

of Iraq is "not going to be self-financing." Newsweek magazine called these numbers "misleading."

What this means, in plain English, is that U.S. taxpayers are going to get stuck funding the difference for a number of months and for the foreseeable future.

We believe the pattern of secretive and closed bidding for these construction contracts is unacceptable. It seems to me the American people have a right to hear if there are reasons for sole-source and invitation-only contracts for these projects. If something is amiss in the Iraqi reconstruction contracting process, then the oversight and the accountability—as Senator BYRD and I have called for in the legislation accepted tonight—is going to bring that to light. It is high time Congress and the American people arrive at fair judgments about these difficult issues with respect to funding the reconstruction of Iraq. The American people deserve real accountability at a time when we need the money here at home for our schools, for our health care facilities, for our roads, and for the critical needs of strengthening our economy.

I think it is a significant step the Senate has taken. It assures this will now be an effort to establish true oversight and accountability over the billions of dollars that are being spent now and that will be spent with respect to reconstructing Iraq and other services in that country.

I thank Senator BYRD for his patience and assistance in this legislation.

Again, I express my appreciation to Chairman STEVENS for helping us to draft this in a way that will win bipartisan support.

I yield the floor.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for morning business.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 2555

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Monday, July 21, at 1:30 p.m., the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 192, H.R. 2555, the Homeland Security appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

SENATE BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we have had a full week, a complete week, though it is Thursday evening, and almost 9 o'clock. We will not be in session tomorrow, and we will not have votes on Monday but will proceed to the Homeland Security bill Monday during the day and, hopefully, make progress.

As we look over the course of the week, it has been a full and complete week, with a number of amendments and a lot of debate, a lot of issues. I congratulate members from the Appropriations Committee, the leaders on both sides of the aisle for their leadership, in bringing us to the point that we have now passed three of the appropriations bills.

We will have a busy week next week. We will proceed as far as we can in addressing, hopefully, a number of appropriations bills next week. And then, that following week, which will be the last week we are in session, we will address Energy and, hopefully, complete the Energy bill, which is my intention, before the August recess.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if the distinguished majority leader will yield?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. I know he has a lot more work to do tonight. I want to say, briefly, before he completes his statement on Prime Minister Blair, and other things, in the National Journal's Congress Daily today, it was brought to my attention that, among other things, it says—and if it is here I am sure it is true; we know all things written are true that the press puts out—

GOP staffers continue to meet in an effort to flesh out a reworking of the bill's electricity provisions. A new proposal expected to be released sometime next week.

The only reason I bring this to the leader's attention this evening is that the bill, as it is, is very difficult. We know there are problems with the electricity section. On both sides of the aisle, people are concerned about it.

If there is going to be a new electricity section in this bill, we have to have it next week because there is tremendous concern, especially by the Senators from Washington. And as we discussed yesterday, there are more than 300 amendments on this matter.

The two leaders are sponsors of one of the main amendments in the bill, and I know the two leaders want to get this bill finished. But having said the two leaders want to finish the bill, we still have 98 other Senators to worry about.

I would hope there is some realization of the great difficulty of finishing this bill, especially if there is a new section to be written about electricity. If it is a section that everybody signs

off on, that would alleviate a tremendously large problem with this bill.

So I just want to say, we have 2 more weeks to go. I think this week, even though I am sure there is some disappointment in the leader in not being able to complete more appropriations bills, we did a monumental task of finishing this bill in the time we did. I think the debate was good. There were no nonrelevant amendments. No points of order had to be raised. So I think we have done good work. But I do not want, by the mere fact that we keep talking about the Energy bill, for anyone to think it is going to be a simple issue to get that completed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments from the assistant Democratic leader and understand that the task before us is a large one. One of the advantages we have is that we began to address the Energy bill on May 6 of this year. We have spent 12 days on the floor debating the bill. We made good progress on the Energy bill, and by saying we would spend a week, or the last week of this month, focused entirely on that bill, we have given all of our colleagues the opportunity to work—both members on the committee and our colleagues not on the committee—the opportunity to develop amendments, to discuss those amendments, to work in a bipartisan way across the aisle to come to agreement—and not necessarily consensus but agreement—in lots of different areas.

One of the good things about, at least 6 weeks ago, saying and making very clear to our colleagues we are going to spend the last week on it is that it has given us the opportunity to work together and to look at the various potential amendments as well as the underlying bill.

It is a huge challenge, I recognize, but one I personally look forward to working with the leadership on the other side of the aisle to accomplish as we go forward.

Mr. President, tonight we passed the Defense appropriations bill. I am very pleased with the progress today. Now we have passed three of the 13 appropriations bills for the new fiscal year that begins in just under 3 months.

In many ways, it is ironic because at the beginning of this year we had 11 appropriations bills we had to pass, and now we have passed three; so indeed we have passed 14 appropriations bills this year, which is remarkable. But, in truth, we have three appropriations bills of the 13 for the new fiscal year that we have passed. And now, well over an hour ago, that third one being passed is a benchmark in many ways. I am hopeful that over the course of the next week we will pass as many as three more appropriations bills. I am confident we will be able to pass two. I would like to be able to pass three, which would mean six appropriations bills passed before the August recess.

On Monday, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, we will begin debate—for the first time, I might add, in this Chamber—on a brand new appropriations bill; and that is the Homeland Security appropriations bill. A lot of my colleagues have not thought about it in those terms, but because of our response and reorganization—our response to, in some part, 9/11, but our reorganization of the Homeland Security Department—we now have a Homeland Security appropriations bill, and we will be addressing that beginning Monday.

And, yes, each time I either open or close the Senate it seems people say it is a challenging schedule. It is a challenging schedule. Indeed, to complete all the appropriations bills, and to send them to the President before the beginning of the new fiscal year, will be a real challenge. But it is our responsibility to do so.

