

designees; that the 20 minutes immediately prior to the cloture vote be divided 10 minutes each for the leaders and the majority leader controlling the final 10 minutes; that upon the use or yielding back of time, without further intervening action, the Senate proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed.

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

PROGRAM

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, as a reminder, cloture was filed on the Harkin substitute to the farm bill. Therefore, if Members have amendments on the list of amendments in order to the bill, they should have germane first-degree amendments filed at the desk by 1 p.m. tomorrow. However, if amendments have already been filed, there is no need to refile at this time.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senator THUNE for up to 15 minutes, the Senate then stand adjourned under the previous order.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, for the past 5 weeks now, my colleagues and I have spent literally hours on the Senate floor talking about the 2007 farm bill. Unfortunately, talking about the farm bill for over 5 weeks is all we have done. We could have spent all the days and hours since November 5 productively debating this farm bill. Instead, the distinguished leader on the other side of the aisle made a decision the very first day of the farm bill debate when the farm bill was brought to the floor and the debate ensued to not allow any amendments to reach the floor. Not one single farm bill amendment has been discussed.

Farm bill authority spans 5 years. This legislation impacts every man, woman, and child in America. My colleagues in the minority, who are not members of the Agriculture Committee and who have not had an opportunity to help craft this legislation, deserve a chance to offer their suggested changes.

The farm bill before us totals 1,600 pages. It reauthorizes over \$280 billion in spending on commodity, conservation, nutrition, trade, energy, and rural development programs. This bill is far too important to be held hostage by partisan tactics. However, the majority leader made a decision, as I said,

nearly 2 weeks ago, to prohibit amendments from being offered to this landmark legislation.

I am a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and I am proud of the farm bill we passed out of the committee. I give Chairman HARKIN and the ranking member, Senator CHAMBLISS, great credit. I believe they deserve to be given great credit for the efforts they made in committee deliberation. The members of the committee held an open and productive debate. Several amendments were offered, debated, and voted on. At the end of the day, Senate Democrats and Republicans set aside their differences and reported out a bill to meet America's food and energy needs over the next 5 years.

Is the committee-reported bill perfect? No, of course not. But that being said, my colleagues all deserve an opportunity to offer their amendments to the farm bill. There are only 21 of us who serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee, 11 Democrats, 10 Republicans. Senator DOMENICI, Senator NELSON, and I authored an amendment that would add an increased renewable fuels standard to the 2007 farm bill on the floor because it didn't get added in the committee and because there were questions about whether an energy bill was ultimately going to pass the Senate. Therefore, we thought it would be good to improve and strengthen the energy title of the farm bill by adding the RFS to the farm bill. That is one of the amendments that, of course, could be debated if, in fact, there were an open debate process.

As I travel across my State and met with farmers and agricultural leaders, the message to me is very clear. No single policy is more important to our agricultural community than this farm bill and the accompanying Energy bill. If we can get a farm bill passed with a renewable fuel standard, I think our farmers would be very pleased with the work Congress has done to promote American agriculture and move the renewable fuels industry forward.

This renewable fuels standard will create jobs in rural America, give our producers an alternative market for our crops, spur billions of dollars in renewable fuels investment, and save over \$600 million in taxpayer dollars in the underlying bill.

However, we have not had an opportunity to debate any of these amendments, including a renewable fuels standard amendment. I listened all day while accusations have flown back and forth. There has been all this hand wringing going on finger pointing, and the blame game being played. I have to say, as someone who voted for cloture the first time we had a cloture vote on the farm bill, I voted for cloture because I need this bill to move forward—my farmers and my ranchers want a new farm bill—but not because the process has been fair to Members on my side of the aisle.

Senators on the minority side, on the Republican side of the aisle—as I said,

there are only 21 of us who serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee. That means there are 79 other Senators who would like to weigh in on this important legislation. We have had the bill on the floor literally for a 2-week period and we didn't debate or vote upon one single amendment.

As I said before, you are talking about a 1,600-page bill that authorizes \$280 billion in spending over the next 5 years, and there has not been one single amendment voted on. The majority leader decided when the bill came to the floor he was going to fill the amendment tree, which in effect said no amendment can be offered unless it is approved by the majority leader.

I don't happen to disagree with the notion that amendments that are brought to the floor of the Senate ought to be somewhat germane to the underlying legislation. But it is a reality, a practical reality every single day in this institution, in the Senate, that amendments are brought to the floor that are not germane to the underlying bill. I will hold up a case in point because I have heard my colleagues on the other side get up and say: The Republicans want to offer all these nongermane amendments and what are we supposed to do about that, these need to be germane to the underlying farm bill? I would like to see amendments that are germane to the underlying farm bill, but it is a reality in the Senate that on many occasions—in fact it is often the case—amendments are offered to all kinds of legislation that are not germane to that underlying legislation.

A case in point: We are now stalled on the Defense authorization bill, a bill that was debated and voted upon a long time ago. The House passed it, the Senate passed it, we went to conference, we resolved all the differences. I serve as a Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and I know some of the issues that were being debated in the conference were somewhat contentious, but they all got resolved. Most of them were related to the underlying bill. Most of them were related to our national security programs, our readiness and that sort of thing. What is holding up the conference on the Defense authorization bill is hate crimes legislation because hate crimes was put on the bill in the Senate before it left, over the objections of many of us who didn't feel it was relevant or germane to the underlying Defense authorization bill. But nevertheless we didn't have the votes. It went to conference.

Now the debate over whether we are going to have a Defense authorization bill doesn't hinge on anything having to do with national security. It hinges on hate crimes legislation. How is that germane to the Defense authorization bill? Yet my colleagues on the other side have continually gotten up today and railed on the Republicans because Republicans, of all things, want a vote on a death tax amendment to the farm bill.