

now subject to the call of the Chair and try to work it out with him later.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 10:06 a.m., recessed, subject to the call of the Chair.

The Senate reassembled at 11:06 a.m., when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. DOMENICI).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

STATUS OF LEGISLATION

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, we have been in recess subject to the call of the Chair, and we will recess again in a moment, but I wanted to announce that the House did pass the bill that we tried to pass last night in the Senate. It extends the Mideast Peace Facilitation Act for I think 90 days. It deems all Federal employees essential. In other words, they can all go back to work. It guarantees they are going to be paid. And it also has attached to it expedited procedure so when we get a balanced budget, we will not be engaged in weeks and weeks and months and months of debate in the Senate.

Now, some of my Senate colleagues may wonder why that is in the House bill. It is in the House bill because we could not pass it on the Senate side. So they agreed to put it in their bill. And we have been working together on the theory that if we get a balanced budget agreement with the President of the United States and with the Democratic leaders and the Republican leaders, we ought to pass it. The American people want us to pass it.

So I would only say that later this afternoon, after having an opportunity to visit with the Democratic leader, I will make a unanimous-consent request that we turn to the message from the House on S. 1508, the so-called back-to-work bill, which also provided for expedited procedure and extension of the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act. That is what we will try to clear later today. If we cannot do it, we cannot do it. It just takes one objection.

I wish to commend the House for their leadership, Congressman WOLF and Congresswoman MORELLA and Congressman DAVIS, for their initiative this morning in getting this done and also the majority leader, Congressman ARMEY, and the Speaker, Congressman GINGRICH.

So hopefully we will get this done. If this happens, people can start making plans to go back to work after the New Year's holiday.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. DOLE. I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair, and hopefully that will be within the next hour or so, so employees will not have to wait all day while we meet at the White House.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 11:09 a.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair.

The Senate reassembled at 6:16 p.m., when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. THOMAS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

AUTHORIZATION OF FUNDS FOR PAY AND ALLOWANCES AND QUARTERS ALLOWANCE FOR MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES

Mr. DOLE. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 1514, introduced today by myself for Senators STEVENS, THURMOND, COATS, and others which would authorize a 2.4-percent increase in pay and allowances and a 5.2-percent increase for basic allowance for quarters for the members of the uniformed services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

• Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, the bill I have proposed will provide the increases adopted by Congress for military pay and allowances. This action is necessary today for one reason—the President vetoed the Defense authorization bill.

H.R. 1530, the fiscal year 1996 National Defense Authorization Act, passed both Houses of Congress with bipartisan support. I regret the President chose to veto this legislation. Beyond addressing these vital requirements to support the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces, and their families, this bill authorized important initiatives to accelerate modernization of the Armed Forces, and enhance our defenses against theater and intercontinental ballistic missiles. These priorities are fully funded in the 1996 Defense Appropriations Act, which became law on December 1.

Mr. President, with 20,000 Americans on their way to Bosnia, and 15,000 more deploying in support of the 1st Armored Division, this is not the time for the President to play politics with the pay and economic well-being of military families. With thousands more Americans deployed to the Persian Gulf, standing watch in Korea, and keeping the peace in Haiti, they should not have to worry about whether we will do our part to make sure they receive the pay and benefits they have earned through their service.

Mr. President, this bill should not be controversial. The House and Senate each passed these pay and allowance increases in legislation earlier this year, and endorsed these funding levels in the appropriations bill. The pay raise for civilian Federal workers will take effect on January 1—that does not require further legislation. There is no rationale to deny this modest increase for the men and women of the Armed Forces, and I hope the Senate will pass this bill without objection.

It had been my intention to offer an amendment today which would have

authorized for all of 1996 the full military pay and allowance increase. At this time it is not possible to get unanimous agreement for this approach, therefore I reluctantly accept a time limitation as the way to ensure that the men and women of our Armed Forces will receive their pay and allowance increases in a timely manner.

Just 2 weeks ago, the Senate voted with a large bipartisan majority to express its support for the military personnel ordered to Bosnia. Many of us disagree with the process that sent them there, but I believe all Members of the Senate strongly support those soldiers, sailors, marines, and Air Force personnel who are doing their duty. Even more than our expression of support for their mission, this bill gives us a chance today to take action, to enhance their economic well-being and the welfare of their families.

We must act on their legislation today, to ensure that they will receive the full increase in pay and allowances for the month of January. I appreciate the efforts of the majority leader, Senator DOLE, to move this legislation and protect the pay and benefits of all military personnel. I hope that the President will join with the Congress and sign this bill, and permit the pay and benefits increase already approved by Congress to become law. •

• Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, this bill will correct a problem created when President Clinton vetoed the 1996 Defense authorization bill. By so doing, he denied the full pay raise and the increase in the basic allowance for quarters provided in that bill. Military pay is again slipping further behind comparable civilian pay. This is happening at a time when our military personnel are increasingly being called upon to deploy in support of U.S. commitments around the world. Our troops deserve this raise and they should receive it without delay. At this very moment, and throughout this holiday season, our troops have been leaving their families in Germany and throughout the United States to fulfill a commitment made by the President to try to bring peace to Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia. These young men and women, and their families, deserve the best we can provide for them in every way. They should have a standard of living at least as high as they could expect in the civilian sector and they should have the very best in supplies and equipment. That is what our authorization bill was designed to provide for them. However, the President chose to veto that bill for reasons that are apparently more political than substantive. This was done as our soldiers were trying desperately to stem the flood of the Sava River just to get into Bosnia. A commander should always have the welfare of the troops paramount in his mind. A Commander in Chief should act similarly. Although he did not, this bill will help to restore some of what was lost in his veto.