

indicated that he is willing to withdraw his amendment, and we can go forward.

The pending business then would be the Wyden amendment on the issue of holds and how secret holds could be dealt with in this body. Some Senators have some concerns about the amendment. I would like for us to step up and address that issue and work with our leaders. That is a Rules Committee issue and I have held a hearing on the issue of holds. I support the Wyden-Grassley approach, but I think that when it involves rules that directly impact how the Senate operates day-to-day, the leaders of our two parties in the Senate have to have major input in how we deal with the issue in the future.

There are other issues that are pending that have interest and support. Obviously, one of those is the amendment by Senator COLLINS and Senator LIEBERMAN dealing with establishing a new Office of Public Integrity. That issue was considered in their committee, and they would like for it to be considered on the floor. I certainly understand that and would be supportive of that because it is supported by these two leaders of that committee. But we have 77 amendments filed as first-degree amendments, most of which are not germane to the bill. So I have to ask my colleagues: Are we serious about lobbying reform and rules reform?

There are some good things in here. I don't support all of them, and on a bill of this magnitude nobody is going to support all of it. But I think we need to step up and resolve these issues. We do need reform in the lobbying area and some changes in the rules especially in the area of disclosure. We also need a mechanism to deal with earmarks that have not been considered by either the House or the Senate, and then are inserted in conference reports.

We are going to have to deal with all these issues sooner or later. We can do it now or we can do it later. Some people I suspect hope this entire package of reforms will slide off the face of the Earth and disappear. It is not going to. It is here, and it is going to come back. We can do it today if the leaders give us that charge or we can come back to it later as filler or we can be the legislative yo-yo. But this issue is going to be dealt with. I hope we can come up with a way to get it done even today, if possible.

We have actually lost a full day. We could have been working on this yesterday afternoon. We could have been working on it this morning. There are other issues that are of interest and concern to the Members and to the leaders, so I understand how that goes. But if every Senator presumes to offer his or her amendment and demand a recorded vote, we will not ever finish it. Maybe the American people are not that focused. Obviously, when I was home I got a lot of questions about immigration, about taxes, but I got one

call, just one, about this bill. It was from somebody who was concerned about something they hoped we would not put in the bill. Actually, it was a lobbyist, and I didn't even agree with what he was saying.

I think we should reconsider the cloture vote as soon as possible. I will support it no matter at what point it occurs. We can consider two or three of these amendments or several of them or not. But we need to step up to the issue, vote cloture, and complete this legislation as soon as possible.

I ask my colleagues: Who wants to take the blame for not getting this done? I was very disturbed about the way this was brought to a halt because I had yielded for what I was clearly told were going to be comments and all of a sudden, we were hit with a second-degree amendment that had no applicability to this at all.

We need to get together in a bipartisan way to address this issue, and we need to do it now. If we do not, somebody is going to have to explain it. The way I will explain it is not going to be positive because we have a commitment and we need to go forward with it.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The time for morning business has expired.

The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in morning business for a period of time not to exceed 15 minutes.

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

LOBBYING AND RULES REFORM

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, let me begin my comments by commending the Senator from Mississippi for his excellent statement. The Senator from Mississippi deserves great credit for working with his ranking member, Senator DODD, to craft a lobbying reform and disclosure bill on the provisions that were under the Rules Committee jurisdiction. Similarly, I worked very closely with the ranking Democrat on the homeland security committee to come up with a bipartisan bill that reflects issues that are under the jurisdiction of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

The result is a strong bill. We have married the bills reported by the two committees on the Senate floor. We have produced legislation that I think would help to restore the public's confidence in the integrity of the decisions that we make in Washington. Some may ask: Why does this matter? Why should we enact lobbying disclosure and reform legislation? The reason is, if the public does not trust us to make

decisions that are not tainted by undue influence from special interests, then we will not, as a Congress, be able to tackle the major issues facing our country. If the bonds of trust between those we represent and public officials are so frayed, then we are not going to be able to make the tough decisions, the hard choices that are necessary when tackling the big issues and challenges that confront our country.

The issues before the Senate in this bill are pressing and serious. Recent scandals involving Jack Abramoff and former Representative Duke Cunningham have brought to light the need for Congress to reevaluate practices that, although legal, raise questions about the integrity of decisions that are made or at least create the appearance of conflicts of interest and undue influence. We need to ban practices that erode the public's confidence in the integrity of Government's decisions. We need to have greater disclosure of the amount of money spent on lobbying and how it is spent. I think sunlight is the best disinfectant in many cases, and providing and requiring greater disclosure will make a real difference.

All of us here today recognize that lobbying, whether done on behalf of a business organization, an environmental cause, a children's advocacy group, an educational institution or any other cause can provide us with very useful information that does not dictate but does aid our decision-making process. We should remember that lobbying actually has a noble history. The word comes to us from Great Britain when individuals would gather in the lobby of Parliament in order to talk to members, and the medium of exchange was ideas and not favors.

Today, unfortunately, the word "lobbying" too often conjures up images of all-expense-paid vacations masquerading as factfinding trips, special access that the average citizen can never have, and undue influence that leads to decisions not being made in the public interest. The corrosive effect of that image on the public's confidence in the decisions that we make cannot be underestimated.

We in Congress have an obligation to strengthen that crucial bond of trust between those in Government and those whom Government serves. This legislation is a significant step in that direction, and we need to pass it promptly, without delay.

As my colleague, the Senator from Mississippi, has mentioned, there are some 77 amendments that have been filed to this bill. Many of them have nothing to do with lobbying or ethics reform. Others only have a very tangential connection. If we are serious about delivering lobbying reform legislation, if we believe that we need to clean up questionable practices, if we want to restore that bond of trust between the public and its elected officials, then we should move forward with this legislation without delay,