

him the following so there is no misunderstanding. I have taken the position—although I have not been able to tell him every day and I have not issued a release about it every day—that the Senator must have the bill for 24 full hours prior to markup. We have taken that position with our leadership and with everyone who has to do with the hierarchy of this bill. That is where we are. That will be enforced. I now have the support I need for that to happen.

Secondly, I will do my very best to get you the portion of the bill that you would like to see on electricity even before that. I am working very hard on seeing if I can do that. There are a whole lot of people who want to look at that provision, and I want to get it to you as soon as possible.

I thank the Senator for his comments, and I understand his concern. I hope that, in the end, whatever your concerns are for that bill—let's hope you are for it, but I hope you will conclude that you have had a chance to review everything and offer amendments. I thank the Senator for yielding.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Idaho is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I had hoped that today I would be on the floor debating with my colleagues the issue of Healthy Forests and H.R. 1904. When the chairman of the Agriculture Committee brought the bill to the floor today asking unanimous consent to move forward, there was an objection heard from the other side. I must tell you it is phenomenally frustrating to me that we have worked on this issue in a totally bipartisan mode since the day it came from the House and, yet, there is still objection from the other side on this issue.

The bill brought to the floor today, chaired and lead-sponsored by the chairman of the Agriculture Committee, Senator COCHRAN, has Senator DASCHLE, Senator DOMENICI, Senator WYDEN, my colleague from Idaho, Senator CRAPO, who chairs the Forestry Subcommittee on Agriculture, Senators FEINSTEIN, LINCOLN, BURNS, JOHNSON, MCCAIN, and CRAIG, who chairs the Forestry Subcommittee in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, together on this issue.

Yet the other side is saying no. Is it because the fire season is over? Is it because of the rains starting to hit the forests of the Great Basin West, and the smoke clouds that filled the air of the West this summer are depleted? Is that why there is objection now to this legislation?

I and others have been on this floor for the last 3 years pleading with the Congress of the United States, and especially this body, to craft a forest health bill that allows us to begin some active management of our forests, to change the character of our forests, and to improve their health. The House acted this year. The bill came to the Agriculture Committee. My colleague

from Idaho, Senator CRAPO, chaired the subcommittee, and the work began under the leadership of Senator COCHRAN. They produced a very good bill. We looked at it in the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. It is not that our committee has not seen it. You darn right we have seen it; for 3 years, this issue has been before the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and my forestry subcommittee. Now the ranking member, Senator WYDEN of Oregon, and I—myself chairing—have agreed this is the bill that ought to come to the floor. Yet we are still being told that, no, somehow it hasn't been vetted enough and somehow there is no understanding of this issue.

There is a lot of understanding of this issue. There is a fundamental disagreement between those who want the forests left alone to burn, to let Mother Nature take her course, and those of us who have said the economies of the West, the watersheds of the West, the wildlife of the West, and of all of our public land forests deserve a policy of active management so our forests can return to a state of good health, so our watersheds can produce clear and valuable water for our urban environments, and so the wildlife can flourish; they deserve that. Yet it is being denied by a select few who would see it in an entirely different way.

The President began to speak out on this issue a couple of years ago. He stood in the ashes hip deep in Oregon, where fires ravaged nearly a million acres, and said that somehow this country has to change its policy.

Guess what. Eighty-seven percent of Americans in a recent poll agree that something is wrong in our national forests. It looks something like this: 79 percent of the folks in the West say: Got to fix it. In the Midwest, 82 percent say: Got a problem, ought to fix it. In the South, 84 percent say—and this is the area the chairman of the Agriculture Committee is from—got a problem in our public forests, ought to fix it. And the chairman of the Agriculture Committee, Senator COCHRAN, set out to do that, along with the Senator from Idaho, Mr. CRAPO, and myself.

