

And those moneys can be used with tax benefit to help children with education, K through 12—kindergarten through the 12th grade. That may be for computers, or it could be for a tutor. It could be for supplies, or it could be to make some decision on their own as parents as to where their children would go to school. It is the sort of thing we have for higher education in America.

I think one of the reasons we have very good higher education in America but much weaker elementary and secondary is because we don't have the same resource, the same opportunity, the same financial benefits available.

So I think this is a bill that has a lot of support. We saw that here in the vote earlier this year in the Senate.

I am glad that Senator DASCHLE indicates that they do not object to us getting to the substance of this bill.

With regard to amendments, I certainly think it would be a good idea and would want amendments to be offered. I would like for them certainly to be germane amendments. After we get cloture on this issue then we would go to the amendment process. I am sure that Senators on both sides of the aisle would probably have some amendments that they would like to offer.

I think, once again, it is very unfortunate that this matter would be tied up over the campaign finance reform issue. We continue to work to get some agreement that we can go along with.

As a matter of fact, once again, just like last week, I had thought we had an agreement. We had a unanimous-consent agreement typed up. Senator MCCAIN is now saying that is not what he meant, that is not what he wants, or he needs something different. But we will continue to work on it. Senator DASCHLE and I have talked. I have talked to interested Senators in trying to get resolution as to when it would be handled.

I say, again for the RECORD, it would be my intent to call this issue up before the end of the first week in March. I don't intend to fill the tree up. I would like amendments to be in order. The problem is Senator MCCAIN wants some specific extra provision as to what he might offer and how it would be voted on. That is what we are still working on. But we get very close, and then it slides back a bit. We will keep working on that because, again, I think it would be unfortunate if the Senate would continue to be tangled up on that issue while letting very, very important national issues like our national transportation infrastructure, highway improvement and educational opportunities in America—even fast-track trade agreements—because we can't get an agreement on this other issue.

But as majority leader I am going to call these important bills up. And this one will get a cloture vote, and then hopefully we will proceed to the substance and relevant amendments that would be offered.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I wish quickly to respond.

Mr. President, the distinguished majority leader mentioned several other pieces of legislation that have urgency to them. Our position has been all along that on those occasions where there is urgent legislation, we want to work with the majority to expeditiously move those bills through the process. One in particular is the 6-month ISTEAA bill. We have indicated that we are more than ready to respond to the bipartisan Governors' request stated yesterday in a letter that we pass a 6-month ISTEAA bill. Members of the House leadership have said they will only accept a short-term bill. The House short-term bill is currently on the calendar.

I hope we can take that House-passed bill, amend it with any improvements the Senate deems appropriate, and quickly to deal with the urgent matter of reauthorizing expired safety programs and the urgent matter of providing contract authority that the 6-month legislation addresses. So we are more than willing to work with our colleagues on such matters of urgency.

This tax bill, however, would not be called urgent. It may be, as the Senator has indicated, a popular bill. But there are other popular tax bills that didn't get in the budget reconciliation package last summer that many Senators want to revisit. This happens to be one of them.

We have a whole host of other tax provisions that we think the Senate, if we are going to have a tax bill, ought to at least give some thought to reconsideration.

So again we are certainly ready to work with our colleagues, and I am willing to work with the majority leader to see if we can't resolve that matter. But I am very hopeful and determined to ensure that we do come to some final agreement on a procedure on campaign finance, and, like the majority leader, I stand willing to work with those who have been very much involved in the issue to see if we can do that this week.

I will not object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER [Ms. COLLINS]. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, if I could just respond further, I think I have made it clear my commitments trying to get the ISTEAA extension highway infrastructure bill done. Basically, the Senate spent 2 weeks trying to get on the substance of that bill. Because of the unrelated campaign finance reform issue, the highway bill has had to be pulled. I indicated more than once repeatedly that if we didn't get cloture and get on the substance the Members that were blocking that bill would have to bear the responsibility for it. For those Governors and

those highway people that now would like some additional action, where were they a week ago? Why weren't they talking to the Senators that were opposing cloture that would allow us to get on to this highway bill?

So, if they have any ideas now as to how to proceed, I urge them to talk to the chairman and ranking member on the Environment and Public Works Committee and explain why they weren't involved a week or 2 weeks ago so we could get to the substance of this issue.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998, CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate turn to the consideration of the DOD authorization conference report, and it be considered as having been read.

Mr. DASCHLE. Reserving the right to object.

Mr. GRAMM. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I sought recognition.

Mr. GRAMM. Madam President, if I might have the indulgence of the majority leader to try to explain where we are, and I will do it very briefly.

We have before us a bill that would take 17 hours to read. It has 30 pages in it that are aimed primarily to prevent competition from occurring in defense. In preventing competition from occurring, it will cost the taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars, and it will prevent private contractors—some of whom might use facilities at Kelly Air Force Base in Texas or might use facilities at McClellan Air Force Base in California, or might use other facilities anywhere in the country—from competing.

