

in the majority or minority, Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative, we ought to be concerned when some small group of people, in the dark of night, overturn legitimate public roll-call decisions made by this body. We ought to be concerned about that because I think it is an erosion of democracy in our Republic that is deplorable, deplorable. How many more times is it going to happen? How does it render the Senate, this so-called deliberative body, when we can deliberate, make tough decisions here on the Senate floor, only to be overturned? What does it say?

With regard to the issues themselves I will say this: I said a couple of days ago this is the beginning. It was not our desire to shut the Government down, to block this bill ultimately. We wanted to give our Republican colleagues a chance to fix it. They have chosen not to fix any of these issues. But we will be back. We must be back. We will continue to offer amendments on whatever vehicle is presented to us. We are now preparing Congressional Review Act resolutions. The legislative veto is available to us on some of these matters and we will use it.

So we will be back again and again. These issues will not go away. We will continue to fight and we will continue to work, first, because we care about the institution but, second, because we care about these policies.

So, Mr. President, it is with great concern—chagrin, that we find ourselves in a position today that I wish had never presented itself to this body.

We will have a vote on cloture. We may have a vote on final passage. But it will not be the last vote on these issues.

I hope in the interest of this institution we will learn the hard lessons that these specific problems have created for each of us.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

#### AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2673, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A conference report to accompany H.R. 2673, making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be 4½ hours equally divided between the

chairman and ranking member of the Appropriations Committee or their designee for debate only.

Who seeks recognition? The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. CORZINE. Mr. President, I yield myself about 10 minutes, if that is appropriate.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORZINE. I thank the Chair.

First of all, I want to speak today about this appropriations bill that is now on the floor. I have serious ambivalence about how we should deal with the specifics of this measure. I know members of the Appropriations Committee, led by the Presiding Officer, have worked long and hard. They have worked in a fair way to try to make sure they put together the best final product they can, have been sensitive to the needs of their colleagues, and have worked to try to be balanced about how they brought forth this final product. Unfortunately, through the conference process, a product has emerged that differs from that sought by our leaders here in the Senate.

It is with some ambivalence that I feel the need to express some of the reasons why I will not be supporting the Omnibus appropriations bill for 2004. It contains what I believe are serious policy flaws that, furthermore, don't deal actually with the appropriations process. They go far beyond what should be addressed, debated and concluded in the democratic forum of this Senate, and in the House.

It seems to me that the most serious problem here is not even those policies, although they are very important in and of themselves, but this process that has somehow overturned the policies supported by wide majorities in both houses, policies we worked so long and hard to deal with—I think this process is out of kilter.

But I also believe that, at a policy level, they are important, things such as overtime. It is just hard to believe when we can pass a dividend and capital gains tax cut to help those who are already doing well to improve wealth, and, to put it in economic terms, to reward capital, we are turning our backs on labor and on work.

I don't mean labor in an organized sense. I mean our workforce, the people who work. It seems to me that people who work should have at least the same value attested to their efforts as people who invest. Here we are talking about 8 million people who will come off these rolls of potential overtime benefits. For what reason? For what reason are we doing this when we want to reinforce the work ethic in this country? And these are the people who have modest to middle-income positions in our society.

It is extraordinarily difficult to understand this decision when you consider the context that both this Senate and the House of Representatives have opposed changes to our overtime rules. This bill is a turnaround from the will

of both bodies on this matter. It is incredibly difficult for me to understand why we are moving forward with this bill when we have something that strikes at the heart of what it is we value in this country. Work ought to be something that is rewarded. It ought to be recognized. It has been a part of the consensus we have in this country. Obviously, it is broadly conceived as being the right thing by the majority of folks in both houses and on both sides of the aisle. I have grave difficulty understanding this. It goes to the fundamental essence of how our economy works. Work ought to be valued at least the same as capital in this society.

Here we are turning our backs on it. We are sending the wrong signal to our kids, and to society in general. It is a big mistake, in my view—so big that I think it actually compromises the value of the overall piece of legislation.

Second, I have serious concerns about media concentration. Of course, a lot of us do not often like things that are said in the media. We don't like that to-and-fro which impacts us individually. But society is better by it. It is a lot better when we have a healthy debate of ideas and different viewpoints come out. That is what democracy is about.

The last time I checked, both sides of this body supported the media concentration rule at 35 percent. And somehow we have a different rule than what was agreed to by both houses. I heard the distinguished minority leader speak to the essence of the institution, and the institution is broader—not just the Senate but the Senate and the House. How can we reach agreements on things and then come out with a different result on something as important as how we communicate with the public in this country? How do we change the dynamics of political debate and news coverage on which the people rely to fulfill their civic duty and gather information to make decisions, such as who they are going to support? How will they make informed decisions when we have this concentration? It is an incredibly difficult concept for me to understand.

We don't raise a lot of cows in New Jersey, but we eat a lot of meat. I don't understand the country-of-origin labeling issue. Why would we not take the steps that are necessary to protect the American people and to protect the country's economic interests so we can keep the export markets open? This is not fundamentally sound on either the safety of the public or our own economic security. Why are we trying to cut jobs in this country? It is bad enough that we are cutting overtime. Now we are undermining our ability to actually be effective in the global market because we are making policy that reflects a narrow interest as opposed to the public's interests and the broader economic interests of the country.

It is hard to understand at a period in time when we are down 2.3 million jobs