

I will tell you, if we do not get moving on a budget, Mr. President, if we do not come together as Republicans and Democrats and work together, we are just going to come to a dead stop because out in the real world they meet deadlines—they meet deadlines.

If you have a new product and you have to get it out to the marketplace, you better not have delays, because if you have delays in getting that product out to market, you can go bankrupt.

Well, around here, statutory deadlines do not seem to mean much. Maybe I am wrong. Maybe my budget chairman right now is preparing to offer the Republican budget. He will lay it down next to the Democratic Clinton budget. We will look at the similarities. We will join hands. We will look at the differences. We will fight those out. We will look at the tax cuts. We will come together and move on.

But I would say—and the reason several of us came over here today to talk about this—that time is moving, the clock is ticking. We have not seen the budget. We know what your tax cuts are. Where are your cuts? What are your priorities?

I just hope that we can get back to why we were sent here. I mean, everybody said after this election it is time to put behind the rancor. But I think there is rancor when you point the finger at the President, in spite of the fact that the CBO said his budget balances, and tell him first, it does not balance, and second, do it again, when you have not even put your product on the table, except for your tax cuts, which benefit 1 percent, the top 1 percent of the people in this country instead of the middle class.

We have a lot of work to do. I look forward to seeing the Republican budget, finding those areas of agreement, working on those areas of disagreement, getting this budget down to the floor by the statutory deadline and moving forward.

Mr. President, I have the honor of not only serving on the Budget Committee but serving on the Appropriations Committee. This is, really, an extraordinary opportunity for the Senator from California to have both those assignments. I have an opportunity to debate the large priorities and then get it down to within those priorities—what is the most important investment to make, and in the context of a balanced budget, I might add. And I voted for several of those, one that Senator CONRAD wrote, and one that former Senator Bill Bradley wrote.

I am ready to make those tough choices. I like to believe my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are ready to make those tough choices. We should come together. The clock is ticking. So, we should do it, Mr. President. I hope we will back off this finger pointing at the White House. I hope we will look at this President's budget. I hope the Republicans will present their

budget and we proceed to mark it up and proceed down the path of bipartisan cooperation so this country has a budget which is, in fact, our priorities.

Thank you, Mr. President.

(Disturbance in the Visitors' Galleries.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The galleries will refrain from any demonstration of clapping, please.

The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Chair for calling the attention of the Senate rules to the galleries.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—
PERMISSION FOR COMMITTEE TO
MEET

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources be granted permission to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, March 12, for the purpose of conducting a full committee business meeting which is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. The purpose of this business meeting is to consider S. 104, to amend the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I object on behalf of two Senators.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, if I could be further heard on this, and I will be relatively brief, I must say, I think this objection is, at the very least, very unfortunate. It has been my understanding that we are operating in good faith with respect to the confirmation of Mr. Peña and the markup of the nuclear waste bill.

I have made a special effort to get this nomination up this morning. We had a lot of communication with the ranking member, the chairman and other Members interested in the confirmation of the Secretary of Energy designee, with the understanding, clearly, that the nuclear waste bill could go forward.

Since this objection has now been raised, the Energy Committee cannot complete its business with respect to reporting out the nuclear waste bill today. It is my understanding they will reconvene tomorrow at 9:30 in order to take action on this very important nuclear waste bill.

I say again, I have been trying to be cooperative in trying to move nominations. I worked with those who had objections in the committee. I helped work out a process where the chairman could schedule this nominee for a vote, and then I worked with the other objections we had on this side of the aisle from the Senator from Minnesota, Senator GRAMS. He was able to make his remarks this morning.

We agreed that we would have a vote at 12:30, or quarter to 1, I believe, now, all this under the assumption that we were working in good faith. Now we have an objection to the committee meeting to report out a bill which has overwhelming support of the full Sen-

ate and will have overwhelming support in the committee.

This is not a good sign, but it is just one of many bad signs that we are seeing, in my view, from the standpoint of being able to work together for the good of the country. So it is a very unfortunate decision, and it will not be without consequences. I yield the floor, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, as the majority leader knows, every Senator has a right to make such an objection, and two of our Senators decided to exercise their right. I think that has to be put into context that every Senator is sent here primarily to represent his or her constituency in his or her own State.

I don't think the majority leader would suggest that Senators do not have the right to protect their constituency. I wanted to make that point because two Senators, who believe that this is not in the best interest of their State, had asked us to exercise their full and given rights as Senators to object to this meeting.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I understand that the Senate will vote at 12:45.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I may speak until 12:45 as if in executive session.

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

NOMINATION OF FEDERICO PEÑA
TO BE SECRETARY OF ENERGY

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I wish to voice my support for the nomination of Federico Peña to be Secretary of Energy during President Clinton's second term in office.

Mr. Peña served ably as Secretary of Transportation during the first Clinton Administration, and I look forward to working with him as he assumes new responsibilities at the Department of Energy. The challenges at DOE are vast, and Mr. Peña's management skills and ability to work with different groups should prove very useful in responding to the complex issues which are the responsibility of the Department of Energy.

Prior to joining the Clinton Administration, Mr. Peña served as Mayor of Denver from 1983 to 1991, and as a Colorado legislator. During his tenure as mayor, Mr. Peña played an active role in reviving the Denver economy from its mid-1980s decline through a series of bold initiatives. At a time when major new international airports were not being built in this country, he gained approval for one of the largest and most technological advanced airports in the world. As Secretary of Transportation, Mr. Peña proudly participated in the dedication of Denver International Airport in February, 1995.

While he served as Secretary of Transportation, I worked closely with