Despite the fact that we have a bill that would take 17 hours to read, despite the fact that we have 30 pages of language which is primarily aimed at preventing this competition, in working with the Defense Department and with the White House, we have come up with 1 page of changes that if it could be made in technical corrections to the language of the bill, then we would happily get out of the way and let the bill pass.

The President, who is committed to veto the bill—and I put his letter in the RECORD—would then gladly sign the bill. So the point I would like to make is that while we are here to resist to the best of our ability—and we will resist—that we are only a few changes away from the ability to move ahead with a bill that not only could we pass this afternoon but that the President could sign.

It is my understanding that there may be other technical language changes related to an amendment that

Senator DOMENICI wrote that was adopted by the Senate, and then subsequently was technically changed by the staff. Senator DOMENICI is seeking to get a technical change to correct this mistake. I think if you look through the 30 pages of depot language—what the Leader is looking at—you can see that we are asking for hardly any changes, but that these are changes the Secretary of Defense and the President believe are critical to their ability to operate the Defense Department efficiently and to meet the national security needs of the country.

So, while we are here today to obstruct, we are willing, with just a few changes, to allow the bill to go forward, and in the process we can get a guarantee that the President will sign the bill.

So I would like to urge my colleagues to work with us to correct this 30 pages of language which is aimed at preventing competition.

So, while we obstruct, we hope to make progress.

And, based on that hope, I object.

Mr. LOTT. Under his reservations, would the Senator withhold on his objection, and allow me to make a comment and ask a question?

Mr. GRAMM. Certainly.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, if he would yield for a response, I understand that these few changes are about 30 pages.

Mr. GRAMM. No.

Mr. LOTT. I have been notified by four Senators that they have objections.

Mr. GRAMM. Those are the 30 pages in the bill. The only changes we are making are the changes that are written in black ink.

Mr. LOTT. Let me just say I have worked with this issue, as the Senator knows, and the other Senator from Texas, over the last 2 or 3 years. I know there are other Senators that have an interest in it and have different views. I know a mighty effort has been made on all sides. This is not a partisan issue. It is a difficult issue between some States, though, to try to resolve it.

I really felt like we were never to bring it to a head until we get this legislation started. That is my intent here. We are going to get it started off.

I have discussed with Senator DASCHLE the possibility that we at some point—we met this afternoon—we meet to see what else can be done. I am certainly willing to continue to work with both sides to try to find a resolution.

But we are running out of time in this session. This is a very, very important bill for national defense and the security of our country.

So I thought we should go ahead and get started. And hopefully that will cause us to try to find some way to resolve this one remaining—one remaining—very difficult issue to resolve.

I thank the Senator for withholding so I could make that comment.

Mr. GRAMM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the minority leader seek recognition?

Mr. DASCHLE. I do, Madam President. But I would be happy to allow the distinguished Senator from Texas to complete his remarks.

Mr. GRAMM. I was seeking recognition, Madam President, both to complete my remarks, and to object. If the distinguished minority leader wanted to speak before I objected, I would be glad to withhold.

Mr. DASCHLE. I appreciate the accommodation of the Senator from Texas.

Madam President, just very briefly, because the distinguished majority leader made some comments relating to the ISTEAM bill, let me just say as succinctly as I can, there is a difference between desirable outcome and an essential outcome. A 6-year bill certainly is desirable. I have long favored a 6-year bill with my full support. But a 6-month bill is now essential. House leaders have said they are not taking up the desirable bill. They are taking up the essential bill—the 6-month bill that bridges the two legislative sessions to accommodate our Nation's highway, transit and safety needs. We have come to the recognition, given our current circumstances, that the essential bill may be all we can do.

So I do think it is important as we consider these bills to recognize that there is a difference between essential and desirable. We recognize the importance of getting the essential work done. That is the reason we would support this afternoon taking up that bill.

I again appreciate the accommodation of the Senator from Texas.

I yield the floor.

Mr. GRAMM. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard to the unanimous-consent request.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998—CONFERENCE REPORT

MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I now move to proceed to the DOD authorization conference report.

MOTION TO POSTPONE

Mr. GRAMM. Madam President, I send a motion to postpone the motion to proceed to the desk, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will state the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Texas [Mr. GRAMM], moves to postpone the motion to proceed until January 15, 1998.

Several Senators addressed the Chair.

Mr. GRAMM. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is not a sufficient second.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President—

Mr. GRAMM. Let me ask the Chair.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I am raising my hand to go ahead and give a second.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mrs. HUTCHISON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 1526 TO MOTION TO POSTPONE

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I send an amendment to the motion to postpone to the desk, and ask for its immediate consideration.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I move to table the Gramm motion, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will first report the amendment from the Senator from Texas.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Texas [Mrs. HUTCHISON], proposes an amendment numbered 1526 to the motion by Mr. GRAMM to postpone the motion to proceed:

Strike the date and insert "January 18, 1998."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. LOTT. I move to table the Gramm motion, and I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. GRAMM. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded, only to ask unanimous consent that a staffer be allowed on the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the unanimous-consent request? Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Texas.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I ask unanimous consent my staff member, Karen Knutson, be allowed access to the floor.

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

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent that, prior to the motion to table vote, there be 45 minutes of debate only,