

So I compliment my colleague from Arizona. I hope our colleagues would possibly even reconsider and let us pass this bill tonight or tomorrow.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, under my reservation, I remind the Senator from Arizona and the Senator from Oklahoma that on Friday of last week we agreed on this side to have the Senate bill brought before the Senate at that time, pursuant to the unanimous consent request of the Senator from Arizona, to have relevant amendments. We have no objection to that coming before the Senate and working on it that way.

This matter which has just passed the House, we just got it a matter of minutes ago—not hours ago; minutes ago—and we have two Senators who want to look at this legislation. They have some idea that they want to offer relevant amendments. We know that, come the light of day, they may not want to offer those relevant amendments, but now they do.

So I say to my friend from Arizona that he can come back after Senator ROBERTS speaks, but the same objection will be there unless we hear in the interim that the Senators, for some unknown reason, withdraw their objections.

On that, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. McCAIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona retains the floor.

Mr. McCAIN. Let me just say that I will be here on the floor. If the two Senators who object from the other side of the aisle would like to come down, I would be glad to discuss their concerns. I would be glad to commit to holding hearings, along with Senator HOLLINGS, next year to try to perfect this bill.

I know my friend from South Carolina has serious concerns about the safe harbor aspect of this bill. I intend to work with him to tighten it up. I much would have preferred the bill pass through the Senate, let me tell you.

We inaugurated a little phrase called “straight talk” back when I was seeking another office. I will tell you, in straight talk, what this is all about. This is the trial lawyers against the automotive interests. Trial lawyers do not want it because they do not like the provisions. They want to be able to sue anybody for anything under any circumstances. And the automotive industry wants this thing killed, figuring that the publicity surrounding these accidents and these tragedies that are taking place will die out and they will be able to kill off this legislation next year.

Straight talk, Mr. President, that is really what it is all about. It is another compelling argument for campaign finance reform because neither the trial lawyers who want to make this bill untenable for the manufacturers, nor the manufacturers who want to water down

this bill so dramatically that it will have no effect, should be the ones who are driving this problem.

This legislation is all about saving lives and preventing injuries. So what we are seeing here is that special interests are winning again. I think it is wrong. I don't know how you go back to the American people and say we didn't enact legislation—we could not get together after a unanimous vote in the House—to resolve some concerns over an issue that “would save lives and prevent injuries.”

Mr. REID. If the Senator will yield, I say to my friend, he and I came to Washington at the same time 18 years ago. I know he has more patience than I, but we have to have a little bit of patience. In this instance, I don't think it is going to require a great deal of patience. We are going to be in session tomorrow, and I think there is a very good possibility, as I see it, that the persuasive arguments Senators have made today and last week will prevail and this legislation will pass.

As things now stand, we have people who haven't been able to read the bill. They may have some problems with it. The ranking member, the Senator from South Carolina, and some of our people over here—and, of course, the Senator from South Carolina works well with the Senator from Arizona, and we will see what we can do to get this wrapped up.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, in closing, I appreciate the efforts on the part of the Senator from Nevada. As he said, he and I came to Congress together many years ago, and we are good friends. I want to also, again, pay great praise to Senator HOLLINGS, who has really had to go a long way in compromising in order to see that this legislation is passed. I will be seeking unanimous consent tomorrow morning. I am not exactly sure when, but it will be sometime in the morning when it fits in with the parliamentary procedures. I hope the unanimous consent request can be agreed to. I thank my friend from South Carolina and the Senator from Nevada. I know we will be working assiduously to try to get these objections solved.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. HOLLINGS. Mr. President, I don't want the Senator to take back his praise, but let me clear the record relative to trial lawyers. Trial lawyers got us where we are. If it hadn't been for trial lawyers bringing the cases and filing some of the reports made on the recoveries thereof, we would not have awakened, literally, and awakened our own Commerce Committee to have the hearings to put us on the floor this evening.

I am intimate with the trial lawyer movement in this country. I can tell you that they have become a whipping boy for Tom Donahue and his blooming Chamber of Commerce, and any time you want to pass some measure like

the Y2K bill, the trial lawyers had no objection whatsoever.

I have to correct the record because the chairman said that is the contest that is going on, about the right to sue and everything else. They have the right. The right is there and neither the Senate bill nor the House bill denies that right. We strengthen it with the reporting and then make the reports public so they can be attained, and they can avoid going to court on cases and avoid trial lawyers. So this particular bill is agreed to by this particular trial lawyer—either the Senate or the House version this evening, right now. I would vote for either one of them. But I think we can get a much better bill with the Senate bill. I wanted to correct the comments made about the trial lawyers because they have been there bringing peace and justice and safety to America's consumers. They got us this far, and I am proud to commend the trial lawyers for doing their work and saving lives.

I yield the floor.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I have one comment in response to my friend. I knew any comment about trial lawyers would not go unnoticed by him. As always, I am very appreciative of his comments.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I want to join the Democratic whip in propounding the identical unanimous consent request with regard to the bringing up of the DOD conference report as stated to the Senate by the distinguished majority leader just moments ago.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have no objection. The staffs of Senator LEVIN and Senator WARNER have worked out the problem.

Just a minute, Mr. President.

Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, we are not going to be able to do the agreement. There is a procedural problem with the Agriculture authorization, which goes first. We will work on that later.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I handed the Senator a colloquy which Senator LEVIN signed. The Senator raising the objection signed the colloquy.

Mr. REID. Why don't we have the Senator from Kansas speak, and we will see if anything can be done.

Mr. WARNER. I withdraw the request.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now be in a period for morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). Without objection, it is so ordered.