free recreational trips. We do not need them. It is time to put an end to them. If we are going to increase public trust in this institution—and it is our sacred obligation to do so—we have to end business as usual when it comes to these kinds of gifts.

Mr. President, this issue has been thoroughly debated. It was debated at great length last year and in the years before. We came close last year. These are difficult issues. Again, if they were not difficult, they would have been resolved a long time ago.

Now is the time that we can resolve these issues. If we address these issues in the spirit in which we run for office, if we address these issues with the same thoughts in our mind and in our heart as we have when we address the people of the United States seeking to reach this place, we will adopt tough gift rules, we will enhance public respect for this institution, and we will carry out what I believe is an obligation to ourselves and to the Constitution that we are sworn to uphold.

When the public believes—public opinion polls show that the public believes—that lobbyists have the power in this town and that Congress and the President come second and third, when public confidence has reached that low, we must act. One of the things we must do is to adopt strong gift reform. We must have a gift ban which affects all gifts except for certain, obviously excluded categories, which are set forth in this bill.

We have to end the free meals, the free tickets, the free recreational trips. I believe it is our obligation. If we address this again in the same spirit with which we came here and with which we sought to sit here, we can successfully address this in a way which I believe the American people will applaud and finally say that Congress is acting in the area of political reform the way the people want Congress to act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NUCLEAR WASTE REPOSITORY AT YUCCA MOUNTAIN

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I rise today to address an issue of great national concern—this country's nuclear waste policy. In 1982, Congress passed the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, which directed the Department of Energy to develop a permanent repository for highly radioactive waste from nuclear power plants and defense facilities. Congress passed amendments to that act in 1987, which limited DOE's repository development activities to a single site at Yucca Mountain, NV. Since 1983, electric consumers have contributed $11 billion to finance the development of a permanent storage site. Despite DOE's obligation to take title to spent nuclear fuel in 1998, a permanent repository at Yucca Mountain will not be ready to accept this waste until the year 2010, at the earliest.

Mr. President, the House of Representatives recently passed the energy and water development appropriations bill for 1996. This bill recommends that $425 million be made available for DOE's spent fuel disposal program, $200 million below the level needed to continue developing a permanent site. Furthermore, the committee report to this bill directs DOE to ''concentrate available resources on the development and implementation of a national interim storage program,'' and to ''downgrade, suspend or terminate its activities at Yucca Mountain.''

Mr. President, I am greatly concerned by the action of the House. We have already spent 12 years and $4.2 billion to find a permanent repository site and conduct development activities at Yucca Mountain. No other viable site for permanent storage has been considered since 1987. If we terminate or suspend activities at Yucca Mountain now, we will be wasting the time and money invested since 1982 toward finding a suitable location. As I have already stated, the electric consumers of this Nation have contributed $11 billion, and we are still behind schedule. How can we, in good conscience, discontinue our efforts at Yucca Mountain when so much time and money has been invested there. To do so would eradicate the progress we have made and abolish any hope of developing a permanent site in the near future. It is our obligation to the American people to develop a permanent repository as quickly as possible and, therefore, we must persist with the efforts at Yucca Mountain. It is our only alternative.

Mr. President, I realize that continuing development of the permanent site at Yucca Mountain will not completely solve the spent fuel problem. In 1998, 23 nuclear reactors will run out of space to store spent fuel. At that time, storage will become DOE's responsibility. Therefore, we need to designate an interim storage site to use until the permanent facility at Yucca Mountain is available. The most logical location for an interim site is Yucca Mountain. Transportation of spent nuclear fuel is a delicate undertaking, so it is sensible to locate an interim facility as near to the permanent facility as is possible. Likewise, the proximity of an interim site to the permanent site would save money on transportation costs between the two sites. Comprehensive legislation has been introduced in both the Senate and House that offers a solution to the spent fuel problem, including the construction of an interim facility at Yucca Mountain.

Building a central interim storage facility at Yucca Mountain by 1998 and continuing to develop a permanent repository at Yucca Mountain by 2010 is our most reasonable course of action. Too much time and money has been invested to change directions now. As my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee consider funding for the project at Yucca Mountain, I urge them to remember the commitment we have made to the citizens of this Nation. Any efforts to abandon this program will deprive this country of a long-term solution to our nuclear waste storage dilemma.

