

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

#### LEARNING ECONOMIC LESSONS

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I spent 8½ hours yesterday trying to get back here, and I understand during a period of that time my name was mentioned rather prominently several times on the floor, which is fine. I know Senator REID is going to come out in a little bit and offer some unanimous consent requests, which I am certainly open to considering, but we just got the language on those and so we will be looking at that. I will be objecting until I get a chance to see what changes have been made, and I look forward to working with Senator REID.

But I think this whole debate about 35 bills and \$10 billion is a great lesson for us. We stand right now as a nation on a fault line that has created a lack of confidence in the financial system in this country—and not just in this country but in the world as well. While we are facing what is being requested by the head of the Federal Reserve, the Treasury, and the administration—a task of trying to reestablish confidence and liquidity in our markets—we have failed to learn the lesson. The lesson is this: We cannot continue to indiscriminately create more Government without making the Government we have efficient.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, regular order. The regular order was I was to have the floor when Senator BOND finished.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is correct.

#### ADVANCING AMERICA'S PRIORITIES ACT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday we started a process of trying to clear bills and passing matters. Prior to that, to remind everyone, 34 bills have been held up by Senator COBURN, held up for months. We have tried to work with him and it has borne no fruit. I want everyone here to understand that Senator COBURN may have been the person objecting to these pieces of legislation passing, but the Republicans are complicit in this because they have joined with him in blocking these bills. He could not do this alone. They have joined with him in doing this. So people who go back to their constituency and say they are in favor of all these pieces of legislation are not leveling with their constituents. I repeat, Senator COBURN may have been the person who made the objection, but we have attempted to move forward. He has been joined by his Republican colleagues. Every Democrat, of course, is in favor of moving these pieces of legislation, even though they are Republican bills. We believe, for the good of

the people, you don't identify a good piece of legislation by whether it is a Democrat or Republican sponsoring it; you identify it as to the merits of that piece of legislation.

Again, to recap, the legislation contains 34 bills with broad bipartisan support that have been held up by Senator COBURN, who obviously thinks he knows better than the House of Representatives—by the way, these bills were passed overwhelmingly; the average vote is 370—that he knows more than the committees that reported these bills out, both in the House and the Senate, and he knows better than the whole Senate, since he will not give us simple votes on these bills. I repeat, he has been joined by his Republican colleagues in the obstructionism.

I tried to get the whole block passed yesterday. I tried to move to different sections—there are seven different sections—and there was an objection made on behalf of Senator COBURN to each of those. With a few things on our plate; that is, the financial crisis facing this country, trying to complete a funding resolution to get us through this beginning of the next fiscal year, an economic recovery package—we have a lot to do. Because of that, I did not have the ability, again, to file cloture. It takes 2 days to vote on a motion to proceed, 30 hours; get on the bill, file cloture, 2 more days, 30 hours. We didn't have time to do that. But we are going to continue working on these next Congress. If we come back after this weekend—which is looking more every day as though we are going to have to—we can consider moving forward on these pieces of legislation at that time.

We are going to do what we can to get these extremely important pieces of legislation passed. I again say, each one of these bills overwhelmingly passed the House of Representatives. Each one of these bills has been reported out of the Senate committee. We are going to see if any of these will get the approval of the Republicans today.

We were told yesterday by Republican Senate staff that maybe there are other Republican Senators who are using Senator COBURN as a foil, using him as somebody to do the blocking, so we will see. Yesterday it was interesting, the junior Senator from Arizona said there are 8 bills we could clear—8 out of 34, not very good, but 8 is a lot better than nothing. Within a few seconds after I agreed to that, well, he said, maybe three. I tried to pin him down to three. He said you will have to wait until Dr. COBURN shows up.

I hope everyone is beginning to see a clearer picture of this obstructionism.

Also understand this: Not a single piece of legislation will cost the American people 10 cents—nothing, not a penny, because they are all authorizations. They allow the appropriations committees to take a look at these pieces of legislation. There are a lot of pieces of legislation that pass that give

authorization and then there have to be priorities set by the Budget Committee, sometimes the Finance Committee, and the Appropriations Committee, to find out which priorities should exist.

The authorizations do not cost the American taxpayers anything; nothing; zero. That is why I was stunned when I got a letter from the Senator from Oklahoma saying you strike \$10 billion in authorizations from these bills and then when the bills come forward you make an amendment to put it back in.

I haven't gone to medical school, but I know that is illogical. We are not going to offer consent requests on each bill in this package because we have been told in no uncertain terms by Senator COBURN that he will not accept that. Right now we have to deal with him. So I am going to start on a couple of titles and see what progress, if any, we make today. As I have said, we are not going to give up on the rest of the important pieces of legislation. But because the Republicans have supported Senator COBURN, that is where we are. I repeat, even though he is the person out front, the Republicans, the Republican caucus is responsible for this.

I disagree with Dr. COBURN on his concerns about authorizations. I think he is wrong, but he has a right to his opinion and I accept that. But my disappointment is his Republican colleagues are supporting him. I do not think that is going to continue.

We do not know what is going to be the status next year, but I hope there will be fewer of them and more of us and maybe that will lessen some of the intransigence we have seen on the other side. I am happy to continue discussion with Senator COBURN's office which, frankly, we found basically has been a big waste of time, but we will continue to do that. I have tried to be patient and I will continue to do that so I hope we can get something done.

The first title of this package deals with health care. This title consists of very important bills covering a range of diseases and conditions. I venture to say that every American and every family in America has been touched by some portion of the health care provisions in this package. The health care provisions in this package include the ALS Registry Act and the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act. That piece of legislation is interesting. Christopher Reeve, Superman, who was badly injured in a horse accident, and his wonderful wife Dana, who was so supportive through his very difficult life, are both dead. As young people they are both dead, even though there is legislation that has been introduced and we tried to pass in their honor. They are both dead.

