

extension of unemployment compensation; that the bill be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. NICKLES. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I think some people are playing political games. I understand some people are interested in passing a unanimous consent agreement on unemployment compensation. I heard the request. It was to provide a 13-week extension of unemployment compensation. That is not what this bill does. I don't know how many times I have to say it on the floor. The bill provides for a 26-week extension, not a 13-week, a 26-week extension. There is a big difference.

I believe I heard the sponsors say it changes the trigger—it does change the trigger. It is not a clean extension because it changes the trigger so that more States are eligible for long-term extension. This bill has a 26-week Federal unemployment compensation extension on top of the State 26 weeks, and an additional 7 weeks for those States that have the highest unemployment compensation. That would be a total of 52 weeks—59 weeks, in some States; 52 weeks for all States, 59 weeks for some States.

It also has a section that says we should not count people who might be employed. It is a crummy bill. I have stated again my willingness to try to work with colleagues to pass a clean extension which would cost about \$7 billion instead of \$17 billion.

While we are here, there are a couple of bills I would like to pass. So I am going to be asking unanimous consent, I tell my colleagues on the Democrat side—it is my intention to propose a couple of unanimous consent requests as well.

One will be to permanently eliminate the tax on Social Security. This is a tax that passed in 1993. It was part of President Clinton's tax package. It passed by one vote in the Senate, and passed by one vote in the House. It is still the law of the land. We still tax senior citizens' Social Security benefits.

I have heard a lot of people say they wanted to eliminate it. The House passed a bill to eliminate it in 2000. Unfortunately, we have not been able to do that. Senator TIM HUTCHINSON from Arkansas has introduced legislation this Congress to do that. It has several cosponsors.

So, Mr. President, I want to notify my friends and colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle that I intend to propound a unanimous consent request so they have a chance to respond as I have been responding on several requests.

I am going to propound a unanimous consent request to make part of the

tax bill we passed in 2001 dealing with marriage penalty relief permanent. Unfortunately, much of the tax bill that we passed in 2001 is temporary. That bill helped lessen the burden, since we found ourselves in a recession and part of that was marriage penalty relief. That provision sunsets. It stops in the year 2009 or 2010. We should make that permanent. The House has passed legislation, H.R. 4019. They passed it with an overwhelming vote, by a vote of 271 to 142. They passed it on June 13. Unfortunately, the Senate has not found time to take that legislation up. All we have to do is pass that House bill, it goes straight to the President, and he will sign it so it can become law. So I am going to propound a unanimous consent request to pass that bill.

I see my friend, the assistant Democrat leader. I will now make both of these requests.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that H.R. 4019, a bill to provide that the marriage penalty relief provisions of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 shall be made permanent, be discharged from the Senate Committee on Finance and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration, the bill be read a third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table and any statements thereupon be printed in the RECORD at the appropriate place.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. On behalf of a number of Senators, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

SEVERAL SENATORS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma retains the floor.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to immediate consideration of Calendar No. 308, H.R. 3529, that all after the enacting clause be stricken, the text of S. 237, a bill by Senator HUTCHINSON, a bill to repeal the 1993 income tax increase on Social Security benefits, be printed in lieu thereof, the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, any statements thereupon be printed in the RECORD at the appropriate place.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is objection?

Mr. REID. On behalf of a number of Senators, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

SEVERAL SENATORS addressed the Chair.

Mr. NICKLES. I thank my friend and colleague from Nevada. I told him that two people can play these games. I would very much like to see the marriage penalty relief package that we passed in 2001 be made permanent. I would also like to see us repeal that portion at least, if not—I would like to see us, frankly, repeal the entire—President Clinton's tax package of 1993,

but certainly repeal the tax on Social Security benefits. We tried to do that. Objection was heard.

The Senate has over and over again found itself, unable in the last year and a half, to pass permanent tax relief for American citizens, not for marriage penalty relief, and not even for seniors who are paying high taxes on their Social Security benefits. I find that regrettable.

Maybe there will be a change in the makeup of the Senate in a couple of weeks and legislation such as the two I just requested consent to pass—maybe we can pass those under regular order. I hope that will be the case.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

DROUGHT RELIEF

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I was surprised to get up this morning and read the Washington Post and see that the Speaker of the House, Mr. HASTERT, said the House could pass drought relief legislation after the election, “. . . if there is a problem.”

Where has the Speaker been? If there is a problem?

Tell that to the farmers of North Dakota. This is a photo of what it looks like in southwestern North Dakota. That is a moonscape. Nothing is growing. There is no question, I would say to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, about whether or not there is a problem. There is a deep problem. This is a disastrous year.

Let me read just one letter from a farmer in North Dakota. He says:

DEAR SENATOR CONRAD:

I am a 40 year old man with a wife and 4 children. I am a third generation farmer. We enjoy farming very much but it's getting very hard to keep on going.

He continues:

When we have had good crops in the past there was no price. Now in 2002 we have no crop, no grass, no hay, and no rain, which all leads to no money.

I know it is hard for city people to understand the difficulties of farming, but it has become very hard to keep a good attitude when you are always under financial pressure. Without any disaster aid this fall, a lot of good farmers will be forced to sell, or will simply just quit.

He went on to say:

I hope and pray that you can persuade the Members of the House how serious it is out here in rural North Dakota.

I do not know of anything that could tell the story more clearly than this picture. This isn't just a small part of southwestern North Dakota. This is mile upon mile of southwestern North Dakota. This is a drought as bad or worse than the 1930s.

This has to be responded to. For the Speaker to say yesterday that the House could pass drought legislation “if there's a problem” misses the point entirely. There is a problem. It is more than a problem. It is a crisis. And it is not just in North Dakota.

