will deprive this country of a long-term solution to our nuclear waste storage dilemma.

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#### CONGRESSIONAL GIFT REFORM ACT OF 1995

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President we are now, I take it, back on the bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are now considering S. 1061.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair. First of all, let me thank my colleagues for their real fine work on this legislation. Senator LEVIN has done such fine work with Senator COHEN on the lobbying reform, and Senator FEINGOLD, and Senator LAUTENBERG, Senator BAUCUS, Senator MCCAIN, and others.

I was listening to my colleague from Michigan. Let me, at the beginning, emphasize some of the points he made. This has been a really long journey in the Senate. I say to the Chair, who is a friend, that actually back in Minnesota, when I talk to people in cafes, they do not even understand what the debate is about. To them, it is kind of not even a debatable proposition. Lobbyists and others do not come up to citizens in Colorado and Minnesota and say, "Look, we would like to take you out to dinner. We would be willing to pay for a trip you might take to Vail." Not to pick on Colorado; it could be Florida, or anywhere. "And bring your spouse." And so on and so forth.

Most people do not have people coming up to them and making these kinds of offers. I think the citizens in our country just think it is inappropriate for us to be on the receiving end of these gifts. And they are right. We should just let this go.

For me, this journey started in May 1993, over 2 years ago, with an amendment I had on lobbying disclosure where lobbyists would have to disclose the gifts they were giving to individual Senators. That amendment was agreed to. Then we went on to this kind of broader debate about the gift ban.

It has been a real struggle. I have never quite understood the resistance of all too many of my colleagues. Although, in the last analysis, on each vote, I want to make it clear, we have had very strong support. Actually, S. 1061—88 current Members of the Senate have essentially already voted for precisely the comprehensive gift ban legislation that we have before the Senate today. So I expect it will engender the