

an amendment to the floor, it is automatically tabled because the majority leader says that is not what our party is going to support?

My question for my colleagues is: When are we going to see a little more independence?

I hope that we follow through on commitments we have made to the people in this country, which is that we are going to be serious about reforming this process. The Congressional Accountability Act is a good, sound, positive piece of legislation in that direction, but we had an opportunity to do much more, and I have given examples of amendment after amendment after amendment that I bet 90-plus percent of Americans would support which were tabled on virtually party-line votes. I thought people wanted us to get beyond that. I thought people wanted each and every one of us to be independent, to vote on the merits of the legislation, to vote on what we think would be good for the people back home.

Did Senators vote against an amendment saying we would not do anything to create more hunger and homelessness among children because they thought this amendment was not good for the people they represent back home? Did Senators vote against gift ban or abuses of frequent flier miles or other campaign finance reform measures because they thought the people back home whom they represent did not want them to vote for these amendments? It was virtually a straight party-line vote.

So, Mr. President, we will see, with the unfunded mandates bill that will be before the body within the next day or so, but I certainly hope as soon as possible, Senators will consider each and every amendment based on their merits, not based on party calculation—based upon what the people back home would want them to do—based on their own personal convictions and independence, regardless of what they think the majority of people back home want to do.

Different people have different models of how they represent their States. Right now, what I have seen, by and large, is virtually a straight party-line vote, all about control, all about power, and not about the merits of the amendments or the legislation, but a retreat from the very reform agenda that many of my colleagues said they were committed to.

So I look forward to the next piece of legislation, and I hope that we will do better. I intend to continue to fight for this political reform agenda, including lobbying registration and gift ban reform, and tough, comprehensive campaign finance reform legislation here in the Senate. I commend my colleagues on their work on the Congressional Accountability Act, which I wholeheartedly support. I yield the floor.

Mr. GRASSLEY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ABRAHAM). The Senator from Iowa.

RECESS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, since there are no further amendments, other than the managers' package—and that is to this bill that is before us—and no other Senators are seeking the floor at this time, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now stand in recess until 4:30 p.m. this afternoon.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 3:09 p.m., recessed until 4:30 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer [Mrs. HUTCHISON].

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, acting in her capacity as Senator from Texas, suggests the absence of a quorum.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

VISIT TO THE U.S. SENATE BY DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

Mr. DOLE. Madam President, and my colleagues, we are very honored today to have visitors from Japan, the Prime Minister, Mr. Murayama; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Kono; Parliamentary Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary, Mr. Sonoda; Assistant Director of the First North American Division, Mr. Suzuki. They have been here visiting with President Clinton earlier today, and Senator DASCHLE and I have had a very good visit.

As you know, we have had a strong, good relationship with Japan since World War II. The commemoration of the conclusion of that war will be next year. I was saying to the Prime Minister that obviously you look to the past and you remember the past, and you remember the agonies; but we also look to the future. We have our problems and they have their problems. We have our problems with them, and they have their problems with us.

I say to my colleagues that I hope you will take this opportunity to say hello to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and other members of the delegation. To facilitate that, I ask unanimous consent that we stand in recess until 5 p.m.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:54, recessed, until 5:01 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. ASHCROFT).

Mr. DOLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

CONGRESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. DOLE. As I understand it, under the agreement, there will now be a colloquy between myself and the distinguished Senator from Nevada, Senator BRYAN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is the Chair's understanding.

Mr. DOLE. I ask unanimous consent that the Lautenberg amendment be set aside.

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

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I yield to the distinguished majority leader.

Mr. DOLE. Does the Senator from Nevada wish to make a statement first and have me respond?

Mr. BRYAN. As the majority leader prefers, I am willing to do it either way.

Mr. DOLE. I think I should respond to the Senator's request.

Mr. BRYAN. I thank the leader.

Mr. President, Members of the Senate, yesterday I was prepared to offer an amendment to the Congressional Accountability Act, S. 2, which would have made congressional pensions and that of our employees on a parity with other Federal civil servants.

The distinguished majority leader and I had several conversations on the floor yesterday evening. I received an assurance from him that he believed that this is an important issue for the Senate to address. I know that it is his intention to do so, and I accept his representation that this is a matter that is going to come before the body.

I indicated to the majority leader that I would forbear in offering the amendment. However, if I saw no action by the Easter recess of this year, it would be my intention to offer an amendment on congressional pension reform, to any piece of legislation which might then be pending on the floor of the Senate for action.

I am satisfied in my own mind that the majority leader shares my commitment to address this and I accept his representation and I thank him for his comments.

But I think that our colleagues need to understand, that although we are not going to be voting on this today because of the commitment that I have had from the distinguished majority leader, this is not an issue we are going to be able to postpone and bury. It is going to come before the Senate very shortly. I want to acknowledge and express my appreciation to the distinguished majority leader for his assurances along that line. I look forward to working with him and our colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

I thank the leader.

Mr. DOLE. I thank the Senator from Nevada.

I know that we have a number of colleagues on both sides of the aisle who share the concerns just expressed and