

So I ask unanimous consent that, at 3 p.m., Monday, March 18, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 318, H.R. 2356, the campaign finance reform legislation, and that the cloture vote on the motion to proceed be vitiated.

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

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, we will continue to take this matter one step at a time. We are encouraging Senators to express themselves on campaign finance reform tomorrow, or on energy tomorrow. My hope is that the Senator from Arizona, Mr. KYL, and other Senators who wish to be heard on their amendments, will offer them tomorrow, will debate them tomorrow, will make sure that we use the day we have available to us tomorrow to move the legislative process along. That is also true on Monday. We will come in at 3. We encourage Senators to offer amendments on the campaign finance reform bill on Monday. We will have further discussions, of course, with our colleagues with regard to the campaign finance reform bill. I will say, if there are amendments to be offered, we will have debate and further consideration of those amendments on Monday and Tuesday.

It would be my expectation to file cloture on the bill for a cloture vote on Wednesday, as we currently expect it. That would then require the vote, as I have said on many occasions, no later than Friday, which would accommodate our schedule for the balance of next week.

I have said, and will repeat, if there is a way we can resolve whatever other outstanding procedural questions between now and Monday, or between now and Wednesday, I am certainly more than ready to do so. But I appreciate at least this progress. We will have more to say beginning Monday.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Will the majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. DASCHLE. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Assuming, Mr. President, the schedule of campaign finance being resolved Wednesday, is it the majority leader's intention, then, to go back to energy?

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, the Senator is correct. My hope is we can finish this bill sometime soon. It would be my desire to continue to work on it until we do so, with the exception, of course, of the campaign finance reform bill.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. And, Mr. President, recognizing that may be extended, I gather the agreement is still under consideration, but if it is prolonged, do you intend to proceed and conclude campaign finance and then ultimately go back to energy?

Mr. DASCHLE. The Senator is correct.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair. I thank the leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL LABORATORIES PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2001—Continued

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, let me inquire about the parliamentary situation. Is the energy bill still pending, and is there an amendment pending at this time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The energy bill is pending, and the Bingaman plan to the energy bill is pending.

NOMINATION OF CHARLES PICKERING

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, notwithstanding that, and after a discussion with Senator DASCHLE, I will take leader time to make some remarks about the vote just taken in the Judiciary Committee. I yield myself leader time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, this is my 14th year in the Senate. There have been a lot of high moments and low moments in that tenure. I certainly worked very hard, and in my position as majority leader, I learned a lot of lessons. As you go along, sometimes you do things that Senators agree with, and sometimes they do not—on both sides of the aisle. I understand that.

But I must say that I feel about as bad about the Senate right now as I have in the years that I have been watching the Senate and that I have been in the Senate. I think the Senate Judiciary Committee just participated in a miscarriage of justice. I am very much concerned about the effect it is going to have on the Senate, and on our relationship on both sides of the aisle.

The Senate Judiciary Committee just voted against the nomination of Judge Charles Pickering from Mississippi to move from the Southern District Court of Mississippi to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. They voted against, as I understand, reporting out his nomination unfavorably, and they voted against reporting out his nomination without recommendation. That was not exactly the sequence, or exactly the motion. The fact is they have voted against the nomination of this very fine man.

I think for the Judiciary Committee to take the action as they did is very unfortunate and very unfair to a man I have known directly and personally for about 40 years.

I know him as an individual. I know his family. I have been in his home. I have been to football games with him. I have been to campground rallies with him, and I know him very well. He certainly is qualified and certainly deserves better treatment than he has received in this process. I think this is a continuation of the politics of personal destruction. I think his character has been smeared. I think a lot of incorrect information and misleading information was put out about the judge. That was wrong.

Now a number of Senators are saying: Well, yes, we realize that information is not right but voted against him anyway. As a matter of fact, this judge has been very courageous and has been a moderating force and a leader in trying to bring about reconciliation and bringing people together—not drive them apart, particularly in the area of race relations in our State.

I think one thing that strikes me so hard and has hurt me about this is because, once again, I believe this is a slap at Mississippi, my State. I think that some people thought: Oh, well. Good. This is a Federal district judge. He is a known conservative. He is a known Republican. He was selected on the recommendation of TRENT LOTT and THAD COCHRAN by President George W. Bush, and he is from Mississippi. This is one we can nail. He surely must have a bad record over his lifetime, being from that State, on race relations.

Now, people and members of the media that had earlier been critical of him said: No, no, no. We didn't mean that. We never really said that. We take it back. Maybe he has been OK in this area, but now our complaint is something about his demeanor on the bench that we don't like.

But I think, once again, there are people trying to use the ghosts of the past to keep us from rising up and looking toward the future together in a positive way.

When you have African Americans, women, and just about every Democrat in the State saying this is a good man and he ought to be confirmed, you ought to begin to ask yourself something. In fact, somebody said: Well, the national NAACP said he shouldn't be confirmed. However, the local people within the NAACP who know him best say he should be confirmed. When asked about that, and about the response of the people who know him best, one of the critic's responses was: well, they were duped. You don't dupe a lot of people when you live in Laurel, MS, on issues such as race relations. Everybody knows everybody. Everybody knows where you were in 1967, where you were in 1980, and where you have been in the 1990s.

So I take it personally. I am hurt by the attacks on this fine man. He does