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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD—SENATE  May 11, 2007

Over the past several months, Senators from both sides of the aisle, Republicans and Democrats, have spent countless hours negotiating a bipartisan solution to this critical challenge. These Senators have been bargaining their good faith. I believe they are working hard to reach a compromise, and I hope they can do that. But if they are not able to reach a new bipartisan agreement, we have an opportunity to move forward on a previous bipartisan piece of legislation. The bill I reintroduced on the floor this morning is the same bill that the Senate passed last year overwhelmingly with 23 Republicans voting in favor of the legislation. Last year’s bill was far from perfect. Many of us had misgivings about it—but it is a solid, comprehensive package that will serve as a good start for this year’s very important and vital debate. Several of my colleagues have said we should not move forward at this time; let’s wait.

Over this weekend, there will be negotiations taking place—the rest of this day, Saturday, Sunday, and I hope Monday—to see if a compromise can be reached. If we put this off a week, the same thing would happen. People would be looking for work something that at the last minute. There has been ample opportunity for people to work out an arrangement. I have asked publicly and privately that the President be involved. Members have put so much time and effort into working on immigration bill, they certainly should embrace a motion to start debate.

Those who have threatened a filibuster on the motion to proceed I hope will reconsider the threat and understand how illogical it would be not to allow us to proceed. A bill that passed this body last year with 21 Republicans voting for the legislation now saying they are not going to proceed does not make sense to me.

Let me be clear as I can: By moving this bill, I am trying to make sure negotiations continue. There has been ample time for negotiations to bear fruit. The purpose of this legislation is to move forward on comprehensive immigration reform. I want this Congress to accomplish immigration reform, but we are running out of time to do it. We have set aside the next 2 weeks to do this. After that, we have 4 weeks, and then we have the July 4 recess. After that, and then we are into the August recess. There is no more time to do it. Today is the time. If we don’t do it, starting next Tuesday, there will be no immigration reform this Congress. That would be a real shame.

The House is waiting for us to do this. As everyone knows, the schedule we have is so crowded. This next 2 weeks, in addition to doing immigration reform, we have to send a bill to the President for supplemental appropriations for the ongoing conflict in Iraq, the civil war in Iraq. We want to try to do our budget. We are going to finish WRDA. We have an energy bill we have to do. That is keeping in mind all the procedural hurdles that are always present in the Senate.

A vote to proceed is a vote to open debate, not shut the door on it. If a new agreement is reached, it can be offered as a substitute amendment to this bill on the floor. If a new agreement is not reached, we can legislate the old-fashioned way—taking out what people do not like and putting in new stuff. We can offer amendments to the existing bipartisan bill to make it even better than the one we passed last year. Either path leads to progress that is long overdue.

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. REID. 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.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to proceed to H.R. 1495 now be agreed to; that on Monday, May 14, at 3 p.m., the Senate begin consideration of the measure and the majority manager, Senator Boxer, then be recognized to offer an amendment.

If I could withhold that, Mr. President, and note 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. REID. 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.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to proceed to H.R. 2206 is the Iraq supplemental.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, H.R. 2206 is the Iraq supplemental.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I was distracted. I am confused as to which unanimous consent request was just entered.

Mr. REID. It was the one. I say to my friend, dealing with Iraq. I only indicated just for general information what we were going to do on the immigration matter. This is the House-passed version of the supplemental that we can move to when we decide it is necessary, in spite of the fact that we may be involved, but for this agreement, in the postcloture proceedings.

Mr. MCCONNELL. All right.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the prior statement before was to just alert those Senators who had called asking that we put the vote over that we are going to do that, and we will not vote on cloture on the immigration bill on Tuesday afternoon. We will be able to work all day on Monday and Tuesday on WRDA. Who knows, we may get lucky and be able to complete most of the work or all of the work on that.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me just say with regard to the immigration bill, the only chance to get a bill is on a bipartisan basis. I agree with the decision of the majority leader to accept the recommendation of those who have been involved in that discussion, to give us the maximum opportunity to piece out the new stuff in the bipartisan agreement that we thought we almost had a week or so ago on this most important legislation.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2007—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to proceed to H.R. 1495 be agreed to; that on Monday, May 14, the Senate begin consideration of that measure, and that the manager of that bill, Senator BOXER, be recognized to offer an amendment.

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

ORDER FOR MEASURE TO BE PLACED ON CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate put the cloture over on the immigration motion to proceed until Wednesday morning. Therefore, I will file cloture on Monday on the motion to proceed on immigration—not today.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 2206