

that we are going to stop legislating tonight and come back tomorrow, come in at 10 o'clock. We will go immediately to the bill. There are a number of amendments pending. Other Senators want to offer amendments.

The main reason I look forward to tomorrow is there are a number of Republican Senators working with Democratic Senators trying to come up with an alternative proposal. Now, I hope something works out. I know everyone is trying in good faith to move this ball down the court. But I think we need the night and some time tomorrow to see if we can do that. There is paper floating back and forth that is becoming filled with numbers, and we all need to take a look at this.

The work done by the negotiators, as I indicated earlier—about eight Republicans, about the same number of Democrats, trying to work toward making this a better piece of legislation—is ongoing. If, in fact, we find tomorrow that we are spinning our wheels, cannot get something done, then we will file cloture and have a Sunday cloture vote.

Now, Mr. President, I am optimistic we can get something done, and I hope that, in fact, is the case. Everyone is going to have to give a little and understand that this is a process where we have to move this ball down the court. The Republican leader has indicated to me that if we get this out of here, we should go to conference. I agree with him. That takes a little bit of time, and I would hope we could complete this legislation tomorrow. I have hopes, and I am cautiously optimistic we can do that.

So I wish I had all the answers, but the answers are not here tonight. I think the answers have been coming forth more rapidly in the last few days. I think staying here later tonight would not benefit us. We have a number of amendments we could dispose of, but I think we are waiting for the big amendment that has been worked on now for all this week.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, will the majority leader yield for an inquiry?

Mr. REID. I will be happy to.

Mr. McCONNELL. Then am I correct in assuming we would continue to process other amendments tomorrow—

Mr. REID. Absolutely.

Mr. McCONNELL. Because there are a number over here, and I understand you have some as well—while these discussions are going on?

Mr. REID. Yes. We will come in at 10 o'clock. The managers of the bill should be here. We will go directly to the legislation. There will be votes. We could have votes early in the morning because there are amendments right now pending that the manager on this side could move to table, setting up a string of votes. But the answer to the Republican leader is, yes, we will process amendments.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HEALTHY AMERICANS ACT

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I cosponsored Senator WYDEN and Senator BENNETT Healthy Americans Act last year to support a legitimate bipartisan effort that combines “private markets” and “universal access.” I am willing to do so again this year, because health care reform is too big of an issue for one party to tackle on its own. Our only chance of achieving true, meaningful reform is if both parties work together.

However, I do have reservations about this legislation—I see it as a work in progress and would not vote for it in its current form. For example, the current budget figures are unrealistic. In order to maintain budget neutrality, as drafted, the bill would shift a new burden on middle-income Americans. We have not yet discovered a way to solve this problem without increasing the cost of the bill.

Another problem I have with the bill is that the mandated level of standard benefits is too high. As drafted, typically young, healthy Americans would be forced to pay for a richer level of coverage than they might now choose or possibly be able to afford.

I commend the efforts of Senators WYDEN and BENNETT to reach across party lines on this important issue, and look forward to working with both of them to further improve this proposal.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES PITCHFORD

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today I would like to pay tribute to a staff member who left over the recess to pursue new opportunities.

James Pitchford—known to all of us as Pitch, is a hard-charging marine who will never cease and desist until told to do so when he is on a mission. And his mission is and always has been to serve his country, the men and women in the military, and his family.

As a former Wisconsin Air National Guardsman, naval aviator, marine aviator, and current naval reservist, I am still trying to figure out when he's going to sign up for the Army and put a check in the final square.

Pitch served on my staff for 10 years. In that time, he was a tireless, and I do

want to stress tireless, advocate for the men and women in uniform and the retirees and veterans that have served this Nation so valiantly.

He helped me establish a counter-improvised explosive device center at Fort Leonard Wood. This facility has saved lives and will continue to do so by providing critical training to Army personnel for countering explosives hazards and providing countermine working dogs that were not previously available.

He was a lead staffer on the National Guard Empowerment Act, a top priority for Senator LEAHY and me as co-chairs of the Senate National Guard Caucus. Provisions were enacted that strengthen the Guard's position within the Pentagon and its decisionmaking power.

He worked to improve health care for the Nation's service members and veterans, particularly those suffering from “invisible injuries” such as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

He worked to keep the F-15 and F/A-18 lines in operation, for the benefit of the Air Force, Navy, and St. Louis workers.

He was a strong advocate for military families, our heroes here at home, and particularly the Heroes at Home Program.

There is much more to Pitch's credit legislatively and in fighting or prodding the bureaucracy, depending on which was appropriate at the time.

In addition to Pitch's innumerable legislative endeavors, he was also a leader on the staff.

He took an interest in each and every staff member and mentored all of the young staff with whom he came into contact.

He actively recruited people to work in the office, and once here, actively recruited them to be members of the Armed Forces.

He took an interest in the personal lives of staff members and volunteered his time as office liaison to the Senate Chaplain's Office.

We are also grateful to Pitch's children, his son Benjamin and fraternal twin daughters, Olivia and Kate, of Wisconsin, who endured long separations from their father while he worked to serve the State of Missouri and the Nation as well as U.S. forces and military veterans.

Pitch feels strongly, and I agree, that small business owners should be encouraged to bring their innovative technologies to our Nation's service men and women to reduce their risk of injury or death as they carry the fight to America's enemies. In his new life, he will continue to pursue this high priority in the private sector.

We are sorry to see Pitch go, but we thank him for his many years of service and wish him all the best in his many endeavors.