

We have an obligation to protect victims. We also have an obligation to protect the Constitution of the United States.

For those reasons, with all due respect to my colleagues whom I highly respect and have a great regard for—I have worked with my colleague from California on numerous issues, and with my colleague from Arizona, not as many, but I have a high regard for him, for his abilities, and for his contribution to the Senate—I urge them to take the language they proposed, and let's work with it. Let's see if we can't draft a statute that would allow us to address the legitimate concerns of victims. Write it into the ordinances of our land. Test it in the courts, if you will, but do not tamper at this juncture with the Constitution of the United States.

I see the arrival of my good friend whom I just referred to by thanking him publicly for giving me my copy of the Constitution, which I carry with me.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, earlier I put into the RECORD the letter that I was honored to sign with the distinguished Senator from West Virginia explaining why we should not go forward with this amendment to the Constitution.

Let me say one last thing on this. Ours is a powerful Constitution. It is inspiring because of what it allows. It is inspiring because it protects the liberty of all of us.

Think of the responsibility the 100 of us here have. Let us be good stewards. Let's keep for our children and our children's children the Constitution with protections as well considered as those bequeathed to us by the founders, the patriots, and the hard-working Americans who preceded us. Work together to improve crime victims' rights in legislation. Let the States do the same. But let us remember that the 100 of us are the ones who must reserve constitutional amendments for those matters for which there are no other alternatives available, and this is not such a matter.

I yield the floor.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority leader, I ask consent that when the Senate receives the veto message to accompany the nuclear waste bill, it be considered as read by the clerk and spread in full upon the Journal and then temporarily laid aside, with no call for the regular order returning the veto message as the pending business in order.

I further ask consent that at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 2, the Senate proceed to the veto message and there be 90 minutes under the control of Senator MURKOWSKI and 90 minutes under the control of Senators REID and BRYAN.

I further ask consent that the Senate stand in recess for the weekly party

conferences between the hours of 12:30 and 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday, May 2, 2000.

I further ask consent that at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday, there be an additional 30 minutes under the control of Senators REID and BRYAN and 30 minutes under the control of Senator MURKOWSKI and at 3:15 p.m. the Senate proceed to vote on the question "Shall the bill pass, the objections of the President to the contrary notwithstanding?" all without any intervening action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Chair notes for the record the receipt by the Senate of the President's veto message on S. 1287, which, under the previous order, shall be considered as read and spread in full upon the Journal and shall be laid aside until 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 2, 2000.

PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF CRIME VICTIMS—Motion to Proceed—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to yield my time to the distinguished senior Senator from West Virginia.

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

The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I have listened to the comments by my colleagues, those who are proponents of the proposed constitutional amendment before the Senate, and I have listened to the comments of many of my colleagues who have spoken in opposition to the proposed amendment. I compliment both sides on the debate. I think it is an enlightening debate.

I will have more to say if the motion to proceed is agreed to.

In view of the statements that have been made by several of those who are opposed to the amendment—the Senator from New York (Mr. SCHUMER), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), and the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), and others, they have cogently and succinctly expressed my sentiments in opposition to the amendment.

I congratulate the Senator from Vermont, Mr. LEAHY, on his statements in opposition thereto, as well as the leadership he has demonstrated not only on this proposed constitutional amendment but also in reference to other constitutional amendments before the Senate in recent days and in years past. He is a dedicated Senator in every respect. He certainly is dedicated to this Federal Constitution and very ably defends the Constitution.

I do not say that our Constitution is static. John Marshall said it was a Constitution that was meant for the ages. I will go into that more deeply later. At a later date, I will address this particular amendment.

But having been a Member of the Congress now going on 48 years, I may not be an expert on the Constitution, but I have become an expert observer of what is happening in this Congress and its predecessor Congresses, and an observer of what is happening by way of the Constitution. I consider myself to be as much an expert in that regard as anybody living because I have been around longer than most people. I have now been a Member of Congress, including both Houses, longer than any other Member of the 535 Members of Congress today.

I must say that I am very concerned about the cavaliness which I have observed with respect to the offering of constitutional amendments. There seems to be a cavalier spirit abroad which seems to say that if it is good politically, if it sounds good politically, if it looks good politically, if it will get votes, let's introduce an amendment to the Constitution. I am not saying that with respect to proponents of this amendment, but, in my own judgment, I have seen a lot of that going on.

I don't think there is, generally speaking, a clear understanding and appreciation of American constitutionalism. I don't think there is an understanding of where the roots of this Constitution go. I don't think there is an appreciation for the fact that the roots of this Constitution go 1,000 years or more back into antiquity. I do not address this proposed constitutional amendment as something that is necessary, nor do I address this, the Constitution today, as something that just goes back to the year 1787, 212 years ago.

The Constitution was written by men who had ample experience, who benefited by their experience as former Governors, as former members of their State legislatures, as former members of the colonial legislatures which preceded the State legislatures, as former Members of the Continental Congress which began in 1794, as Members of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation which became effective in 1781. Some of the members of the convention came from England, from Scotland, from Ireland. Alexander Hamilton was born in the West Indies. These men were very well acquainted with the experiences of the colonialists. They were very much aware of the weaknesses, the flaws in the Articles of Confederation. They understood the State constitutions. Most of the 13 State constitutions were written in the years 1776 and 1777. Many of the men who sat in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 had helped to create those State constitutions of 1776 and 1777 and subsequent thereto. Many of them had experience on the bench. They had experiences in dealing with Great Britain during and prior to the American Revolution. Some of them had fought in Gen. George Washington's polyglot, motley army. These men came with great experience. Franklin was 81 years