CONGRESSIONAL GIFT REFORM ACT OF 1995

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President we are now, I take it, back on the bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are now considering S. 1061.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

First of all, let me thank my colleagues for their real fine work on this legislation. Senator LEVIN has done such fine work with Senator COHEN on the lobbying reform, and Senator FEINGOLD, and Senator LAUTENBERG, Senator BAUCUS, Senator MCCAIN, and others.

I was listening to my colleague from Michigan. Let me, at the beginning, emphasize some of the points he made. This has been a really long journey in the Senate. I say to the Chair, who is a friend, that actually back in Minnesota, when I talk to people in cafes, they do not even understand what the debate is about. To them, it is kind of not even a debatable proposition. Lobbyists and others do not come up to citizens in Colorado and Minnesota and say, ''Look, we would like to take you out to dinner. We would be willing to pay for a trip you might take to Vail.'' Not to pick on Colorado; it could be Florida, or anywhere. ''And bring your spouse.'' And so on and so forth.

Most people do not have people coming up to them and making these kinds of offers. I think the citizens in our country just think it is inappropriate for us to be on the receiving end of these gifts. And they are right. We should just let this go.

For me, this journey started in May 1993, over 2 years ago, with an amendment I had on lobbying disclosure where lobbyists would have to disclose the gifts they were giving to individual Senators. That amendment was agreed to. Then we went on to this kind of broader debate about the gift ban.

It has been a real struggle. I have never quite understood the resistance of all too many of my colleagues. Although, in the last analysis, on each vote, I want to make it clear, we have had very strong support. Actually, S. 1061—88 current Members of the Senate have essentially already voted for precisely the comprehensive gift ban legislation that we have before the Senate today. So I expect it will engender the

same strong support on the floor of the Senate as we go forward.

Mr. President, Senators FEINGOLD and LAUTENBERG and I in the last Congress had to threaten to attach gift ban to another piece of legislation to finally get a consent agreement to have it eventually brought up; finally we had it on the floor. This has been a much scrutinized, much debated piece of legislation. Ultimately, as Senator LEVIN stated, at the very end we had lobbying reform and gift ban reform in the form of a conference report that came over here that was filibustered at the end of the last Congress.

Then we started off this Congress. At the very beginning, again, I think Senators FEINGOLD, LAUTENBERG, and myself, we had an amendment on the Congressional Accountability Act. It was our feeling this was very much about accountability. That was defeated. We wanted to include gift ban reform. That was defeated on the Congressional Accountability Act. The majority leader said we would take it up later; I think by the end of May. I came out with a sense-of-the-Senate resolution, essentially repeating what the majority leader had said, that we take it up by the end of May. That was defeated. I could never understand the ''no'' vote on that.

Now, here we are at the end of July. This legislation has garnered the support of a broad range of reform minded groups: United We Stand, Common Cause, Public Citizens, and others. I think the reason for this is that people in the country really want to see some changes in the way we conduct our business here in the Nation's capital. People in the country, I have said this before on the floor of the Senate, want to believe in our political process. And people in the country are, I think, far more serious about reform than some of us are.

As I observed several weeks ago on this floor, some of my majority colleagues, frozen like deer in the headlights, have refused to move forward on the gift ban. There has just been unbelievable resistance to a very simple proposition. And the only way in which we have been able to do it is through a tremendous amount of pressure.

I ask this question, and I am going to ask this question over and over again for as long as this debate takes. Why are too many of my colleagues enthusiastic about slashing free or reduced-price lunches for children but at the same time they wither when it comes to eliminating free lunches for Members of the Congress?

Let me repeat that. Why are so many of my colleagues, or hopefully just a few of my colleagues, who are leading this effort at resistance, so willing to cut or slash free or reduced-price school lunches for children but they wither when it comes to eliminating the free lunches for Members of Congress? I think this represents truly some distorted priorities.

Let me just read from some editorials in some of the newspapers about this piece of legislation, what is called the McConnell-Dole alternative, to give you and colleagues and people in the country some sense about how this issue is being discussed in the country.

