

likely will not be in session on Friday out of consideration for the Democratic gathering and planned meeting. That will be similar to the following Friday as well. We will have further announcements on that schedule during the course of the week.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if I may say before the leader leaves the floor, I believe we had a productive week last week. It was extremely difficult and contentious at times. When it ended, I think it was good. I hope the leader will use whatever influence he has, which is significant, to have the conference move forward. We need to get this bill done. I hope the leader will do whatever he can to have the House and the Senate begin meeting immediately, and, of course, the way it works is the administration is heavily involved in those conferences. This is so important. I hope we start that "yesterday."

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I, too, will encourage our colleagues in the Senate and in the House of Representatives and the administration with regard to having an expeditious process. We all did work very hard. We had a recess that had been initially planned, and with the goal of being able to accomplish what we all set out to accomplish—and that is completion of these appropriations bills—all of us came back from that recess, worked together hand in hand, and accomplished a lot. So over the course of today, we will be talking to our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and bicamerally, so we can expeditiously bring this legislation to a conclusion.

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#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

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#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 12:30 p.m., with the time to be divided as previously ordered, and with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho is recognized.

Mr. CRAIG. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. CRAIG, Mr. CRAPO, and Mr. LOTT pertaining to the introduction of S. 219 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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#### THE STATE OF THE UNION

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, tonight our President comes to Capitol Hill, as Presidents historically do, to deliver a State of the Union Message both to us here in Congress and to the country at large. I would have to say that this State of the Union probably, in his Presidency, is one of the most critical.

We have a very bold President who has not ducked from any of his responsibilities, and in so he has been a very dynamic, forceful leader for our country. Tonight I believe he comes to Capitol Hill to challenge us here in the Congress on a variety of fronts, to challenge us to do our work in a bipartisan way, not only for our country and for the citizens of our country but for the world at large. This is a President who tonight will speak on a variety of topics. Let me talk about four areas I think he will dwell on for much of his time.

First of all is growing our economy and creating jobs. There is no question that we are in, and have come through, a recession. We have men and women in our country who are out of work. The economy has slowed. The revenues to government have frustrated our States. Certainly we have to recognize and deal with that here, as revenues have declined. But most important, clearly it is an issue of men and women out of work. He will challenge us to grow our economy and to create new jobs, and he will do so by the dynamic approach of the stimulus package that will have tax reduction in it, to get money back into the economy and out to not only the job creator but middle-income Americans themselves, those who are the hard-working men and women of our country.

It will be argued from the other side, with oftentimes the gnashing of teeth and the wringing of hands, that somehow the President is going to take money away from Government. Somehow, it is Government, if you leave the money in Government, that will create all of these jobs and will provide the safety net and the security for the American people. Yet just last week we saw our colleagues on the other side offer amendment after amendment that would have driven up our deficit by nearly \$450 billion to \$500 billion over the next several years. They clearly demonstrated that their intent is to keep all the money they can get and spend it, instead of in any way trying to create a package that will not take money out of the pockets of the working men and women of our country but will also generate the incentives that will cause the economy of this country to reinvest and to create jobs.

Over the next several months—and I hope it will only be a couple of months—the Finance Committee here in the Senate, and hopefully the House Ways and Means Committee, will come forth with a budget and a budget proposal that will include within it, I trust, many of the incentives that our President is proposing in his economic stimulus package that he will talk about tonight. We can be a positive force in the economy by rewarding and recognizing both investment and hard work, instead of penalizing them by taking more and more, or by creating the kinds of hurdles or obstacles that the investment community has to take to reinvest in the economy. So I hope

we listen closely to that proposal tonight, as our President visits with us about it.

He has obviously talked about—and I think will talk again tonight—strengthening and improving health care in this country. We worked at it a long while last year. We were at the threshold of dealing with Medicare reform and prescription drugs. Those probably are some of the most difficult areas with which to deal, but the most important. Prescription drugs have become a dynamic part of health care delivery in this country, yet we still deal with an old Medicare model that is not paying its way to the provider and the caregiver. As a result, many of our senior citizens are having difficulty finding a primary care provider, and are paying \$300, \$400, \$500, \$600 a month oftentimes, and more, for prescription drugs. We can deal with that this year and we can deal with it in a bipartisan way. The President has supported us in that.

But last year, struggle as we might, somehow some of my colleagues thought it was an issue better left unaddressed until after the election. Why? I suspect they thought they could take it to the people and somehow gain political favor by arguing that one side or the other had denied the senior citizens of this country access to a viable modern Medicare program with prescription drugs. I believe that argument fell hollow. What was heard by all of us who were out running for reelection last year was: Congress, do your work. Do it on a timely basis. Do it on a responsible basis. Yes, and do it in a bipartisan way. But don't drag your feet, don't argue, and, most important, don't in every way avoid getting your work done, failing to address the problem with the argument that somehow you will gain political favor by doing so; that will not work.

I think the President may also talk about something else that is reshaping American health care, and that is, of course, excessive lawsuits that are causing doctors literally to pack their bags and move to other States that have been bold enough to do tort reform over the last several years and where, as a result, the cost of insurance for care providers is not as great as it is in other areas of our country. This is something we have to deal with here. Yes, we have to look at a certain segment of our economy right in the eye and say fair is fair. A reward for malpractice suit should not make both the patient and his attorney multimillionaires in a single act. Clearly, a person injured by malpractice should be rewarded for that injury. None of us argue that. But the fact that in some instances predator lawyers can make a million dollars or more a case doesn't make a lot of sense to me, and I don't think it makes a lot of sense to the consumers, who now find they have to pick up the bill because of malpractice insurance that some doctors are now paying that is in the \$200,000 to \$300,000