

Does the Senator note the absence of a quorum?

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The absence of a quorum has been noted. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

#### EARTH DAY LEGACY

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, Teddy Roosevelt said that, "Conservation is a great moral issue, for it involves the patriotic duty of ensuring the safety and continuance of the nation."

As a result of the translation of that ethic into the legislative process, and the foresight of our political predecessors, the United States today leads the world in efforts to protect the environment.

Our laws have become models for other nations' efforts to grapple with their own air and water pollution and wildlife conservation challenges. And, as a result of this commitment to a healthier environment, the United States has succeeded in reversing the course of environmental degradation that we followed for too long.

Today, on Earth Day, rivers and lakes are cleaner, waste is being disposed in a more secure and responsible manner, and the air most of us breathe contains fewer dangerous pollutants, such as lead. We can rejoice at the progress made.

Congress and a number of Republican and Democratic Presidents can and should take credit for this accomplishment.

The tangible environmental success this Nation has experienced over the last three decades is one of the reasons I have been so disappointed by the direction of the debate over the environment in the 104th Congress.

It is as though too many of us have forgotten the environmental challenges we have faced and overcome since President Nixon create the Environmental Protection Agency and Congress began its legislative journey that produced: The Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Water Act, Superfund, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and the rest of the laws that make up the canon known as American environmental law.

Collectively, that body of law represents one of the most important legacies we will leave our children and grandchildren.

I hope the fabric created by those laws will not be stretched and torn. I hope the quality of our environment that results from implementation of those laws will not be sacrificed to short-term political considerations.

We need to embrace opportunities to improve and refine the impressive body of environmental law that has been developed over the last three decades.

In the spirit of that bipartisan legacy, today—Earth Day—I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to embrace their legislative heritage and work to protect and strengthen it. The contribution of this generation of lawmakers to that impressive body of law should be one of thoughtful improvement, drawing upon the lessons learned from past implementation of those very laws.

We should continue to search the fabric of our laws and seek to repair the rips and the frayed ends.

We should seek commonsense solutions to our remaining environmental problems.

In doing so, we should work to find consensus, as we have even in this partisan year with the passage in the Senate, unanimously, of the Safe Drinking Water Act and the recently enacted small business regulatory reform bill.

As we stand here on Earth Day and survey the few months remaining in this legislative session, let us resolve to keep the fabric of American environmental law whole. Let us not turn back the clock on the accomplishments of a generation.

In that regard, just on Friday, 41 of our colleagues here in the Senate joined with me in sending a letter to our majority leader and the Speaker, to indicate our strong determination not to roll back the standards affecting clean air; not to weaken the regulations relating to safe drinking water or industrial polluters; not to slow down or stop the cleanup of hazardous waste sites; not to weaken the community right-to-know laws, such as the toxic release inventory; not to abolish protections for endangered species and all the other efforts that are underway.

It is our view that we have a sufficient number of votes to extend debate for whatever length of time, if that is required to protect the laws that we have steadfastly supported over the last generation. It is our strong desire, our sincere hope, that extended debate on any of these efforts will not be necessary, that we can work together to resolve our differences and to continue to build upon the impressive record that we have now generated over the last three decades.

So, as we stand here on Earth Day, let us again renew our commitment to work together to eliminate those threats to the environment that we see yet today. Let us eliminate the anti-environmental riders from the appropriations bill this week, to demonstrate our commitment to Earth Day, to demonstrate our resolve, continuing to build on the impressive record that we have achieved. On the major environmental laws that are being reauthorized, let us work to find ways in which to strengthen those laws, enact new ones where we identify new ones are needed, and leave future

generations with a clean and healthy environment.

As Teddy Roosevelt stated nearly a century ago, that is truly our patriotic duty. It is one I believe every Member of this body can and should embrace on this day, on all days.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Georgia has the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry. It is my understanding that the time from 12:30 to 2 o'clock has been designated to myself or management; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

#### EARTH DAY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, as we all know now, today is Earth Day, a day dedicated to remembering our commitment to the environment, to the future, a commitment on the part of every generation of Americans to assure that those who come behind us will not be jeopardized by contemporary actions and, better, that those who follow us will have the opportunities to enjoy a healthy environment—an environment in which recreation can be pursued, an environment in which future generations will not be troubled by the water they drink, by the air they breathe, by the environment in which they live.

There has been a lot of rhetoric in this 104th Congress, finger pointing about who is for the environment and who is not for the environment. I do not know anybody who is not for an improved environment; at least I have not met them.

In all the discussion, though, a little-told story is that this Congress has passed one of the most historic pieces of environmental legislation in the history of our country. I will quote from F. Graham Liles, Jr., who is executive director of the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission. It is a letter addressed to me dated April 11, 1996. He says:

With regard to the new Farm Bill, I feel this is probably the strongest conservation legislation to have been signed in decades.

I do not believe that, when we were considering the farm bill, it was generally acknowledged that that legislation is monumental environmental legislation that this Congress can take credit for, that it will be a legacy of the 104th Congress. Yes, the farm bill