How can the Speaker of the House have missed this? In Montana, in South

Dakota, in Nebraska, in Kansas, in Minnesota, in Wyoming, and other parts of the country as well, they have suffered different kinds of disasters. My neighboring State of Minnesota has suffered the worst flooding in their history—and the administration has said, Well, look to the farm bill. Yet the administration knows there are no disaster provisions in the farm bill. They prevented it. The Speaker prevented it. I was one of the conferees on the farm bill. When we went to conference with the Senate bill that included disaster assistance, the House conferees said that there were only two things they were not at liberty to discuss in the conference. No. 1, they said we can't talk about opening trade with Cuba; and No. 2, we cannot talk about disaster assistance. The House conferees told us that those two issues had to go to the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The Speaker said no. The President has said no. Always before when any part of the country suffered a disaster, we have moved to respond—always. Whether it was earthquakes in California, mud slides in that same State, hurricanes in the State of the occupant of the Chair, whether it was drought in farm country, or flooding any place in the Nation—always before we have moved to help. This year, there is no assistance for those suffering natural disasters. That is wrong.

In my State, there is a calamity. It is not just my State. It is State after State.

For the Speaker to say yesterday that disaster aid may be considered later this fall "if there's a problem" shows that he is terribly out of touch with what is happening across this great Nation. These are natural disasters that deserve a response and that require a response, and we ought to be providing help. For those who say look to the farm bill, there is no disaster assistance in the farm bill. In fact, there are savings under the farm bill to pay for the disaster assistance.

Some may ask, How is that? Very simply, because of these disasters, there is less production. That means prices are higher. That means the farm bill will cost less. The Congressional Budget Office has told me and has told all of our colleagues there will be about \$6 billion in savings in the farm bill this year because of these natural disasters. That also happens to be the size of the disaster relief package. So we have an opportunity here to be fiscally responsible. We are proposing to spend the same amount of money on disaster assistance that is being saved in the farm bill because of these disasters. Because there is less production, prices are higher than anticipated. That means the farm bill will cost less by nearly \$6 billion. That is money that could be available for disaster assistance and should be.

Let me conclude with this chart that shows what this is going to mean.

Net farm income is going to decline this year by 21 percent across the coun-

try largely because of these natural disasters. Yet there is no response from Washington. We passed disaster assistance here in the U.S. Senate. We passed it as part of the farm bill. We passed it on an amendment on the Interior appropriations bill with 79 votes—an overwhelming bipartisan agreement that we should provide disaster assistance. But the House has said no. The President has said no.

To have the Speaker of the House say yesterday that they may consider aid in a lame duck session "if there's a problem" is incredible. Where has the Speaker of the House been to say "if there's a problem"?

This is a disaster. This is a crisis. There ought to be a response.

I thank the Chair.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the majority leader has been wanting to come to the floor for some time. We are both happy that there has been a lot of participation on the floor this morning. They were fine speeches.

There is no need for me to maintain the floor until he shows up. I ask my two friends, the Senator from Texas and the Senator from Utah, if they would allow him to take the floor when he appears, which should be momentarily. In the meantime, if they would agree to that, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Texas be recognized for up to 15 minutes.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. REID. Yes. I am happy to yield.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I think it is perfectly reasonable for the majority leader to have the right to the floor.

Reserving the right to object—if the Chair would be generous in giving me an opportunity to explain why—when the majority leader finishes his unanimous consent request and his statement, I would like to have 10 minutes to respond.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the leader wanted to make sure that the Senator from Texas was on the floor when he made his unanimous consent request, which I am almost certain he will be. He wanted the Senator from Texas to be notified when he was going to be here.

He is now here.

He wanted the Senator from Texas to be here, and we are glad he is here.

I ask unanimous consent that following the statement of the majority leader and the statement of the Senator from Texas, the Senator from Utah be recognized for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS— H.R. 5005

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, everyone knows we are attempting to resolve many of the unfinished pieces of legislative business that ought to be addressed prior to the time we depart for the election day break. As everyone knows, we will be coming back. It will be my hope that we can address a number of the issues involving conference reports. Of course, we will have to address appropriations when we come back.

One of those issues that has been the subject of a great deal of debate and consideration on the Senate floor has been the issue of homeland security and the creation of the new Department.

It is no secret that Democrats have been frustrated in the effort to bring the debate to a close. We have had five cloture votes. We have not reached cloture on each of those five occasions because of Republican opposition.

My original thought was perhaps that opposition was because of legitimate language concerns or issues involving the creation of the Department. I now doubt whether that really is the motivation. I think there are many on the Republican side who simply oppose the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. The new Department was a Democratic idea originally. The President and our Republican colleagues objected and opposed it unanimously when we passed it out of committee last summer.

The President finally reversed his position, and the administration's bill was written by four people with no consultation with Congress. They sent the bill up as somewhat of a surprise to us all.

The bill they wrote seeks to exploit the issue of homeland security in order to advance a preexisting ideological agenda. It is an ultraconservative agenda that is antiworker and obviously anti-union. More importantly, it has nothing to do with homeland security.

This bill would return us to an era when patronage and political cronyism ran the Federal workforce—and that is wrong. We say to the President and our Republican colleagues, public servants are not the problem. Terrorists are the problem.

The administration's position is an insult to every public servant, every firefighter, and every first responder who risked their lives and, in many cases, gave their lives on September 11.

When those union firefighters rushed into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on that fateful day last September 11, nobody asked: Are you a member of a union? That is why the police and firefighters oppose the Republican plan. That is why the National Association of Police Organizations wrote to every Senator.

I will quote from their letter.

On September 11, 2001, the union affiliations of law enforcement officers did not