

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I certainly share the sentiment offered by the Senator from Arizona about the excitement of the Internet, the fascinating, remarkable growth of the telecommunications industry and all that it means for the future of our country and the world. Things are moving so quickly, and changing so rapidly, it is just breathtaking and very hard to keep up with. From a public policy standpoint, regarding the kind of legislation that will be brought to the floor of the Senate at some point—for example, such as the Internet Tax Freedom Act—it is very important that we understand exactly what we are doing and what the consequences of what we are doing might be now and in the future.

I would say the increased commerce over the Internet, that is increasing at a very dramatic pace, illustrates that there is nothing at the moment, nothing anywhere that I am aware of at the moment, that impedes the transaction of commerce on the Internet.

The very growth of that commerce suggests there are no impediments. One way to do commerce in this country is to set up a web page and advertise and sell books, automobiles, travel services, or whatever it is you want to advertise over the Internet. That is one way to do business.

Another way to do business is to rent a storefront someplace to get some inventory moved in, hire some people, open the door and put "Open for Business" and invite customers to come in and look at your merchandise and sell merchandise that way.

Still another way is to have your merchandise in a warehouse somewhere and send a catalog through the mail and do business through mail-order catalogs.

If the Congress decides to change the state and local Tax Codes related to all of those different ways of doing business, it is very important that we not create a circumstance where one way of doing business has preference over another way. I certainly hope that whatever we do to those involved in Internet transactions, we will say, "To whatever extent you are advantaged by this new legislation, the Main Street businesses will be similarly advantaged."

The Internet Tax Freedom Act is very controversial in my judgment. The concerns Governors and many others have about what impact it might or might not have on the State and local revenue bases are serious. The Internet Tax Freedom Act is a very significant piece of legislation and it is very controversial.

Another issue that the Senator from Arizona mentioned is the slamming issue. For those who are not familiar with slamming, it refers to the unauthorized practice of a company changing a consumer's telephone exchange

service or telephone toll service. In other words, a company says if you are using one long distance service, we are going to change that and your new long distance carrier is XYZ, and all of a sudden you begin getting bills from XYZ when, in fact, you never authorized changing your long-distance carrier. That is called slamming, and it is a growing, continual problem in this country.

The FCC had about 20,000 complaints of slamming in the last year. We understand the "king of slammers" identified by Chairman Kennard of the FCC is a man named Daniel Fletcher. GAO investigators allege that Fletcher switched at least a half million customers' long-distance service without their knowledge or consent.

I noticed a story in the paper this past weekend in North Dakota that one of the victims of slamming was the attorney general of North Dakota, Heidi Heitkamp. "Heitkamp Victim of Phone Billing Scam" reads one headline.

This company that was slamming would have been well-advised to stay away from the attorney general of that State.

I am confident that the North Dakota attorney general is on the case. She is aggressive and tough and will get to the bottom of who is involved in this slamming.

To all the slammers out there I will say, "Senator McCain, I and others will bring a piece of legislation to the floor that will attempt to shut the door on slamming. But, slammers might want to stay away from attorneys general and law enforcement officers, because it is against the law. We hope, prior to the legislation being passed, we can count on State authorities and the FCC to take appropriate action to levy fines and other penalties against those who are involved in this kind of activity.

There are a number of other issues we will discuss when we talk about slamming. I expect the U.S. Senate will pass this legislation by a wide, wide majority. It is a good piece of legislation. I compliment Senator McCain for bringing it to the floor. Only because the majority leader and minority leader have not talked and reached agreement on the question of procedure we are not able to proceed at this point. But I expect in the coming hours, when Senator LOTT and Senator DASCHLE will find a mechanism by which we are able to consider this legislation.

I just received a note from someone else, from another Senator in the Chamber that says, "I've been slammed twice." I don't know if that Senator wishes to be identified. In any event, it is not something that only relates to attorneys general. I have not been slammed once, and I am not looking forward to the first slam. Hopefully, before that happens, this kind of legislation can pass. Those who have been victims will be victims no more, and those who have been involved in slamming will begin to pay a significant price for criminal behavior.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—
S. 1150

Mr. LUGAR. Madam President, on behalf of the majority leader, after consultation with the minority leader, I ask unanimous consent that the Chair lay before the Senate the conference report accompanying S. 1150, the agriculture research bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. GRAMM. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. GRAMM. Madam President, as the distinguished chairman of the Agriculture Committee knows, we agreed previously not to have a recorded vote today. It is my intention, when the conference report is before the Senate, to have at least one motion to recommend with instructions. So rather than have that debate today when no one is here to listen to it, when we know it will have to be debated on another day if we are going to have a recorded vote, I suggest that we simply begin the debate on this issue today and that we bring it up tomorrow, or some date in the future when we can have a recorded vote following a debate on the motion.

I ask that we simply begin the debate today and that we agree on some future date to readdress this question. On that basis, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The Senator from Indiana.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, EXTENSION, AND EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 1998—CONFERENCE REPORT

MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. LUGAR. Madam President, I now move to proceed to the conference report accompanying S. 1150.

Mr. GRAMM. Madam President, I ask that the bill be read.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to read the conference report.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. It is not in order to suggest the absence of a quorum. The clerk will continue to read.

The assistant legislative clerk continued with the reading of the conference report.