

other body and whoever sits as our great President, whether it be President Clinton or President Bush, have found the ability and a way to work with the leadership of both bodies. That is part of what this experiment is about.

We have great confidence that the American people, who are the special interests to each and every one of us, the special interests and the needs of farmers and the needs of Americans, will be heard by our President, by each Member of the Senate and this body; and that is why we are moving this legislation forward.

I do not think that we would ask someone ahead of time what they are going to do with that, but rather to allow them the chance to debate and work through the changes. Compromise happens all of the time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, I guess that answer means, no, we do not have assurance from the other body that they will move on this; and, no, we cannot give assurances to the family farmers who are watching us here today that in fact the relief that they seek will be enacted anytime soon.

My follow-up question will be if the gentleman gets his way and his leadership gets its way and this bill moves forward with the House-passed bankruptcy reform bill attached to it, it goes over to the other body and they decide to filibuster it, is there agreement on how long we are going to wait until we help our family farmers, or will this go on indefinitely?

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

Mr. MCGOVERN. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. SESSIONS. The American people will have a lot to say about that as they talk with Members of the other body; and based upon that wisdom and as a result of what the leadership does, we will catch a good signal. We believe it will be on their agenda, and we are proud of what we are doing.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his response; but it is not satisfactory, not only to those of us on this side of the aisle, but to those who may be watching this who are hopeful that we will actually do something of substance and that we will help family farmers looking for relief.

Mr. Speaker, the problem here is that we have an opportunity to do something good, to actually help some people; and we are turning this into political theatrics. I think that is unfortunate. I oppose the rule.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I appreciate what the gentleman is saying. I appreciate that he wants to know what the agreements are between the bodies as they work together. I respect that, but I would say to the gentleman that I respect more the 315

votes from this body that chose to speak on the subject the last time we voted.

Perhaps it is true there are some frustrations that come about as a result of the business which we engage in. Certainly there are frustrations that 315 people, time after time after time that vote for this important bill, are thwarted in the process; but I believe rather than becoming frustrated, it is up to us to think through how we will accomplish those things that are necessary, to retry, to renegotiate, to do those things that are dealing with negativism of, oh, it will never happen, to keep searching, and that is what the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER), the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, has done. He looked at a piece of legislation with 315 vote, and knew how important it was. Rather than accepting a defeatist mentality, he took the attitude he would be proactive and work on behalf of our special constituencies that all of us as Members of Congress have, the American people.

Mr. Speaker, 315 votes is a clear and simple overwhelming majority of this body. I am proud of what we are doing. Obviously, what we are trying to do here is to make sure that we pass this bill. Since 1986, this ad hoc approach which has talked about reauthorizing chapter 12 relief has allowed this relief for small farms to lapse six times. Today we are going to make it permanent. Today we are providing an answer. Today it is a change. I am proud of what we are doing. Our great chairman, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER), has not only worked diligently on behalf of farmers but also on behalf of consumers of this country. I think we will pass this bill. I think it is the right thing, and I welcome the opportunity to join the chairman down at the White House when our great President signs this legislation into law.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 1920.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

BANKRUPTCY ABUSE PREVENTION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT OF 2003

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SESSIONS). Pursuant to House Resolution

503 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the Senate bill, S. 1920.

□ 1343

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the Senate bill (S. 1920) to extend for 6 months the period for which chapter 12 of title 11 of the United States Code is reenacted, with Mr. LAHOOD in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the Senate bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the Senate bill is considered as having been read the first time.

Under the rule, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. WATT) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER).

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, the amendment in the nature of a substitute to S. 1920 made in order by the rule replaces the text of that bill with the text of H.R. 975, the bankruptcy bill passed by the House by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 315-113 on March 19, 2003.

The administration has without qualification endorsed this legislation. Nevertheless, this bill has languished in the other body now for almost a year. The question that has been asked is, why are we engaged in what admittedly may appear to be a redundant undertaking? While the other body is often described as the saucer in which the coffee cools, H.R. 975 has become nearly frozen in that proverbial saucer.

□ 1345

Today I seek to reignite congressional consideration of bankruptcy reform.

Some of my colleagues may also ask, "Why now? What's the rush?" There are many answers. A major reason is that the current bankruptcy system is broken, and it gets worse every day that we fail to act. Bankruptcy filings continue to break record after record, straining the system's resources. The proliferation of bankruptcy filings is not just a temporary event, but part of a consistent upward trend. In 4 years, the number of bankruptcy filings has jumped by 150 percent to nearly 1.7 million cases as of fiscal year 2003.

Another reason has to do with the growing extent of fraud and abuse in the current bankruptcy system. Bankruptcy relief should be available to honest debtors, but current law allows, if not encourages, dishonest debtors to file abusive bankruptcies that overburden the system. According to the Justice Department, bankruptcy fraud and abuse is "serious and far-reaching."