

stepped in and wanted to stop us from doing this—always some diversionary tactic. As to 9/11, we got another letter today from the 9/11 families saying do something about this.

Here is our work schedule. Let's make sure everybody understands what we need to complete during this work period: Defense authorization; we are going to work hard at SCHIP; we are going to finish the conference reports on 9/11 and ethics and lobbying reform. We are also going to do the Defense authorization bill, as I talked about. We are going to do the reconciliation on the Higher Education Access Act, and we are going to do an appropriations bill or more, if we can. I repeat: It is time that we start legislating for the American people. The minority has certainly proven that they can slow things down here, and 42 times we have had to file cloture. I hope we don't have to continue doing that. We will address the issues I have talked about before we end the work period and break for the August recess.

The recess is important. I repeat: It gives Members the opportunity to travel home and abroad, which is so important. It widens our understanding of the issues we face. Two of our colleagues, for example, both former members of the military, Senators MCCAIN and REED, traveled to Iraq during this Fourth of July work period. They will have a lot to report. I have already met with JACK REED, and I have had a wonderful conversation with him. I don't think there is anyone in the Senate who has traveled there more than he has. I am quite sure that is true. The August recess is also a time to meet with constituents. That is also important.

We are sent here for one reason above all others; that is, to legislate. That is what we must do. So I say as respectfully as I can to my friends, Democrats and Republicans, who are Senators, you need to keep your August travel plans flexible. I believe we can address each of these issues I have mentioned in the next 4 weeks and complete our work. The conference reports could go very quickly, but it is not just up to me, as we move this calendar along at a pace that allows for fair debate but not obstruction. In recent weeks, we have seen some of our Republican colleagues filibuster even issues that it appears they support, which is hard to comprehend, but that is what we have seen. That is their right, but I don't think it is good for the country, and we are simply going to do what we can to move this body along so we can accomplish passage of legislation.

President Wilson said on one occasion:

The commands of democracy are as imperative as its privileges and opportunities are wide and generous. Its compulsion is upon us.

So, Mr. President, the compulsion to get the job done is upon us now, and I look forward to a very successful work period. We are going to have to put in

some long hours, but certainly that should not be a hindrance to our work.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

#### ADVANCING THE ISSUES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I listened with interest to my good friend, the majority leader. Let me make a few random observations before making some remarks about the Defense authorization bill.

He indicated there have been 42 cloture motions filed. That is quite a lot, no question about it. The reason that was necessary, of course, is because the majority was trying to truncate the legislative process, which, in the Senate, unlike the House, gives the minority considerable opportunity to offer amendments.

Typically, the way these things are done is to be worked out. Cloture motions do not always produce the desired result of the majority, and we look forward to having fewer cloture motions, not more, as a better way to actually pass more legislation.

With regard to the August recess, I certainly would be prepared to stay here and work. I recall the majority leader and I were here the last time that was tried in 1994, when we stayed here 2 weeks into the August recess, to try to pass the national health care plan supported by then-President Clinton and his First Lady, HILLARY CLINTON. After 2 weeks of frustration, Senator Mitchell gave up and the recess began. Sometimes that kind of device would be helpful; other times it may not be.

I worry a good bit about the fact we have not done any appropriations bills yet. The basic work of the Government is to fund the agencies of Government. We do it through 13 appropriations bills. We have not passed any yet. I do worry we will end up with a process that could lead us in the direction we went last year under my party and in 2002 when the Democrats were in the majority, which led to kind of a total meltdown of the appropriations process. I hope that can be avoided. There will be a lot of cooperation on this side of the aisle to prevent that from happening. But we do need to schedule the bills and actually pass them if we are going to have a chance to have anywhere near a normal appropriations process.

With regard to the 9/11 bill, as my good friend the majority leader knows, we were prepared to go to conference on that bill the Friday before the recess. No request to go to conference was actually propounded on that day. I think if we can have our staffs exchange some language, there is no good reason why we cannot go to conference on the 9/11 bill very shortly, maybe even including today.

With regard to the lobbying bill, it was my intention to go to conference on the lobbying bill. We had an objection on this side of the aisle. The objector came over here, made the objection, and that is the way the Senate works. There is still strong support for that bill on this side of the aisle. It was the first bill the majority leader brought up, with my concurrence and cooperation. We passed it with only two dissenting votes, and I am very optimistic we can get that to conference as well.

So there will be a lot of cooperation on this side of the aisle to try to advance the issues the majority leader believes we ought to address.

#### DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. With that, Mr. President, let me make some observations about the Defense authorization bill.

What Republicans would like to see is an open and comprehensive debate. We know this debate is going to include a discussion of our policy in Iraq. We welcome that too. There are a variety of different proposals on both sides of the aisle about how we ought to go forward on that most important issue. Nobody has any doubt that is the No. 1 issue in this country, and we are certainly prepared to offer our suggestions, as well as to react to the Democratic suggestions about where we should go from here.

But a couple of words of caution are in order as we proceed. Everyone should know from the outset that Republicans will expect and insist on the freedom to improve this bill with our own amendments. We will be offering them and expect to have them voted on, as well as Democratic amendments.

Democrats have continually tried to block our efforts at improving legislation earlier in this session, as evidenced by the record pace of cloture motions we have been discussing on the floor that have been filed since January. I know there has been an effort to attempt to paint this record-setting pace of cloture motions as a reaction against alleged Republican intransigence, but, frankly, that is simply not the case. It is an effort to try to truncate the legislative process in such a way that works to the disadvantage of the minority.

The Senate has always been a place of cooperation. Most of us on both sides have been in the majority and minority recently. We know the different proposals that tend to please one and inhibit the other. The Senate is a ponderous place on purpose. It is exactly what Washington and the Founders predicted.

Republicans have insisted on our right to improve everything from ethics reform to the minimum wage bill this year. We have improved, we believe, everything we have touched, and we will continue to insist on our rights to do that.