

The President met with them, both before it was finalized and after it was finalized. The President said: If the Senate passes it and if the House passes it, I will sign it.

So I think the President of the United States—albeit he is a Republican—was out in front on this issue, both from the standpoint of the original proposals and from the standpoint of trying to get something that could pass the Senate that he could sign.

We heard from the distinguished majority leader a little earlier about how Republicans objected to help for unemployed workers and having health insurance for unemployed workers coming up on the airline bailout bill. But we were following the consensus of people who were suggesting that if we were going to have a stimulus package, that there should not be anything in it that was industry specific—industry specific meaning helping just unemployed people in the airline industry when you have other unemployed people who would not get help. Consequently, we were following the advice of people such as Chairman Greenspan to be very generic in our approach to helping business or to helping individuals.

On the other hand, I do not like the accusation that somehow helping the airline industry did not help the workers. If those airlines had gone under, instead of there being 30,000 people unemployed, there would have been 330,000 people unemployed. Keeping the airlines flying kept workers on the job and less of them laid off.

We recognize that laid-off workers need help. Obviously, that is why the President came out with a proposal. It was not an industry-specific proposal but was a generic approach to help workers—and not just from the airline industry but from all industries—with the additional 13 weeks of unemployment benefits.

It was also said that Republicans refused to negotiate for 3 weeks. This was that period of time when there were shackles put on Democrat negotiators when we negotiated with them. That was part of it. But also that does not give credit to the hours and hours that Senator BAUCUS and I spent negotiating prior to a bill ever coming up on the floor of the Senate. It does not take into consideration, also, the fact that, at the instigation of the majority leader, the Senate Finance Committee met, and contrary to how we normally do our business in a bipartisan way, there was a push to get a very partisan bill out of the Senate Finance Committee. And it did come out on a party-line vote.

So it seems to me that if we are going to be accusatory, we ought to take into consideration that when there was an opportunity to develop a bill in a committee—the Senate Finance Committee, which almost always does things in a bipartisan way—there was an effort to go strictly partisan and the result was to go strictly partisan.

We have the President of the United States pushing more than anyone else, and the House Republicans passed a bill in early fall. That was a bill not very many people liked. The House accepted that. They scaled the bill back and agreed to go to conference a quasi-conference, not a formal conference such as we used to have.

The House of Representatives, in this informal setting, along with representatives of the White House, made this deal with the Senate centrists, what I call the White House-centrist bipartisan package that would have a majority vote of the Senate, albeit not the 60 votes that are required.

The bottom line is that the President of the United States, in saying he would sign the bill, and the House of Representatives, in passing it, took up the challenge and did what needed to be done. Here we are, once again, in the Senate ignoring something that had a majority bipartisan vote in December before we went home for the holidays. Here we are again. Presumably, it has the same bipartisan votes we had then.

Look with me at the other side of the aisle. I already mentioned the partisan bill in the Finance Committee. I already mentioned the intractable position in conference over non-COBRA eligible, meaning when you are unemployed, you only have to take the insurance from where you were laid off, and if you did not have that insurance, you would not be able to get any other insurance under that proposal.

We allow people to continue the insurance from where they worked with 60-percent credit, but we also allow people who are unemployed who did not have insurance where they last worked to get the same 60-percent credit. But there was an ideological block to that on the part of Democrats who were negotiating. Then we had the refusal of a vote in December on the White House-centrist agreement.

I think the Democratic leadership has resisted movement to the center represented by a bipartisan group of Republicans and Democrats who call themselves the centrists. Even though I am more conservative, I have bought into that plan as one we ought to pass in the Senate. Many amendments have been filed, debated, and voted on, so we have been trying to move this bill along.

I am going to finish where I started last December. Let's have a vote on the White House-centrist agreement. If we pass it, the President will sign it. The unemployed will get their unemployment checks, payroll taxpayers will get rebate checks from the Federal Treasury, middle-income taxpayers will get more money in their paychecks, and the unemployed will get help with health care.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session at 5:15 p.m. today to consider Executive Calendar No. 643, the nomination of Callie V. Granade, to be United States District Judge; that there be 15 minutes equally divided between the chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee or their designees, for debate on the nomination; that at 5:30 p.m., the Senate vote on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that any statements related to the nomination be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action; and that the Senate return to legislative session.

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

Mr. REID. As in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to request the yeas and nays on the nomination at this time.

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

Mr. REID. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

#### HOPE FOR CHILDREN ACT— Continued

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have the greatest respect for my friend from Iowa. He is a person who has always been very deliberate and never hides his positions. I have no doubt if he were the one calling the shots and, as he said—and I am using his words—if it was in his pay grade, I am confident this legislation, the economic recovery bill, would have moved much further along.

I have to say in response to my friend from Iowa that he is really looking at this matter, as he set out on the record, with a pair of glasses that do not magnify properly. They want to do what they want rather than go through the regular process and have legislation that we can amend, the so-called centrist package. The problem in all this—and the majority leader laid this out very well earlier this afternoon—in the Senate, whether we like it or not, it takes 60 votes to pass legislation. If someone opposes what you are trying to do, then you have to have 60 votes to break a filibuster and, in some cases, to overcome a point of order.

The fact is, the items the Senator from Iowa mentioned, about which he feels so strongly, do not have 60 votes. The two leaders know that.

Senator DASCHLE, after literally months of wrangling on this, said: OK, all this out here we do not agree on, but there are four things on which we can agree; why don't we pass something that has those four measures in it?