This is a national issue today. It is not an issue of the elitist or the select few of the environmental community who say nothing should happen on our public lands; that they should be a preserve only managed by Mother Nature. We have seen what Mother Nature has done in the last 5 years. She has burned 3 million to 5 million acres a year. She has destroyed watersheds. She has destroyed wildlife. In many instances, she has destroyed thousands of homes, and she has cost Americans their lives. Many Americans have died in the last few years just trying to fight these unusually hot and devastatingly damaging wildfires that have swept the West.

Here are the facts. The American public understands these fires are de-

stroying our forests. They understand that we need to do more thinning.

Eighty-three percent of the wildland firefighters have told this Congress and the public that the most important step we can take to increase their safety—is to thin these forests.

Because the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society and other radical environmental groups want no timber harvesting in our Federal forests, we are destroying 6 to 7 million acres of land each year—6 to 7 million acres of wildlife habitat are being destroyed each year.

The bipartisan amendment that was reached as a compromise with 13 of my colleagues responds to the needs of the American public. It responds to those who are concerned about the loss of wildlife habitat. It responds to the wildland firefighters who tell us we need to increase the number of acres thinned each year. And, most importantly it responds to the needs of our forests.

We have seen communities destroyed by fire and important wildlife habitats destroyed. Yet we, in this Senate, fiddle.

I am tired of our fiddling around. We all know that this body must address this issue. We all know that the bipartisan amendment is a good one that is fair and balanced and good for our forests.

Last year, all we asked for was an up-or-down vote on our amendment, but the minority would not allow that.

This year, a few Members seem to be saying no debate, no vote, and yes to the destruction of our forests. This simply has to stop.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, that is the issue before us today. It is an issue that this Senate ought to debate. I plead with my colleagues on the other side to work with us to get this bill to the floor for purposes of debate and passage.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I yield the remainder of the time on this side to the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized for 2 minutes 9 seconds.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

#### EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senator HATCH has been courteous as always. He is slated to speak at 2:30 p.m. He said the time for morning business can be extended until 2:35. It is OK with him that we extend morning business until 2:35 with the time equally divided. I ask unanimous consent that be the case.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to extending the time

for morning business until 2:30 p.m. as under the previous order with the time equally divided?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 2:35 p.m.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to extending morning business until 2:35 p.m.?

Morning business is extended until 2:35 p.m.

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized for 2 minutes 9 seconds.

Mr. THOMAS. Under the new circumstances, perhaps I could have 5 minutes.

Mr. COCHRAN. I yield to the distinguished Senator 7½ minutes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized for 7½ minutes.

#### HEALTHY FORESTS

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in talking about the problems I guess particularly in the West, although not only in the West. When I was in high school, I lived near the Shoshone Forest in Cody, WY, and I would help the firefighters fight fires. I remember that so very well, particularly one mountain close to home. It was very steep. As the fire went up the rocks, it would loosen the rocks and they rolled down. Since that time, it has become even more of a problem.

I always think about those who say we ought to leave things the way they are, and I think about the wild horses. If we would get too many wild horses, what would happen to them in the old days? They starved to death. We don't let that happen anymore. We have to keep the numbers down. The same is true with the forests.

We are using the forests differently than we did in the past. More people live closer to the forests. People are using the forests differently. We have more insect problems to manage. We are talking about managing the resource.

There will be areas, of course, where we will not have forest protection—on roadless areas and wilderness areas. But much of the forests are areas where there are many people all the time, where there are roads and buildings, and we have to do something different than we have been doing.

Fires burn at naturally high temperatures and cause severe damage to the soil, watersheds, and air quality, as well as, of course, to the trees. Fires destroy habitat, including endangered species.

It is our responsibility to protect the health and safety of the community in neighboring lands. There is a lot we must do to do a better job.

In Wyoming—and we have not had as much fire as some other States—in the Shoshone Forest where I grew up, many of those trees are infected by insects. Yet only 1 percent of the corridor is available for any kind of treatment and care for these trees. In Big Horn National Forest, a fire burned for 3 weeks causing evacuation of dozens of cabins and loss of other facilities.

Black Hills National Forest—interestingly enough, we had some agreements before that were limited to the Black Hills to do forest fighting, clearing, and so on. We ought to extend that to some of the other forests because we have had experience in that area. Grand Teton, of course.