The New York Times wrote that the McConnell proposal would, ''perpetuate much of the old system under the guise of reform.''

The Washington Post said that the McConnell proposal ''would be substantially more permissive about those charity trips and expensive free meals. Without an aggregate limit, a lobbyist could theoretically take a Senator out for $75 dinners, night after night, and not be subject to any limits at all. You might as well not pretend to have a gift ban.''

I am, of course, referring to a substitute that is going to be laid down which, in the guise of reform, really represents the opposite of reform.

The Kansas City Star wrote that ''the gravy train would stay on the track under a ploy of Senator MITCH MCCONNELL, Kentucky Republican. MCCONNELL would limit a meal or gift to $100 but the long-time foe of gift bans conveniently neglects to restrict the numbers of gifts. That means spending would go on and on. Senator MCCONNELL's legislation would appear to be sound. They are not''—these are not my words—''his phony, bogus gift ban would have no appreciable impact on the current corrupt system.''

Mr. President, there are just some titles: ''Good and Bad Lobbying.''

''Capitol Still Sports 'For Sale' Sign. Senators Showing True Colors. Republican Gift Fraud.''

''Stop the Freeloads.''

''Beware of Mischief in Senate Ethics Bill.''

''Airtight Ban Needed.''

''Don't Weaken the Gift Ban.''

And, from the Pioneer Press, St. Paul Pioneer Press, in Minnesota, ''Prove It's Not For Sale.''

Mr. President, there is no doubt that these kinds of gifts, and other favors from lobbyists, have contributed to American's deepening distrust of Government.

They give the appearance of special access influence and influence, and they erode public confidence in Congress as an institution and in each Member individually as a representative of his or her constituents. That I think is the issue. This giving of gifts by lobbyists and special interests, this receiving of gifts by Senators, erodes public confidence in this institution and public confidence in each of us as representatives of the people back home in our States. We should let go of it.

Mr. President, we have seen delay after delay after delay. Now, the question I ask my colleagues is whether or not they are going to essentially embrace some hollow reforms as substitutes for the real thing. Are we going to have colleagues talking about reform out of one side of their mouth while on the other side they oppose it? Will we have colleagues who will support hollow reform as a substitute for the real thing?

For example, do my colleagues again intend, as some did last year, to try to gut the provisions on charitable vacation travel to golf and tennis hot spots like Vail, Aspen, Florida, or the Bahamas where Members and their families are wined and dined at the expense of lobbyists and major contributors? Are we going to keep that provision and then say we passed reform? I hope not. But I expect that such an attempt will be made on the floor. We fought that fight last year and we won. And I certainly hope that we will win again.

Mr. President, are we going to see a measure that purports to be reform which says—the Senator from Wisconsin and I have discussed this—that actually we can take gifts up to $100 from anybody, lobbyists included, actually not even per day but per occasion with no aggregate limit with no disclosure? So breakfast, lunch and dinner? We could be receiving free lunches, free breakfasts, free dinners, tickets to—I do not call them the Redskins game—the Washington team game, or to the Orioles game or to concerts or trips? Anything that is under $100 we could receive in perpetuity from a lobbyist with no aggregate limit and no disclosure requirement.

I say to my colleague. What, again, does that add up to, if you were doing $100 a day?

Mr. FEINGOLD. I hope I am right. Mr. President, in answer to the Senator's question, I think it adds up to $36,500 per lobbyist per Member of Congress every year. And it could not even exclude the lobbyist. So the potential is truly unlimited. But I think the minimum figure is $36,500 from one lobbyist and one Member of Congress.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Yes, $36,500 from one lobbyist a year. That is the conservative definition; it could be much more. There might even be efforts to cut that by half. Then it would only be $18,000 from one lobbyist per year, although, if you add in the number of occasions where that lobbyist can give us a gift during the day, it could be double that or triple that; no aggregate limit. And that is called gift reform?

Mr. President, the gift ban legislation has in a way taken on a life of its own. It has become a symbol of incumbents' stubborn resistance to changing the way lobbyists operate in Washington. I cannot believe it has taken over 2 years. I have been involved in this from almost the very beginning. I think this resistance and these alternative proposals in the guise of reform, which do not pass any credibility test at all, which are going to infuriate people if Senators end up voting for this and claim that they have made significant changes—this is a symbol of incumbents' stubborn resistance to changing the way Washington operates.

