

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—  
H.R. 2316

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I want to visit with everyone present for just a few minutes about S. 1, the ethics and lobbying reform bill. We hope to appoint conferees on this important bill today. By doing this today, we would enact this critical legislation that is so important to be done. It is the most significant lobbying ethics reform, I believe, in the history of this country. It makes tremendous reforms—long overdue. It will restore the people's confidence in their elected officials.

Last year, Americans rightly got sick and tired about story after story of corruption, the culture of corruption some called it, here in Washington led by Jack Abramoff, who is now in prison; Randy Cunningham, who is now in prison; Bob Ney, who is now in prison; Safavian, the head of Government contracting, led away from his office in handcuffs; Scooter Libby—numerous people who worked for various House Members who were involved in corrupt activities, airplane trips to golf in Scotland and places that are hard to imagine.

The American people responded at the polls last November with a clear message that they wanted a new direction, and we, the Democrats, responded by passing the most sweeping ethics and lobbying reform in a generation. We did it with the help of the minority. I do not say that lightly. But let's see what is in this bill. Let's review it for a bit to find out what this bill does.

It prohibits lobbyists and entities that hire lobbyists from giving gifts to lawmakers and their staffs. It prevents corporations and other entities that hire lobbyists from paying for trips for Members or staffs. And it prohibits lobbyists from participating in or paying for any such trips. It requires Senators to pay fair market value prices for charter flights, which put an end to the abuses of corporate travel.

Many people in this Chamber flew in corporate jets and paid first-class airfare. That did not corrupt any Members of Congress, but it was corrupting. It didn't look right, and therefore it is important it be stopped. And I hope it stopped. We need legislation to make sure it is stopped.

This legislation also slows the so-called revolving door by extending a ban on lobbying by former Members of Congress and senior staffers, and prevents Senators from even negotiating for a job as a lobbyist until their successor has been elected. This legislation puts an end to pay-to-play schemes, such as the notorious "K Street Project." It provides dramatic improvements to disclosure and lobbying activities by doubling the frequency that lobbyists must file reports on their activities, requiring disclosure of contributions and bundled contribu-

tions, requiring that lobbyists' disclosures be publicly available on the Internet in a searchable form. This is for the first time ever.

This legislation requires lobbyists to certify in writing that they have not violated House or Senate gift and travel rules. It ends the practice of corporations hiding their lobbying activities behind bogus coalitions with friendly sounding names, and increases civil and criminal penalties for lobbyists who violate the law.

The bill has brought about a revolution in earmark disclosure.

For the first time ever, the Senate will identify all earmarks in bills, the Senator who requested it, and the entity or location that receives it. Further, every Senator has certified that he or she has no monetary interest in their earmarks. Let me say that. This disclosure is the first time ever that this information will be disclosed. The Senate could have required the disclosure last year or the year before or the year before that, while the number of earmarks was exploding under a Republican Congress, but it did not. This year we took the lead and changed the way we do business around here. At the beginning of the year, we sent a message that ethics and lobbying reform was our No. 1 commitment by designating the bill S. 1. We worked hard to make this a bipartisan bill. Now we must take the next step by appointing conferees. I look forward to moving the ethics bill forward so we can reassure the American people that Congress is as good and honest as the people it represents.

I have gone over most everything in this bill. There are other things in it, but this is strong, important information the American people deserve. It is a law that should become a reality as quickly as possible.

I, therefore, ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 182, H.R. 2316, lobbying disclosure; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of S. 1, as passed by the Senate on January 18, 2007, be inserted in lieu thereof; that the bill be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate with a ratio of 4 to 3, with the above occurring without intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—  
S. 223

Mr. BENNETT. Madam President, reserving the right to object, on behalf of the Republican leader, I would add an additional unanimous consent request that at a time to be determined by the majority leader, in consultation with

the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 96, S. 223, under the following limitations: That the committee-reported amendment be agreed to and that the only other amendment in order be a McConnell or his designee amendment, with 1 hour of debate equally divided in the usual form on the bill and 1 hour equally divided on the McConnell amendment, and that following the use or yielding back of the time, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the McConnell amendment, followed by a vote on passage of the bill, as amended, if amended, with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Madam President, here we go again, doing their best—that is, the Republicans—to stop us from going ahead on ethics and lobbying reform. The suggestion of the distinguished Senator from Utah is reasonable, but it should be a different matter. In fact, once we look at the amendment, we may be willing to accept it. But it is only an effort to divert attention from ethics and lobbying reform, those matters—corporate jets, what lobbyists can do, what they can't do, bundling, what we need to do with earmarks. It is an effort to divert attention from that. Attention may be diverted for a few minutes this afternoon, but we are going to continue to focus on it. We need to pass this legislation. It is important we do so.

We, the Democrats, support what the Senator has suggested, basic electronic filing of FEC reports. There is no problem with that. Senator FEINSTEIN moved it through the Rules Committee and has been seeking consent to pass it on the floor unanimously. We have never seen the amendment Senator MCCONNELL wishes to stick on this. Once we have a chance to review it, we will be able, perhaps, to move forward on this consent request. In any event, let's not muddy the waters on the ethics bill. We want to move forward on that comprehensive bill, the most sweeping reforms in a long time, probably ever.

I wanted everyone to know there has been objection made by the minority to going forward on a conference. The conference will be led by JOE LIEBERMAN on our side, a man who is certainly fair to both sides. Why would we not go to conference on this important legislation?

I will be back. I will be back and hope there will be the revelation to the Republicans that we are going to do everything we can on this legislation. We are going to focus attention on why it is not going to conference. It is not going to conference because the Republicans are stonewalling our ability to do so, coming up with something as diverting as FEC reports being filed electronically.

I object to the request of my friend. The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.