

that you cannot get anything done without bipartisan support. Our 60-vote rule for cloture to close off debate in order to have an up-or-down vote requires it. So why not recognize that, sure, we can say no, no, no, but occasionally I think we ought to look for an opportunity to say yes where it doesn't sacrifice our principles, but it does find common ground to try to get things done on behalf of the American people.

I have constituents who asked me, as recently as last night: Don't you find life in the Senate and in Washington and in the Congress frustrating? Many say I could never do what you do because I would be so frustrated by it. I think there is plenty of opportunity for frustration, if we dwell on that. But I prefer to look at the opportunities for making life better for the American people and for offering solutions on the difficult issues that confront us. To me, that is what I get up and come to work for. That is why I enjoy being in the Senate. I believe it gives me a chance, as one American, to do what I can to try to make life better and to make a difference. It is not about sacrificing principles. It is doing what we said in the preamble to the Constitution when we said:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.

We said that in 1787, in a document that was ratified by all of the States by 1790. That should be our goal still today—to be true to that statement of principle about what our goals are as a nation.

The Senator from Tennessee did go through a number of concrete proposals and talked about what our alternative will be to the proposals being made on the other side of the aisle. Again, I agree with him, that the American people don't expect us to come here and split the difference on everything in order to come up with an agreement if they believe that outcome is devoid of principle or sacrifices fundamental values. There are differences between the parties. Those differences ought to be reflected in a dignified and civilized and respectful debate that highlights those differences, and then we have a vote on those different points of view. We will either pass legislation or not based on that vote. But I think it will be acting in the greatest tradition of the Senate, and in a way that our constituents back home earnestly wish we would act and, unfortunately, in a way that we have not always acted.

I have to believe all Members of this body want to see our economy as strong as it can possibly be going forward. They want to see that our Nation is secure and our defense remains the best in the world; that all Americans have access to quality health care; that

taxpayers not be compelled to foot the bill for wasteful Washington spending. I have to believe that all of our constituents, and indeed all Members of the Senate, believe that we need a sustainable energy policy that allows us to turn away from our over-reliance on imported oil and gas from dangerous parts of the world.

I think, as Senator ALEXANDER pointed out, principled differences on important legislation need to be debated in the Senate and voted on and resolved rather than be left without a solution and unaddressed.

We do have an opportunity, I believe, this new year as we have come back not just to say no, no, no, to every idea that is offered on the floor but to say: Here are our alternative solutions to the problems that confront America.

Mr. President, you will be hearing us on the floor of the Senate on a weekly basis not only addressing legislation offered by the majority—and, of course, it is the majority leader's prerogative to set the agenda to call up bills; we will not be able to do that as Members of the minority—but what you will hear from us is a principled proposal to solve the problems that confront America on each of the big issues this Nation wants us to address and wants us to expend our very best efforts to try to solve.

I am delighted we have seen a sort of renewed enthusiasm for finding solutions in a principled way. I agree with the Senator from Tennessee, the retreat we had I thought was one of the most hopeful retreats I have ever participated in as a Member of the Senate because I think what we saw is a recommitment to try to solve problems, to avoid the partisan bickering and the divisiveness that has resulted in the historically lower approval rating of Congress and which turns off so many of our constituents.

Of course, as we all know, as elected officials, if we do not respond to our employer and try to address the concerns our employer has—and our employers are our constituents—then our employers may look for somebody else to do the job in the next election.

It is up to us to be responsive to those concerns, and I think without sacrificing principles, by staying true to those values we brought with us but looking for common ground. That is the art in our job, and it is more art than science. I have said it before and I will say it again, I think compromise for compromise's sake is overrated because if all compromise means is sacrificing your principles in order to get a problem behind you, I don't think you have done your job. Doing your job means standing on your principles but looking for common ground, consistent with those principles, to solve problems. There is plenty of common ground to find if we will work a little bit harder and a little bit more in earnest to try to find it.

I yield the floor, and 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. BOND. 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.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:04 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 12:07 p.m., when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. KLOBUCHAR).

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FISA AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2007— Continued

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask that the pending amendment be set aside so I may call up amendment No. 3905.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BOND. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I guess I would like to start by saying I appreciate very much the sentiments that were recently expressed by the Senator from Tennessee and the Senator from Texas, who is my friend who served with me as attorney general at the same time in our respective States, Texas and Rhode Island. I ask them to let me know when that new approach will begin because I am, frankly, not seeing much of it in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act procedures we are going through on the floor. I confess, I am a new Member of this body, and I do not understand why.

We heard Senator DODD, the very distinguished Senator from Connecticut, who has served in this body for 27 years, describe how important this Chamber is and that it is the right of Senators to debate matters, not for the sake of ventilating themselves but toward actually getting a vote on a real amendment on a matter of real significance.

We had one vote on a committee amendment. Not one Senator has achieved getting a vote, and we are on a very short timeframe. I may be new, but I will tell you that in the 1 year I have served, I have presided a great