Mr. President, is it going to be business as usual? Do opponents intend to try to change the gift ban to allow Members of Congress to continue to establish foundations or other similar entities to which lobbyists will be allowed to contribute in order to curry their favor? That is in the McConnell alternative. So we have no limit on gifts, up to $100 in perpetuity, with no disclosure, $36,500 a year, but actually it can be much more for one lobbyist. And, in addition, charitable travel is included. If you are for a charity and you believe in that charity, then we should all go but we should pay our own way. It is just not appropriate to have a lobbyist or other special interest paying our way to wherever for ourselves and our spouse for golf or tennis, for a nice vacation trip over a long weekend. It is not appropriate. We should just let go of this.

Then there is a provision in this alternative, the McConnell-Dole alternative, that purports to be reform that says we can continue to establish our own foundations, our own entities and then ask lobbyists to contribute to those foundations that we control to possibly curry our favor. That is hollow reform. That is not real reform. Or will we continue to allow lobbyists to contribute to legal defense funds with all of the accompanying conflict problems that this raises? That is not reform. That is hollow reform. That is in the McConnell-Dole alternative. Or will we allow Members of Congress to continue to direct lobbyists to make charitable contributions to their favorite charity, the same lobbyists who are asking them for access for legislative favors for themselves or clients? I hope not. That is in the McConnell-Dole alternative. That is not reform. That is hollow reform.

Mr. President, I really do think that this piece of legislation puts all of us to the test. It puts all of us to the test. It puts all of us to the test in several fundamental ways. The No. 1 priority, by golly, if Senators are willing to vote to reduce free lunches for children in this country, Senators ought to think about their priorities and, by golly, we ought to end all free lunches for Senators. Actually, what we should do is end the free lunches for Senators and Representatives and certainly not end the free lunches for children who need that nutrition.

Second of all, it would be better not to pass any piece of legislation than to pass a piece of legislation which purports to be reform with enough loopholes for the largest trucks in America to drive right through, many of which I have identified.

Third of all, since we have been at this for 2 years, I think gift ban does have a life of its own. And this McConnell-Dole alternative represents the same resistance by Washington to the kind of change that people in this country are really demanding. The Contract With America had nothing about any of these reform measures.

Mr. President, it is time. We will pass today the lobbying reform, and this week we are going to pass a strong gift ban reform. Then eventually we are going to move on to campaign finance reform. When we do that, I think we will have passed some measures that we can be proud of and people in the country can be proud of. But, Mr. President, the alternative or substitute, the McConnell-Dole, which is going to be laid down later on does not represent a step forward but it represents a great leap backward. We need to move forward.

This piece of legislation that we have introduced today, S. 1061, represents a strong, tight, comprehensive gift ban reform. And that is what the Senate ought to pass. We owe people in this country, we owe it to the people we represent, to do no less.

Mr. President, again, I thank my colleague from Wisconsin, and Senator MCCAIN, who has been very engaged in this, Senator LAUTENBERG, and Senator LEVIN from the word go, and Senator COHEN. I also know that Senator BAUCUS has joined in this effort. I think we will have Republicans and Democrats alike involved in this. But we will have a very sharp debate, and we will identify what it means to move forward with a reform effort that we can be proud of which is credible, which meets the standards that I think people in the country want us to live up to as opposed to some alternative that has the word ''reform'' and that is sort of made for politicians where you use the word ''reform'' and you claim you are moving forward while all at the same time you are cleverly designing a piece of legislation that essentially maintains and perpetuates the very practice the people in this country want us to eliminate. That we cannot let happen—today, tomorrow, the next day or this week. We have to pass tight, comprehensive, tough gift ban reform. That is what people expect.

I yield the floor.

Mr. FEINGOLD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues, and especially the Senator from Minnesota, in supporting a tough, meaningful and loophole-free gift ban bill. That is what S. 1061 is all about. I urge the Senate to reject the empty reform proposal put forward by the junior Senator from Kentucky, Senator MCCONNELL.