The STOP Stroke Act—I don't think there is a family in America who has not been affected by stroke in some way.

The Legislation also contains the Melanie Blocker Stokes MOTHERS

Act, which focuses on postpartum depression, which now is more easily diagnosed, and they are looking for ways to lessen the burden that people who have postpartum depression have and the Vision Care for Kids Act and the Prenatally and Postnatally Diagnosed Conditions Awareness Act.

Three of the six bills in the health care package were introduced by Republicans. All these bills passed the House with extremely strong bipartisan support. Eighty-five percent of the people in the House of Representatives voted for these pieces of legislation. That is the average. Of course, the same over here. We have bipartisan support. But procedurally Republicans have supported Senator COBURN.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—  
H.R. 1727

Mr. REID. First, let's take a look at the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act, one key provision that has been obstructed. It is an important piece of legislation dealing with paralysis. This legislation would support and enhance cooperation in paralysis research, rehabilitation, and quality of life programs for people with paralysis. It authorizes grants and research funding for clinical rehabilitation of paralysis. The bill has been languishing on the Senate calendar for well more than a year and, I repeat, passed the House with extremely broad bipartisan support.

Dr. COBURN's office has indicated on several occasions that, OK, let's pass this. But we have heard that before.

I ask unanimous consent that the HELP Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 1727, the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act, and the Senate proceed to its consideration, that the bill be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and there be no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. Reserving the right to object, will the Senate majority leader yield for a question?

Mr. REID. Of course.

Mr. COBURN. You sent over some 20 or 30 bills to our side. Is this one of those bills and has there been any change in what we have since our discussions?

Mr. REID. This is the exact language from the House of Representatives.

Mr. COBURN. Pending the time we get to review all of that, I will gladly accept a unanimous consent but, reserving the right to object, I will object at this time until I have a chance to look at the bills. They were given to us less than 20 minutes ago and we wish an opportunity to look at that. The majority leader has my word I will not object if that is the case.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say to my friend, he has had more than a year to look at this. It is the exact bill from the House. Fine. Take a look at it. We will come back again.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—  
S. 1810

Mr. REID. Another bill in this package is extremely important. This bill will help ensure pregnant women and new mothers of babies with prenatal conditions will get information and support services to help prepare them for the challenges and rewards of their children.

I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 457, S. 1810, that all after the enacting clause be stricken, that an amendment at the desk consisting of subtitle (f) of title I of S. 3297 be inserted in lieu thereof, the amendment be considered and agreed to, the bill as amended be read a third time and passed, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate. The two sponsors of this legislation, Senators BROWNBACK and KENNEDY, are in favor of what we have done with the amendment that is at the desk.

I have made this amendment available to everybody for some time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. Reserving the right to object, after looking at what was sent over this morning, if there was no change to it, I will not object. Pending that, I object at this time.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—  
S. 1382

Mr. REID. Mr. President, now we turn to another important piece of legislation. This is what we mentioned earlier, the Lou Gehrig's disease legislation. The bill would build upon, expand, and coordinate among pre-existing ALS registries, helping to collect data essential to the study of this dread disease.

The reason this is important is the average time from discovering a person has Lou Gehrig's disease until they die is 16 months. Time is of the essence.

The bill would create a Federal advisory committee on the national ALS Registry and promote research access to ALS data. The bill passed the House 411 to 3 a year ago. Both House and Senate committees marked the bill up with bipartisan support. Senator COBURN said he wanted some changes made so we have made those changes. Each change he told us he wanted we have made. Then he asked for an additional change and we made that. Now we have made extensive changes to the bill to accommodate the concerns Senator COBURN said he had with the bill, so I hope we can get it passed.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 518, the ALS Registry Act, that all after the enacting clause be stricken, the amendment at the desk consisting of the compromise amendment based on the language of subtitle (a) of title I of S. 3297 be inserted, that the amendment be considered and agreed to and

the bill, as amended, be read a third time, passed, and the motions to reconsider be laid on the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. Reserving the right to object, again, after looking at this, if what the majority leader said is accurate, I plan on supporting this. But until I have had a chance to read what was sent over this morning—I will object until that time.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—  
H.R. 507

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this is the Vision Care for Kids Act. What this would do is ensure that children get the vision care they need to succeed in school.

I think most everybody knows I was born in a little town and raised in a little town—no doctors, no hospital. I was born in a house, not in a hospital.

When I went away to high school, which is also a fairly small high school, I was a baseball catcher on the baseball team. When we would move inside to the gym when the weather was very bad, which was not very often in Nevada, and I would be catching, I had trouble picking up the ball. But I thought it was that way for everybody. I thought other people had trouble seeing the ball. It was not until I was a freshman in college that somebody said: You must not be able to see very well. And so as a freshman in college I got a pair of glasses. I will never forget it. I came back to my dormitory; I had never seen green on the hills. I did not know things looked that way. But with my glasses, I could see it was green now. Now I know why I could not see the ball.

That is what this is all about, so kids like me have an opportunity maybe to be able to see with glasses or whatever it takes to improve their eyesight. Is this bill going to solve all of those problems? No, but it certainly would help. It would establish a program through the Centers for Disease Control to complement and encourage existing State efforts to improve children's vision care.

I am not suggesting to anyone that I was blind. I just didn't see very well, and I didn't know that. I thought everybody was like me. But can you imagine how—I can imagine. I was there. I know. I came home, and I could not believe it. I called my friends: Look, it is green over there.

I ask unanimous consent that the HELP Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 507 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be read a third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. COBURN. This bill has never been before the HELP Committee. It