As the distinguished ranking member of the Senate Appropriations Committee reminds us on a regular basis, one of our most basic responsibilities of the Congress under article I of the Constitution is that “No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law.”

Thus, we take this fundamental responsibility seriously. And thus the discipline and the focus, the patience, the collegiality, the cooperation must all be reflected in order to accomplish that task.

There is reason to be optimistic that for the first time in almost a decade we can complete action on all of the 13 appropriations bills and have them signed into law before the new fiscal year begins October 1. Again, when we accomplish that—if we accomplish it—but when we accomplish that, it will be for the first time in almost a decade.

That optimism stems from a number of facts: first, from the fact that having adopted a budget resolution earlier this year, we now at least begin this appropriations process with a defined top-line spending level for all the appropriations bills next year, that top line being \$784.6 billion.

That optimism is also a result of the hard work of the chairman of the committee and the ranking member of that committee, as well as others, to establish very early a general understanding with the administration how the President’s priorities and the congressional priorities will be considered.

That optimism that we can accomplish completion by the end of the fiscal year also stems from the fact that of the 13 appropriations bills, the Senate and House’s initial allocations are identical for 7 of the bills, and these 7 bills, with identical allocations, represent three-quarters of all the appropriations for next year.

A lot of this is made possible by a very close working relationship with the House of Representatives. Speaking of the House, I am optimistic that before they recess in about a week or 7

days from today or possibly tomorrow, they will have completed 11 of the 13 bills. That will have been a major accomplishment and one that will expedite going to conference quickly to resolve any differences with the Senate bills in September.

Finally, that optimism is further strengthened by the fact that because we have a budget in place this year, because we passed a budget and we have a budget in place right now, we also have the tools to enforce the spending levels that are assumed in that budget.

Over this week we have made much progress on the appropriations process. We have begun the process in earnest. We have achieved a good first step. Even with this optimism, I know it will not be easy. After the August recess, we will need to complete action on the remaining bills in the Senate and then conference those with the House.

We also recognize that in discussion of these appropriations bills, there are many demands—we saw a number of them play out today—in the bills that come before us. We will see many very good programs, many very worthy programs that require funding. But we will also see programs—and will be talking about that on the floor—that were simply created at a different time in our history. Or we will be talking about programs that simply were created but have not met their goals, programs where continued funding is simply not the most effective use of taxpayer dollars.

As we saw the deficit figures come out over the course of the last week, again and again we said, there are certain things that can be done. It is to grow the economy. It is to reap the benefits of the jobs and growth package that we passed on the Senate floor with those midterm and long-term effects of growing the economy, creating jobs. Thirdly, there is the fiscal discipline that does demand tough choices, that does demand tough decisions.

We are committed in this body to slowing rates of Government spending, and indeed, if you exclude the spending in the war supplemental last spring, the appropriations for next year will represent less than a 3-percent increase over the current year.

Spending will be tight. Many worthy programs and initiatives may not see the increases they have enjoyed in many recent years. Recent years’ appropriations have grown at an annual rate of over 7 percent. That simply cannot be tolerated. It is unacceptable today, growing at 7 percent. That is faster than the economy. That is faster than families’ paychecks. We simply will not do that. We cannot do that. We need to engage that fiscal discipline.

Again, if you take out that war supplemental from last spring, the appropriations for next year will be less than a 3-percent increase over the current year. It is that type of fiscal discipline that we will demonstrate.

I do know we can live within our budget that we adopted earlier this

year. I look forward to working with the Democratic leader and the leadership of the Appropriations Committee to fulfill our responsibility under the Constitution to enact appropriations bills and to do so in an orderly and timely manner.

Our work this week demonstrates that disciplined, orderly manner again in a timely way. I thank my colleagues for their cooperation, for their patience as we, under the leadership of Chairman STEVENS, proceed in this disciplined manner.

PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, we in the Senate today had the experience of participating in the joint meeting in the House Chamber listening to Prime Minister Tony Blair. I opened the Senate this morning pointing out that we would be welcoming and honoring our distinguished visitor in this joint meeting. I mentioned that he is the fourth sitting Prime Minister to address a joint session of the Congress, preceded only by Winston Churchill, Clement Atlee, and Margaret Thatcher, three of histories great leaders.

Today’s historic tribute gave us the opportunity to reaffirm our abiding friendship and our deep respect both for the man, Prime Minister Tony Blair, as well as the people of the United Kingdom. Our two nations have stood shoulder to shoulder to defend the free people around the world.

We had the opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister before the address. We were able to directly express our appreciation to the Prime Minister and for him to reflect to the people of Britain for their courage and their resolve.

As you sat in the majestic House Chamber and listened to those words, I think we were all affected very directly because it helped elevate the debate which seemed to have mired down in part of the way it has been handled by the media but also the way it has been handled by a number of our colleagues both in this Chamber and in the other Chamber.

The words from Tony Blair really did elevate it. There is just one passage I want to quote from what the Prime Minister said today in the Chamber:

And I know it’s hard on America, and in some small corner of this vast country, out in Nevada or Idaho or these places I’ve never been to, but always wanted to go. I know out there there’s a guy getting on with his life, perfectly happily, minding his own business, saying to you, the political leaders of this country, “Why me? And why us? And why America?”

And the only answer is, “Because destiny put you in this place in history, in this moment in time, and the task is yours to do.”

The Prime Minister continued:

And our job, my nation that watched you grow, that you fought alongside and now fights alongside you, that takes enormous pride in our alliance and great affection in our common bond, our job is to be there with you.

You are not going to be alone. We will be there with you in this fight for liberty. We