We have been at this issue for some time, Mr. President. You think you have said it every way you can. And it is obvious that we ought to deal with this and get rid of it. But the Senator from Minnesota just came up with what I would have to say is just about the best formulation of what is going on here which I have heard.

Those are the very same people who feel comfortable going after school lunches, who feel very comfortable going after many of the things that are important for low-income people in this society, the same people who will go to the wall to protect these lavish lunches and dinners that have become part of the Washington culture. I cannot think of a better formulation, and yes, I say to the Senator, I wish I would have thought of it myself.

That says it all. That is what it appears, Mr. President, this 104th Congress is becoming all about—choices but very bad choices, blocking real reform and saying that things like school lunches have to be eliminated in the name of deficit reduction.

Mr. President, to review again, because the Senator from Minnesota and I need to keep pointing out to people that this is not something we thought up yesterday, this has been a long, hard struggle about something that should have been dealt with in about 5 minutes it is so clear; that Members of Congress should be paid their salary and that is all they should get. They should not get all kinds of freebies on the side.

I will tell you, back home it is a real simple concept. It has nothing to do with party. There is no Republican coming up to me in Wisconsin and saying, ''Hey, Russ, you really got to preserve that gift thing. It is an important part of the way Washington works.''

Nobody has said that to me in Wisconsin in the last 2½ years. And it has been just over a year since the Senate, Mr. President, passed a tough gift ban bill by a margin of 95 to 4. What is wrong? Almost every Member of this body has already voted for the bill the Senator from Minnesota was just talking about. You would think that when a bill passes by such a large margin, it would not be all that difficult for that bill to become a law.

After experiencing this for a couple of years, I am not naive enough to believe that proposed legislation which will have such a profound effect on the manner in which this institution operates with such a restraining effect on the special interests would sail through Congress with little or no trouble.

What I find particularly regrettable is that when this process began I did not think the practice was as widespread as I do think now. The resistance makes me wonder, makes me think that it is just not a question of perception but there may be more reality to it; otherwise, why would people fight so hard to prevent what was already a 95-to-4 vote to be redone in the 104th Congress. It makes me wonder. It makes me wonder just how much of this is really going on. And there is no way for me to quantify it, but it certainly makes me wonder.

The fact is this body has gone on record repeatedly over the past year in favor of gift reforms proposed by myself, the Senator from Minnesota, and the Senator from New Jersey [Mr. LAUTENBERG].

Last May, this body soundly rejected a gift proposal—I will not call it a gift ban because it was not—a gift proposal

similar to the one currently offered by the junior Senator from Kentucky. So everybody, Mr. President, must be wondering why are we having this debate now. In May of last year, as I said, we had a 95-to-4 vote in the Senate on this legislation. In the fall, 36 Republican Senators, led by the Senator who is now the distinguished majority leader, Senator DOLE, cosponsored, actually cosponsored, Mr. President, a resolution containing the exact gift provisions put forth in the Wellstone-Feingold-Lautenberg proposal. Mr. President, the exact same provisions, not the McConnell proposal but the exact same provisions of the Wellstone proposal, were cosponsored by 36 Republican Senators, yet for some reason there are some Members of this body who feel we need to repeat the debate we had last spring when an alternative gift proposal was put forth that is remarkably similar to the proposal before us today.

The proposal last year, the so-called McConnell-Johnston proposal, was soundly defeated. The McConnell-Johnston proposal was defeated 59 to 39, and yet here we are today having the same debate all over again.

One of the clear messages that came out of last year's election to me, Mr. President, is that the public is tired of the way business is done in Washington. And everybody says that, but I think that is true. They have to define exactly what aspects of what goes on in Washington people do not like, but it is not terribly difficult to figure it out, yet real reform, like campaign finance reform or gift ban legislation, seems to constantly be put on the back burner.

I am absolutely confident that campaign finance reform and gift ban are among the things almost every American would describe as what is needed for reform. So if November 8 was about reform, and I think it was, these should be on the front burner, not constantly being blocked procedurally.

