

that is appropriate. I believe in reciprocity and good faith. I had a conversation the other day with the Republican leader. He didn't mention who was going to offer the amendment, but both of us thought there would be such an amendment offered.

I look forward to completing this legislation. We need to do it by Thursday. I hope we can work our way through this. If it is the CR amendment—and I have no other information other than staff told me walking in that that was going to be the case—I think that is an amendment that will take a little bit of time for us to discuss. There is not much to look at. It is probably one line long. I think I have made myself clear. This is an important piece of legislation for our country. It is an important piece of legislation for the Senate so we can get back to our regular appropriations process. We have done a good job of cutting, significantly, Government-directed spending. I have been on the record some time ago saying we have a constitutional obligation to make sure we are involved in how the country spends its money. We shouldn't leave how it is spent to bureaucrats in big offices here in Washington, made up of people who I don't think know my State as well as I do.

We should have a good, stout debate on a number of issues in the next few days and hopefully move on to other matters next week.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

AMENDMENT PROCESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I listened carefully to the remarks of my friend the majority leader about the amendment process. I certainly commend him for the way in which we have operated this year. As he well knows, 41 Republicans signed a letter to him a couple months ago indicating this is an issue about which Republican Members, regardless of their particular political philosophy—and we do have lots of different philosophies represented in those 41 Members—felt very strongly about. I commend the majority leader for responding. I think it has given the Senate an opportunity to operate again such as it did in the past. I think Members are, by and large, on both sides of the aisle, comfortable with voting. People send us here to vote. My 41 Republicans represent half the American population, and they are certainly entitled to have their say. I think we are operating in a way that is widely accepted and popular on both sides of the aisle.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. McCONNELL. With regard to the bill before us, the Omnibus appropri-

tions bill that arrived from the House certainly is an important piece of legislation, but it is not an emergency. Congress approves it every year. There is no need to rush something Congress approves every year. In fact, in January I recommended several times to the President and to the Democratic leaders in Congress that we move the omnibus before the stimulus. By determining what we would fund in an omnibus first, Democratic leaders would have been encouraged to be more timely, temporary, and targeted as they put together the stimulus. Instead, we have had the order reversed. The result is that now we have significant double spending showing up in both the stimulus and in the omnibus. We have known about the Friday deadline for months, so no one should suddenly point to it now as a reason to rush \$410 billion in spending.

Americans are getting whiplash from all the spending we are doing around here. Let me say that again. Americans are getting whiplash from all the spending we are doing around here. We need to slow down and consider the consequences of every dollar we spend. What we know about this bill already is cause for serious concern. As I said, it adds money for 122 programs. It adds money for 122 programs that were already in the stimulus. It represents an 8-percent increase over last year's bill.

Much of the funding it adds or eliminates calls for scrutiny. The new administration has repeatedly criticized Congress for rushing through legislation before the public has a chance to review it. During his campaign, the President said he wouldn't sign any nonemergency spending bill the American people had not had at least 5 days to review on the White House Web site. There is no reason for us to rush this massive bill when the White House has already promised it would not sign it without the requisite 5-day review. I would suggest, as we begin this debate, that the House prepare a short-term continuing resolution. There is no reason for either the Senate or the American people to feel artificially rushed, particularly on a bill of this magnitude.

It may seem quaint to some people, but a month ago many of us were concerned about a \$1.2 trillion deficit. Then we watched it grow, as we passed a \$1 trillion stimulus bill and a \$33 billion bill for SCHIP. Then last week the President proposed a \$3.6 trillion budget, including a \$634 billion "downpayment" on health care reform and a major tax increase on small businesses. We expect to be asked to spend \$1 to \$2 trillion to stabilize the financial sector, and we have been told the administration's housing plan, which is set to start this week, will cost a quarter of a trillion dollars.

We need to step back, look at the bigger picture, and think about what we are doing. That means slowing down before we spend another \$410 billion.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, as I have indicated, the omnibus bill has been fully vetted by the various committees, Democrats and Republicans alike. As to the issue the Republican leader raised, that people need more time to review this, this has been on the Web site for well more than a week. People could look at it and have it memorized by now. We also know the issues the Republican leader raised, that President Obama is talking about health care. Does anyone think that we can not do anything dealing with health care? People have said: How much is it going to cost to try to take care of health care?

How much is it going to cost to do nothing about health care? Fifty million people have no health insurance and millions of others are uninsured. If they have a private physician, every time they get sick and hurt, they go right to the emergency room. The highest priced medical care rendered anyplace in the Nation is in these emergency rooms. It drives up taxes, the cost of a doctor, the cost of hospitalization and, of course, insurance premiums. So we have to do something with health care.

Energy? We are importing 70 percent of our oil. We have to do something about energy. Education? We are failing American children by not doing more for education. So these issues we are going to take up in the future should have nothing to do with getting this most important legislation passed.

We are looking forward to moving this matter as quickly as possible. It is something that is important for the country because we have a lot of issues we need to get to after we fund the Government—something we should have done last year but we could not because of the difficulty we had working with President Bush.

I think what Senator INOUE and Senator COCHRAN have done is in keeping with the traditions of this body in meeting the needs of the American people. There is no wasteful spending in this most important piece of legislation. It is important to all 50 States. I am hopeful and confident we will pass this in the next few days.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2009

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1105, which the clerk will report by title.

The legislative clerk read as following:

A bill (H.R. 1105) making omnibus appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2009, and for other purposes.