

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. I thank the Senator from Arizona for his normal courtesy to me as manager of the bill that we are trying to bring up. I did not object on my own behalf and he knows that full well. But I do believe we all know what the situation is.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—  
H.R. 4475

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask consent that the Senate now proceed to the Transportation appropriations conference report, notwithstanding the receipt of the papers from the House.

I further ask consent that the conference report be considered under the following time agreement: 10 minutes for the chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee; 10 minutes for the chairman and ranking member; of the appropriations subcommittee; and 15 minutes under the control of Senator MCCAIN.

I further ask consent that following the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on the adoption of the conference report, without any intervening action or debate.

Mr. MCCAIN. I object.

Mr. STEVENS. I thank the Senator for his normal courtesy.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I will take 10 minutes in morning business while we are trying to work things out here on the floor.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for just one moment?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I am pleased to yield.

Mr. STEVENS. For the purpose of managing the floor, would there be an objection if we extended morning business until 11 a.m.? The papers are not here on the Transportation appropriations bill.

EXTENSION OF MORNING  
BUSINESS

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended to the hour of 11 a.m.

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

The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield, just so I can enter into a colloquy with my friend?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I am pleased to yield.

Mr. REID. I say to Senator STEVENS, the problem we are having on this side, as I know you are having on your side

of the aisle, is whether there is going to be any votes this morning. Would you be able to determine that quickly from your leader, as to whether or not there is going to be a vote? We have a number of Senators, with the holiday coming up, with places to go. We need to know whether there is going to be a vote this morning.

Mr. STEVENS. I say with due respect to my friend—and despite words at times, he is my friend—I believe the Senator from Arizona would have to answer that. It is our intention, once the papers are here, to move to proceed to that conference report. That is not a debatable item. There would be a vote immediately. After that, the conference report would be before the Senate, I would ask for the yeas and nays, and it would be a matter of time, how much time the Senator from Arizona wishes to debate the bill.

I know of no other speakers.

Mr. REID. I have spoken to my friend from Arizona and there is no question he is going to want to speak for more than a half-hour or an hour.

Mr. STEVENS. I would expect that. I honor his right to do so. It would be my predilection that you should address that to the leader. The question is how late in the day would the Senator from Arizona finish his brief comments?

Mr. REID. If, in fact, he would finish today.

Mr. STEVENS. That is for the Senator from Arizona to determine.

Mr. REID. I guess my question to the Senator from Alaska is, if we do not vote on that, does the majority leader want us to vote on something else today? I hope in the next few minutes there could be a determination made as to whether or not, around 11 o'clock when we finish morning business, there will be a vote on something other than the Transportation appropriations bill.

Mr. STEVENS. I might say to my good friend from Nevada, and to the Senate as a whole, it has been my request to the leader that we proceed with appropriations bills and only appropriations bills so we can get them to the President. We have been doing that. We do have other appropriations bills on the move now. The Agriculture conference was finished last evening. I do not think we can get to that today. But I do believe we should try to finish the Transportation bill today if we can and take up Agriculture appropriations next week.

We have three other conferences that are going forward and we do, I understand, have an agreement now—nearly an agreement on how to handle the VA-HUD bill. So we should be voting on several bills early next week. But I do not know of any other bill that we can get before the Senate today in the form of a conference report. I do think we could handle the VA-HUD bill if we could round up that agreement. It is still waiting for one clearance. I doubt we will finish that one today. We should take that up early next week, however.

Mr. REID. It sounds to me it is fairly safe to assume there will not be any votes on appropriations bills today. As I said, I have spoken to my friend from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. If my friend will yield, I am seeking agreement to take up this legislation on which American lives are at stake—not money but safety and lives of Americans. I am seeking an agreement to take that up. If we could get agreement to get that bill up, with relevant amendments, then I will be more than happy to not impede the work of the Senate.

I do not know of a higher priority than to take up legislation about a compelling issue that has to do with the lives of the American people. So I hope we could get an agreement to take up that legislation, either now or in the next several days. Then I would certainly remove my objections to proceeding with an appropriations bill. Apparently, that is not the case because there are “rolling holds” on this legislation. I think that is really quite remarkable.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, as the Senator from Arizona knows, I am a member of the conference committee, and I support the legislation he mentions. But I also know portions of it are in this bill and were agreed to by the Transportation conference committee, and the matter he suggests is a leadership issue. I am in no position to negotiate on when the bill, that I also support, would come up. But I do believe our problem is trying to get this bill on its way. We cannot flood the White House with bills, appropriations bills, and expect to get answers in time.

We are trying to get them down day by day so we can get some timing and get some response. If the President wishes to veto them, we will have to come back and deal with those, too.

But we are trying to move this bill. This bill is ready to go. The Transportation bill is ready to go. It contains a portion of the bill the Senator from Arizona has mentioned—not all of it but a portion of it. It is not negative, but it is not totally positive.

I do believe the issue he reaches, whether or not the Senate will allow the consideration of the bill—that is under consideration now in the House—at any particular time, is a matter for the leader to determine, not for me. I would like to move forward with this Transportation bill. I urge my friend to allow us to do that because it is a significant bill, one of the most significant Transportation bills on which I have been privileged to work. It sets a new process for trying to reduce the increasing numbers of drunken drivers on our highways.

If there is a safety problem out there that is greater than the one the Senator from Arizona mentioned, it is alcohol. I do not want to see this bill delayed. I would like to see it get to the President. I am informed the President will sign it. I hope he will. We could get