

Mr. DASCHLE. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, what is the order of business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

INTERNET TAX NONDISCRIMINATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 150, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 353, S. 150, a bill to make permanent taxes on Internet access and multiple and discriminatory taxes on electronic commerce imposed by the Internet Tax Freedom Act, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I would like to address my remarks for the next few minutes on the discussion that we have been having for the last 6 months in this body on the question of how to deal with the phenomenon of high-speed Internet access. It is the fastest growing new technology in America, according to a New York Times article last week. We have some differences of opinion about how to proceed in terms of the taxation and regulation of this phenomenon, not only what it should be but whether the Federal Government, the State government, or local government should do it.

The leader has asked all of us who have different opinions to work together. We have tried that. We have worked hard. Senator MCCAIN, chairman of the Commerce Committee, has been especially involved. I am grateful to him for that. Senator ALLEN and Senator WYDEN, who have principled positions on this discussion, have worked hard to try to compromise on the issues, as have I and my colleagues, but we simply have a difference of opinion.

Now, today, we begin debating a motion to proceed and to move down a track in the Senate that, I believe, is the wrong track. I welcome this opportunity and I thank the leader for giving us a chance to have a full debate, which we will be having this week. I am confident that by the time we are finished the Senators who have had a chance to spend more time on this, and

that the citizens of the country who have had a chance to understand more clearly what we are talking about, and the State and local officials who will see exactly what we are doing which might affect the future of State and local governments in America will suddenly say there is a little more to this than meets the eye and that we will come to a good conclusion.

I believe it was President Harry Truman who had on his desk a sign that said, "The buck stops here." What we are about to do today and later this week with the consideration of S. 150 is to begin a series of votes about passing the buck. I looked on the Truman Presidential library Web site to see why Harry Truman, who was noted for plain speaking, liked the phrase "The buck stops here." Here is what the Truman Web site says:

The saying "the buck stops here" derives from the slang expression "pass the buck" which means passing the responsibility on to someone else. The latter expression is said to have originated with the game of poker, in which a marker or a counter, frequently in frontier days a knife with a buckhorn handle, was used to indicate the person whose turn it was to deal. If the player wishes to deal, he could pass the responsibility by passing the buck, as the counter came to be called, on to the next player.

That would be my text today, if I were preaching a sermon, because we are about to vote about passing the buck. By passing the buck, if we were to do this, we would create permanent confusion about how to regulate and tax the fastest growing new technology in America—high-speed Internet access. We would create a permanent tax loophole for the high-speed Internet access industry and the telecommunications industry, and the high-speed Internet access industry, so far as I can tell, must already be the most heavily subsidized in America by Federal, State, and local laws. We would be voting for higher taxes, not lower taxes, because if you order taxes to be lowered on telecommunications or high-speed Internet access, you are raising taxes on local property taxes or local sales taxes on food or local corporation taxes on manufacturing companies that might be struggling to keep from moving their jobs overseas.

It is a big trick to say this is a bill that lowers taxes. It does create a tax loophole for one industry. But what cost does that mean? That just means everybody else pays higher taxes.

Aren't a lot of people going to be surprised if this should be enacted and suddenly they find their mayor and their Governor raising local property taxes, raising local sales taxes on food and imposing a car tax again? That is what happens. You lower this tax and you raise that tax.

Then the worst thing to me as a former Governor—and there are many in this body who have been Governors, who have been State tax commissioners, who have been mayors, who

have been State treasurers, who have been local officials—the worst thing to me is we are breaking our promise about doing no harm to State and local governments, particularly on my side of the aisle, the Republican side of the aisle.

We were elected promising to do no harm to State and local governments. I will be talking a lot about that this week because I believe in that. I heard it. It wasn't just from me.

In 1994, the Republican revolution began to occur. In 1995 and 1996, we had Presidential elections. When the Republican Party gained control of Congress in 1995, the first thing it did in this body was pass S. 1.

The Presiding Officer very well knows the distinguished Senator who was the majority leader at that time. His name was Senator Bob Dole of Kansas. He carried around in his pocket the tenth amendment. He said S. 1 means no more unfunded mandates.

If we vote to put into motion S. 150 and the companion measure that passed the House, we will be imposing a massive unfunded mandate on State and local governments. We will be breaking our promise.

It is rare that the Senate has had an opportunity to do so much harm with one vote. It is very difficult to find a situation where you can cast one vote and create permanent confusion about the fastest growing technology and a permanent tax loophole for the most subsidized technology I can find. With that one vote, you could also impose higher taxes, local property taxes, car taxes, taxes on food, and sales taxes, and break your promise to State and local governments to do no harm.

There is a better way to go about this. I believe that I and my colleagues have suggested that. Senator CARPER and I and a group of nine other Senators of both parties have said: Wait a minute. Let us do this a different way. There is a way we can vote to ban new taxes on Internet access for 2 years. We can provide the Senate time to consider what to do about this phenomenon of high-speed Internet access growth, and we can keep our promise to State and local governments.

Rarely has there been a chance to do so much good with one vote, and that would be to pass the Alexander-Carper compromise, or take the original moratorium of 1998 and enact it for 2 more years. That would be a vote for no taxes, it would be a vote for no unfunded mandates, and it would be a vote for time to study it. That would be the wise and prudent course. That will be the argument we will be making today.

Today, we begin a series of procedural motions—that is the way the Senate works—designed to give us a full opportunity to consider and discuss these issues.