

we had to move forward on was Amtrak, a bill that had been in the Republican leadership for years not moving forward. We decided we would move forward on it, and we passed it. What was the first amendment offered? A tax amendment. It had absolutely nothing to do with Amtrak. We can't have these bills in the waning weeks of this Congress, when people are waiting around for all kinds of things they want to do on Iraq and Afghanistan and the military and immigration.

I guess the Republicans think they have a good issue on immigration, to bash immigrants. They have all kinds of issues they want on immigration. They are waiting in the wings to offer these amendments. We can see that on the farm bill. A number of the 287 amendments filed have been dealing with immigration. We can't open the farm bill during the time we are trying to pass FISA, trying to pass the farm bill, AMT, do our spending bills.

How much more reasonable could I be in trying to shorten the time? I said: Republicans take 10; we will take 5. No. So Senator HARKIN comes to me and Senator CHAMBLISS. They have it down to less than 40. I said: Take the deal; we will agree to it. We don't even want time agreements on the amendments. How much more reasonable can we be? We can't be. Whatever we come up with, the Republicans would not agree to it because they do not want us to have a farm bill. So why don't they just acknowledge that. They are acknowledging it by their stopping us from having any kind of agreement.

I agree with the Republican leader, once we got on the bill, we could move forward with these amendments quickly. But that is where we are.

According to my friend—and I think these are the words he said—it is offensive to pay for these tax cuts. Let's follow this. It is offensive to pay for the tax cuts? That has been the Republican mantra for 7 years. And where are we? When President Bush took office, there was a \$7 trillion surplus over 10 years. Where are we now? We are approaching a \$10 trillion debt. Everything the Republicans have done with their spending has not been paid for, and their tax cuts have not been paid for.

As with the Clinton administration, we adopted pay-go. That is in our budget. If we have a program that is new, we have to pay for it. That doesn't sound unreasonable. That is what the American people want. If they buy a new car, a new refrigerator, they have to pay for it. There is only so much credit in the world. This Government has exceeded its credit limit. The credit card no longer works.

We also believe the tax cuts, which have given us red ink as far as you can see, created by the Republicans, should come to an end. If there are going to be further tax cuts, we should pay for them. That is the right thing to do. That is all we are saying with the AMT. Pay for these tax cuts. This is a tax cut. It should be paid for. I don't know what is offensive about that.

I would further say we are willing to meet the minority more than halfway—halfway, of course, but more than halfway. We have proven that as we have worked through legislation this year. It has been hard. It has been a slog. I understand how disappointed the Republicans are that we are in the majority. It was a surprise to a lot of people when last November we took the majority of the Senate. We won seats that no one expected us to win. But we are in the majority, no matter how slim. We have had some accomplishments, and we are proud of those. But more importantly, we believe in change. We believe we are agents of change for America. The Republicans are agents of the status quo. The American people will have to judge whom they want to support. Do they want to support those who want to keep things the way they are in Iraq and every other bad situation we find ourselves in as a country or do they want to move forward with us and work for change? That is where we are.

I think we are on the right side. I hope during these next couple of weeks we can work together and do some good things for the country. We are willing to go more than halfway. Take AMT, for example. Let's go over that again. I have tried everything I can, offering unanimous consent requests which have been objected to. Vote on the House bill. No. Vote on what we have in the Senate. No. Vote on what Senator LOTT wants: just to repeal it and have another trillion dollars of red ink. No. Not willing to do that.

So today I said: OK, let's vote on not even paying for it. How about that? I have heard no clamor from the Republicans, yes, that sounds like a good idea. What more could we do?

The word is that there are people—and how big the number is we don't know, but we know in the Senate it doesn't take a big majority to cause problems—there are many Republican Senators who don't want us to put the patch for AMT so they can go around, as I told Senator MCCONNELL this morning, pointing fingers at each other about whose fault it is that these people in America with \$75,000 to \$500,000 in income are going to get a tax increase. How much more reasonable could we be? Have we gone more than halfway? The answer is obviously yes. We want to legislate. We do not want to block things from happening.

If someone can show me how I am unreasonable with my proposal on AMT, I would be happy to sit down and talk to them. I don't know how I could be more reasonable.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, others have been waiting patiently to speak. Let me say with regard to AMT, this is existing law we are trying to extend. With regard to the extenders, there is existing law we are trying to extend. We should not use that as an

excuse to raise taxes on a whole lot of other Americans. That is something that virtually every member of my conference feels strongly about. We are going to continue to talk about it. I am still optimistic we are going to be able to get this worked out. The majority leader and I are good friends, and we are going to continue to work on all these issues in the hope that we can go forward in the few weeks remaining before Christmas.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business for 60 minutes with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees and with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first half and the Republicans controlling the final half.

The Senator from Oregon.

(The remarks of Mr. WYDEN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2411 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1662

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, with the indulgence of the Senator from Oklahoma, at this time, on behalf of Senator KERRY, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 422, S. 1662; that the amendment at the desk be considered and agreed to; the committee-reported amendment, as amended, be agreed to; the bill, as amended, be read a third time; that the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee then be discharged of H.R. 3567, the House companion, and all after the enacting clause be stricken, the text of S. 1662, as amended, be inserted in lieu thereof, the bill be advanced to third reading, passed, and 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; that S. 1662 be returned to the calendar, with all of the above occurring without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I object and will take my morning hour time to explain why.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

CREDIT CARD BILLS

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I say to the Senator from Oregon, I look forward to looking at the bill he just introduced. I, too, am very concerned. We