

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the majority leader for his very kind words about the way we have tried to move the bill. We, too, urge our colleagues to come over, particularly those who now have an amendment that they wish to bring to the floor. We were open for business yesterday, did 4 hours of very good, yeoman work. I think both sides of the aisle want to move the bill. We would like to concentrate on the major amendments, space station and veterans health care, and if others would just come over and discuss them with us, we believe we can iron some of them out and move ahead.

I thank the leader.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1997

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3666, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3666) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1997, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Pending:

Bond amendment No. 5167, to further amend certain provisions relating to housing.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I observe the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOND. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. BOND. Mr. President, I think the parliamentary situation in which we find ourselves is this particular provision dealing with the Bion Program in NASA was included in the House bill. The committee amendment struck the House prohibition on those activities.

So, procedurally, the people who want to maintain the amendment will, after discussion, move to table the committee amendment, which is, I believe, the pending business. Is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BOND. Therefore, we can begin the discussion whenever the pro-

ponents wish. The tabling motion will come at the end of the discussion. We would like to make sure that everyone who wants to be heard on this issue has an opportunity. We do not yet have a time agreement. We talked about 2 hours last night. I would like to know from the proponents, and will be discussing with them, how much time we need. There are some on our side who wish to maintain the amendment.

I hope we can wrap up the debate in fairly short order this morning and then move to the tabling motion. But I reserve my comments on the issue until those who are proponents have an opportunity to present their views.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I think that is a very good way to proceed. Hopefully, we can conclude this before 11:30 and then be able to move to the Iraqi amendment, so when we come back after the conference we can dispose of both of those and be then ready to continue to move the bill. That is kind of the way I see it.

Mr. BOND. I thank the ranking member for her very helpful suggestions. My view is we are now open for business for the next hour or so. We could have a very spirited debate on this important issue, and I hope then we will be in a position to resolve it.

I ask my colleague from New Hampshire if he is ready to proceed. If so, I will yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

EXCEPTED COMMITTEE AMENDMENT ON PAGE 104,
LINES 21-24

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, the pending amendment is a committee amendment to strike the language in the bill, as the Senator from Missouri has just indicated, that prohibits funding from being used for the so-called Bion 11 and 12 missions. The amendment will prevent the waste of approximately \$15.5 million on wasteful research involving sending Russian primates into space. Let me repeat that, because one may wonder why we are spending money to send Russian primates into space. I wonder that myself, but that is what we are talking about. What we are trying to do is prevent the waste of \$15.5 million of taxpayer money involving research—and it is wasteful research—sending Russian primates into space.

I would also like the record to reflect that Senators FEINGOLD, HELMS, KERRY of Massachusetts, D'AMATO, and BUMPERS have joined me in opposition to funding for this Bion Program. It is a bipartisan group of Senators, as you can tell, crossing the whole political spectrum. I believe Senator FEINGOLD will be speaking on the issue, if not others.

Just so there is no confusion, the language before the Senate passed the House by an overwhelming vote of 244 to 171. It appears on page 104 of the Senate bill. It reads as follows:

None of the funds made available in this act for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration may be used to carry out or pay the salaries of personnel who carry out the Bion 11 and 12 projects.

The pending committee amendment strikes this language. This is what we object to. I want to say at the outset, it is very important, I spent almost 6 years on the Science and Technology Committee in the House of Representatives before I came to the Senate. On that committee I do not think there is anyone who was a stronger supporter of NASA or the space program. I continued that support in my time in the Senate. This is not, and I want to make it very clear, it is not a NASA-bashing amendment. I am not asking these funds be taken out of NASA. I am just asking they not be spent on this particular project, the Bion project.

So let me make it very clear. This Senator has offered a number of amendments in the past to cut spending, and I am proud of them, but that is not what this is. I am not trying to take the money from NASA. I am trying to stop NASA from wasting money that NASA probably could find good use for in some other way.

I had hoped the committee would retain the Bion language, given that it passed the House by a majority of 73 votes. I felt it was reasonable that that language be retained. Frankly, I am disappointed it was not. We had 147 Republicans and 96 Democrats on the House side who supported the amendment to eliminate that funding.

There has been a great deal of criticism of the program from a wide variety of groups: the science community—it is interesting—the science community; not all in the science community, but many; taxpayer groups, those who wish to save tax dollars; animal welfare organizations; and, as well, interestingly enough, from people who had the courage to speak up inside NASA. So when we have NASA people, people within the science community, animal rights organizations, and taxpayer groups all together on an issue, I think it is worth the Senate's time to look at it very carefully.

This letter is from Tom Schatz of Citizens Against Government Waste, which strongly supports this amendment. He says here, this vote will be considered for inclusion in their 1996 congressional ratings. This is a group I have come to deeply respect because they have the knack for finding the most egregious examples of waste in the Federal bureaucracy. It is a very good group. Most Senators here are aware of this group and the very good job they do.

Mr. Schatz is very specific in his letter. I ask unanimous consent this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the 600,000 members of the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste (CCAW), I urge you to support the efforts by Sens. Smith (R-N.H.) and Feingold (D-Wis.) to eliminate funding