

arguments on the bills where we have real differences that we ought not have arguments on bills where we may not have any real differences. But I would just like to caution, or raise one point of caution. We are going to go into conference again on the Interior bill about 2:30. We were in conference on it this morning until it was interrupted for a rollcall vote on the House floor and a leadership meeting, as I understand it. If we go back in, if everything goes well and everything is kissy-face and nobody has any problems with it, we might be able to finish by 5 o'clock or so, very optimistically speaking. But at that point it is my understanding that there is an expectation that there would then be a follow-up meeting with the White House to try to discuss the known objections that the White House has to the conference as it is being formed right now.

Right now there are at least eight items which are still considered vetoable. One is the land legacy item where we have not only a \$500 million difference but substantial differences not between the parties but between the Congress as an institution and the Presidency as an institution on how that package is to be handled.

We have considerable shortfalls in the Native American health area, which the White House is insisting be restored. We have a problem with energy conservation funds. We still have a large argument on the arts. We have had three additional riders that were added in the conference last night, the White River Forest in Colorado, the White Mountain rider in New Hampshire, and now the conferees are possibly going to also include a hard rock mining amendment.

If that is the case, then we will have matters of major controversy between the Congress and the White House that still have to be resolved. Assuming that could be done today, which is a huge assumption, and my evaluation is that there is not much chance that is going to occur in that short a period, but assuming that could happen sometime today, it will take at least 7 or 8 hours after drafting those changes to get that bill in a position where the committee will then have to do its read-out where we walk through every paragraph to make certain that the bill does what the conferees agree.

That means they will have to work all night. The earliest that they could possibly file would be about 5 or 6 in the morning. The earliest the Committee on Rules could meet would be tomorrow morning. Normal order would require a 1-day layover. And, in my view, it is highly unlikely that we are going to get there that fast. I do think if we can work out the differences, the bill could be ready for a vote on Monday. But I have very strong doubts that there is a prayer it will be ready tomorrow. And while we will be here on the Committee on Appropriations and I know the leadership will be here, I would simply ask the gentleman

what is the utility of inconveniencing other Members who could go home or do whatever else they need to do rather than holding out a smidgen of a hope that this bill could be moved up one day? In my view given the large number of controversial items hanging out there, that is not likely to happen.

I assure the gentleman I am raising this simply to try to help meet the convenience of Members who have a right to have a realistic assessment of what is likely to happen on this bill.

1330

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BONIOR. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BONIOR) for yielding to me.

I want to personally thank the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) for outlining before the body the enormity of the task and the enormous amount of work that there is. And, in fact, I appreciate the Subcommittee on Interior's efforts to accomplish this work.

I think the gentleman has spoken eloquently and completely about how much good work they are doing and how important it is, and we can do nothing other than to elevate the appreciation.

I know the Members of this body will show to the members of the Subcommittee on Interior their appreciation and, in fact, to even sharpen their degree of willingness to encourage them in completing this work. But the fact remains that every Member here in this body was notified in January that on this week the House would be in session and would be available to consider these very important bills until 2 o'clock on Friday; and within the constraints then of that, due and full notification to all of us was given to plan our year, and, indeed, this week within this year.

I believe the only fair way for us to show our appreciation for the appropriators is to wait upon their work, encourage them in every way, and to be available to then take our next step in the completion of the House's consideration of that bill after what the gentleman has clearly outlined will be for today and this evening and tomorrow morning a heroic effort on their part and one we certainly will want to stand and applaud them for when we have the bill on the floor.

Mr. OBEY. If the gentleman would continue to yield.

Mr. BONIOR. I yield further to the gentleman.

Mr. OBEY. Madam Speaker, I certainly would like to say it is no skin off my nose if other Members are kept here, because I am going to have to be here anyway. But I really do believe that Members need to understand that the percentage chance we have of actually having an agreed bill that is not going to be vetoed, ready for the House to vote on by tomorrow is about 3 percent.

I would note, for instance, that the National Journal indicated that last week when the House took up the NASA authorization act, it actually voted on and passed the wrong bill. It had the wrong text when we voted on it last week, and that is why we have to go through these readouts and we will be here.

We will have to go through those readouts, but I do not think it helps individual Members for them to have to be stuck in their offices when they could be doing something more useful while we are running through those readouts to make certain that that does not happen again, when, in fact, the bill could easily be ready for Monday consideration if we reach agreement on it and we would not have messed up any other Members' schedules.

Mr. ARMEY. If the gentleman would continue to yield.

Mr. BONIOR. I yield further to the gentleman.

Mr. ARMEY. Madam Speaker, I want to again affirm before the body that the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) has very good points in support of our commitment as a body to do the Nation's work, complete the Nation's work, and get it done as soon as is possible. I have no doubt that the gentleman from Wisconsin will be instrumental in that task, because he works in the committee to see that the work is done completely and accurately; and we appreciate the gentleman from Wisconsin for his effort.

Madam Speaker, the House will stand now in anticipation of the committee completing their work. We will continue to stay in touch with the committee as their work proceeds, and should there at any time between now and tomorrow be any information that would change the circumstances, I would be happy to come to the floor and announce it to the body. But for now, I want to thank all the Members for their cooperation, their understanding, their patience and their commitment to the Nation's work and look forward to just being on the floor and voting that bill in the morning.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. BIGGERT). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. METCALF) is recognized for 5 minutes.