

have every one of their rights protected when it is time for the conference to formally act on a bill. Certainly they will be included. As the gentleman knows, around here, the meetings that are being held in different areas and in different subsets of Members are being held with Members that want a bill and are trying to get a bill done, rather than to obstruct a bill. And Members' rights are always protected whenever they want to change a bill, substitute it, or whatever; and in the formal meetings of a conference, they can do so. But it wastes everybody's time, quite frankly; the reason for a conference committee is to be small with just a few Members so that we can work it out and get it done in an expedited manner. So those meetings are being held with Members who want to get a bill to the floor and to the President.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I do not want to be very confrontational, and I do not think these colloquies ought to be confrontational; I think it is a good discussion, but I think the gentleman needs to know honestly our view on this.

Let me remind the gentleman of the Patients' Bill of Rights. It passed the 106th Congress of this House with some 60-plus Republicans. However, the gentleman indicates that conferences are being held with people who want to pass a bill. The Speaker, as the gentleman knows, appointed over two-thirds of the Republican conferees who voted against the bill, and that bill never came out of conference. We were not surprised. In the 107th Congress, we were precluded from having a bipartisan bill because the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) concluded that he was going to withdraw from discussions with the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) on that.

So with all due respect, Mr. Leader, if you make a judgment that you are not going to include people that you think do not have the same view that you have or that your chairmen have or that your Chairs of subcommittees have, then calling them conferences, we believe, is not appropriate. They may be meetings; they may be meetings of the Members of your side of the aisle who have responsibilities for the bills, but they are not conferences in any classic sense of bringing together the two Houses and all of the conferees who were appointed by the Speaker, not by us.

Conferees are appointed by the Speaker. We are not given any notice of hearings, we do not attend any hearings. And for the gentleman to say that people are meeting, we do not doubt that. We think the gentleman is absolutely right. We hear about those meetings. We read about those meetings. We read about the large conference on the energy bill when the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. TAUZIN) and Mr. DOMENICI get together and talk. We think that is appropriate. They ought to do

that. They need to do that. It is their responsibility. But it is not a conference from our perspective. And there is not an opportunity for us to sit down and represent the point of view that we bring to the table, that we have been elected to put forth.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOYER. I am glad to yield to my friend.

Mr. DELAY. I would just remind the gentleman, again, that formal conferences are held. When the formal work of the House, through its conference committees are to be done, at that particular time, Members that oppose the bill will have all of their rights protected, and they can go to those meetings and participate in the conference process.

But in order to get a bill, particularly a bill as complicated as an energy bill or the Medicare bill, it has never been, even when the gentleman's party was in the majority, it has never been the practice of having big, huge conference meetings and debates on a daily basis or a regular basis. These things are worked out with those who want a bill and then presented to the full conference in the light of day so that people can express themselves, and it is brought to this floor for further debate.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for his observation; and, obviously, he and I disagree as to how this process occurred when we were in charge and how it is occurring now. But the gentleman and I have both had the privilege of being on the Committee on Appropriations for many years.

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Mr. HOYER. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is now, as the majority leader, not on the committee because he has been elevated to his present position. But the gentleman and I have sat in many conferences together, he on one side of the aisle, me on the other side of the aisle, in which we had probably 30 members of the Committee on Appropriations from our side, usually eight or nine from the majority side, 12 or 15, so 20 to 25 Members, and discuss issue by issue and go through it. That is what we expect the conference to be, because that is what we expect the democratic process provides in a conference committee to resolve differences that might exist.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, would the gentleman yield? I just remind the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) in that particular case the gentleman is absolutely right. But everyone sitting at that table, at the time, wants a bill. And they work hard to get the bill rather than try to kill a bill. So, it is very easy to work in that configuration as the appropriators usually do.

And when everybody comes together and everybody knows that they are trying to get a bill and want a bill to be brought to the House, they are in-

cluded. And it is no different than any other conference.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I want to assure the majority leader we want a prescription drug bill. We have been fighting for a prescription drug bill, but that does not necessarily mean we want your prescription drug bill. We want a bill that has the support of the majority, the American people, and that we believe we can have. We are fighting for such a bill.

We want an energy bill. We think this country needs an energy bill, certainly in light of the August 14 blackout in the northeast. We think we need to address that issue.

So let me assure the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) that we want to see these bills passed. But let me also assure the gentleman that if the condition preceding to having a conference in which we are included is saying that we will agree to it as it passed the House, if we oppose it, that is neither a reasonable request on your part, I believe, nor is it the expectation of either side that they be included in a conference only on a condition that they will agree to what the leadership wants to do.

I think we have probably discussed this sufficiently, but it is a real concern that we are not including both sides in these conferences. Because on the energy bill, I do not believe there has been a conference nor does the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) as we understand a conference. But we have a different view, perhaps.

Mr. Speaker, unless the majority leader wants to make additional comments, I would yield back the balance of my time.

ADJOURNMENT TO MONDAY,
OCTOBER 20, 2003

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 12:30 p.m. on Monday next for morning hour debates.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

DISPENSING WITH CALENDAR
WEDNESDAY BUSINESS ON
WEDNESDAY NEXT

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the business in order under the Calendar Wednesday rule be dispensed with on Wednesday next.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.