It is clear we need to have a program. Firefighting is extremely costly. It is expensive to suppress and control. It is much less expensive to seek to avoid fires.

The Forest Service this year has already spent \$1 billion in forest fighting. We passed nearly \$700 million to cover the cost of the shortfall; otherwise, it had to come from other projects. We cannot continue to have these kinds of resources consumed by the fire.

It has already been mentioned that the House has a bill and we have a bill and we will be taking up the differences. There are differences in view as to how different parts should be handled.

Between the House and the Senate, there has been a compromise on almost all the issues that are important: administrative appeals and all the suits that take place. We have an agreement to cut those down, so instead of having to do studies for a year before something can be done, it can be done in 30 days. We have wildlife-urban interface, with half a mile around facilities in which more of this control will take place.

We have the old-growth issues where there can be changes if old growth is in that interface close to buildings. There can be exemptions.

I am most disappointed that, having talked about this issues for years, knowing the impact of not doing something, here we are with objections to moving forward when we have an opportunity to create some solutions to the problem that exists and will continue to exist.

I hope we can do something this week. This is our chance to come together and pass a bill that will be usable. I hope we do that.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, how much time remains on the morning business allocation for this side of the aisle?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). The distinguished Senator has 5 minutes 51 seconds remaining.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I yield the remaining time to the distinguished Senator from New Mexico.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator from Mississippi Mr. COCHRAN.

First, on the way to the floor, something very interesting happened to this bill. The Parliamentarian read it and said: Chairman DOMENICI—who had been waiting anxiously to do this bill—you don't have jurisdiction the way the bill is written and said the Agriculture Committee did.

For a little while I had a sourpuss look on me until I found out that, indeed, we were fortunate because Senator THAD COCHRAN and his committee, letting us help him, did a magnificent job. In fact, I can say so there will be no doubt on the record that they did a better job than we could have. So I am very pleased the bill came roundabout that way.

As always happens in a bill of this type, you cannot win on the floor with just a bill produced by committee because there are Senators who are not on any of the committees of jurisdiction who have big interests in the bill. Guess what. Those Senators are now supporting this bill. We must have somebody around here who is against this bill. Senator WYDEN is for it. He has had some of the biggest problems with forests and forest fires in his State of any Senator.

We met under Senator COCHRAN's leadership for weeks. And Senator WYDEN is for this bill. Surely, he is not for not bringing up this bill. Whoever is for not bringing it up—I don't understand.

California has so much of everything that we sometimes forget they have huge forests and huge forest fires, and it burns a lot of things down.

They need to fix the law. Guess what. She is not on the Agriculture Committee. Right?

Mr. COCHRAN. Right.

Mr. DOMENICI. So she came in and said: Let me help. She went to meeting after meeting. Of course, they invited me and my staff. I had more than a few things to do, and I probably was there less than the Senators I just mentioned, but I came. I was one who pursued it and pushed it.

On the Democrat side of the Agriculture Committee, the Senator from Arkansas, BLANCHE LINCOLN, was there all the time. She came to these meetings and she is for it. MAX BAUCUS, Democrat from Montana, a State with huge problems, he was there. He is for it.

Everybody knows the Senator from New Mexico is for it. I have been trying to do this for 10 or 12 years. I got one big bill through that nobody thought could happen in the midst of the forest fires. It passed in an amendment on the floor. We got \$250 million times 2—that is \$500 million—for each agency. We named that bill "happy forests." We named it happy forests because we thought if it works, these forests that cannot see sunlight may see sunlight and they might be happy when they look up at the sun.

So I nicknamed the bill the happy forests, with the trees of America once again being unclogged. The clogging makes the trees limp but also makes them burn like wildfire. We got that one through and it did a lot of good, but we are stuck with the problem that this bill tries to solve; namely, we cannot get anything done in a reasonable period of time. That is the issue.

We do not have to talk about the fancy words, jurisdiction, courts, and