

This should have been the day we were doing our victory laps prior to going home for the August recess. We should have felt good. I felt good. We were finally going to be able to do something about coastal erosion, to restore the coasts, especially around New Orleans. I have been worried about that. I was twice chairman of the Environment and Public Works Committee. We finally had an opportunity, and what do we do? We should be leaving feeling good. We should feel good today about what Senators BAUCUS and GRASSLEY did for us in taking care of the pensions bill, which directly affects 45 million people and indirectly affects 145 million Americans. It was done. It was signed.

That is what Robert Novak is talking about. It was done—the pension bill was done. It had the extenders on it.

That is when Chairman THOMAS, as indicated here, showed that he could outsmart the House leadership and the Senate leadership. And as indicated here, GRASSLEY was undercut by Senate Majority Leader BILL FRIST in supporting the Thomas plan.

It was all done. It would have taken an hour here. The extenders would have been done, and the pension bill would have been completed. It was done, agreed upon by the House and Senate conferees.

We should have been leaving today feeling so good about that. We should be leaving today feeling good about having given the money to our beleaguered troops, which is so badly needed.

We learned this week that a month ago the President got a message from his generals that the war machine was worn out. They wanted \$17 billion—yesterday—to refurbish the fighting forces we have. Our valiant soldiers are fighting, but they are doing it with equipment that needs repair.

We learned a day later from the head of the National Guard that they are underfunded by \$34 billion. The Nevada National Guard followed up by saying, as a number of our Guard around the country said—a lot of our equipment is still in Iraq.

We should have left feeling that we had completed work on the Military Construction bill and the Defense appropriations bill. But no; we have been jammed into this situation that we have here today.

Of course, we should have felt good about these extenders that now we have been threatened: We are not going to do them at all—which we know we will do before we leave. We are going to do them.

This should not be called the “trifecta” bill—as it has been referred to too often by my friends in the majority—but the “defecta” bill.

The minimum wage issue is absolutely so hard to comprehend. We know—and Bob Novak talks about it—the Republicans hate the minimum wage. He is the mouth of the conservatives. He says Republicans hate the

minimum wage. And they give us a bill so they can say “minimum wage”—but it is a pay cut for people in seven States. Then it is spread out over 3 years.

They couldn't bring themselves to do a pay increase right away.

The richest man in the world is named Warren Buffett. He has more money than all of the Saudi princes. He has \$34 billion in the bank, cash money. He is opposed to repealing the estate tax.

Bill Gates of Microsoft—he and his father are opposed to repealing the estate tax.

What I say about the “defecta” bill is let us vote on the motion to proceed right now—right now. Set it up and make it so each side will have half an hour of debate on it. Let us vote on the motion to proceed right now. We don't need to wait until tomorrow morning. We are ready to do it right now, so that we can get to work on the Defense bill, so that we can do the extenders; otherwise, we are just churning time.

Let us vote on it.

The Family Prosperity Act is for 8,100 in this country. It really is. That is how many this applies to with repeal of the estate tax—8,100 of the richest of the rich.

It is time to put the charade to bed. We are ready to end this circus. Let us have the cloture vote now so we can get on with the business of the American people. The Senate has already spent far too much time on the No. 1 priority of the Republicans. The road to “legislative heaven” of the Republicans is the estate tax repeal.

We have spent more time on this issue in this do-nothing Congress than anything else—far more time than we have spent on our troops in Iraq—on 8,100 families. Is this the legacy of the Republican majority, to spend all of our time on repealing the estate tax and threatening—threatening—Democratic Senators, Republican Senators, and the American people: Either do it with the “defecta” bill or we are not going to do anything?

We need to vote. We need a new direction in this country, and it should start right now.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2007

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 5631, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 5631) making appropriations for the Department of Defense, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2007, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Kennedy amendment No. 4802, to require a new National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). The Senator from Alaska.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 4777, 4821, 4789, 4837, 4823, AND
4838

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, I have another managers' package that has been prepared and has the approval of Senator INOUE and myself. Let me state it for the Senate.

It contains amendment No. 4777, for Senator SMITH, regarding landing systems; amendment No. 4821, for Senator LANDRIEU, regarding first-aid kits; amendment No. 4789, for Senator STABENOW, regarding Stryker combat vehicles; amendment No. 4837, for Senator BENNETT, regarding all-terrain vehicles; amendment No. 4823, for Senator DURBIN, regarding the training of military nurse educators; and amendment No. 4838, for Senator MCCAIN, regarding grants. These have been cleared by both managers. I send this managers' package to the desk and ask unanimous consent that it be considered immediately, the amendments be adopted immediately, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

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

The amendments were agreed to, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 4777

(Purpose: To make available from Research, Development, Test and Evaluation, Air Force, up to \$4,000,000 for the Transportable Transponder Landing System)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by title IV under the heading “RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, TEST AND EVALUATION, AIR FORCE”, up to \$4,000,000 may be available for the Transportable Transponder Landing System.

AMENDMENT NO. 4821

(Purpose: To make available from Operation and Maintenance, Marine Corps Reserve, up to \$3,500,000 for the Individual First Aid Kit)

At the end of title VIII, add the following:
SEC. 8109. Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by title II under the heading “OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE, MARINE CORPS RESERVE”, up to \$3,500,000 may be available for the Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK).

AMENDMENT NO. 4789

(Purpose: To make available from Research, Development, Test and Evaluation, Army, up to \$8,000,000 for the Advanced Tank Armament System)

At the end of title VIII, add the following:
SEC. 8109. Of the amount appropriated or otherwise made available by title IV under