Some say that the very first bill we passed this Congress in the Senate, a bill which forced Congress to live under the laws it passes, was an important reform bill, and I agree with the premise of that bill, and I voted for it. We should have to abide by the rules we make for everybody else, but in no way should we pretend that the American people have somehow had their faith restored in this institution because of that one rather minor, although worthwhile, piece of legislation.

Other people say we have reformed Congress by pointing to the reduction and elimination of many of the public perks available to Members of Congress. And they say we have cleaned up Washington; we do not need the gift ban. Fortunately, there has been progress in that area—no more free haircuts or free stationery or no more free gymnasium. People come up to me and say, ''When are you going to get rid of that free gym and the free haircuts?'' And I say, ''Well, it has been done.'' It should have been done a long time ago. But what they know and what really disappoints people, they constantly are disappointed to find that lobbyists can still send Members of Congress on free vacation trips to the Bahamas.

Last year, I had the chance to say that I think free gifts really is the mother of all perks. It is the big one. Those free trips to the Bahamas are an awful lot more in value than the free haircuts which we have eliminated. The lobbyists can still treat Members to expensive meals at some of Washington's finest restaurants, and the lobbyists can still send the flatbed carts loaded with gifts and goodies all around Capitol Hill, and they are continuing to do it.

So what I have noticed—it is an interesting distinction—is that there seems to be a great deal of interest in going after public perks. Members of both parties are willing to go after public perks, things like the haircuts and the free stationery, the congressional pensions, health care—these are things that certainly can be described as perks, and that are provided by public dollars, taxpayers' dollars. But the same people who are in the front row to attack these public perks have what I can only describe as a steadfast apprehension to deal with the private perks, the hidden private interest, special interest perks that come from the lobbyists and the special interest community. Those we do not touch. Those are not even mentioned in the Republican Contract With America, as the distinguished Senator from Minnesota has pointed out.

In other words, the perks that are essentially provided by the Government and the American people are bad, but the attitude is that the perks provided by the special interests are somehow benign, not a problem, just the way things are done in Washington. That is the message coming from Congress if we do not deal with the gift ban and if we do not deal with the really big issue, as the Senator from Minnesota has pointed out, which would be next, and that is campaign financing.

It is distressing to open up the newspaper or turn on the TV and see repeated stories of the cozy relationship between the lobbyists and the legislators. The level of special access that the lobbyists are receiving continues to undermine the confidence of the American people in their Government. It really does further the belief of the average working American that that person has little or no voice in Washington, DC.

Let me mention, for example, just one item that appeared in a national journal publication. It appeared on May 5, 1995. This column briefly describes a retreat hosted by the American Bankers Association for congressional staffers and their spouses at a West Virginia resort. This retreat occurred on the weekend before the House Banking Committee was to vote on legislation backed by the American Bankers Association. The article notes that during the weekend retreat there would be morning discussions about bank modernization issues but the afternoons would be open for the staffers to ''indulge in golf, horseback riding, swimming, and other recreational activities that the posh Homestead offered.''

Now, when our constituents vote for us, and vote for us knowing what the salary is, they do not know about these fringe benefits that are provided. And here, Mr. President, just a few days before a congressional committee is to vote on a particular bill, the staff members from that committee are invited to an all-expense paid resort weekend by the lobbying association backing that particular bill. This is a disturbing practice. It sends a clear and strong message to the American people that this institution is at least perceived to be under the control of those who have the money and access to influence the political process. So to me it is clear that we have a very serious problem here. The issue before us today then is how we can best solve that problem and address the very cynical and skeptical feelings the American people sometimes hold for this institution.

I think we are all familiar with the gift ban approach embodied in S. 101. The sponsors of that legislation, including myself and the Senator from Minnesota and the Senator from Michigan, believe in a gift ban—a gift ban. No gifts from lobbyists period. No more free meals from lobbyists at fancy restaurants, no more free vacations paid for by lobbyists at sun spots around the world. This is not a gift ban we are trying to put in place. The McConnell proposal is a lesson in how best to dodge this issue. It ducks; it weaves; it does everything but ban gifts. In fact, Mr. President, what I think it does, if we have the wrong vote out here today or tomorrow, is enshrine gift giving in Washington and forever say that it is perfectly acceptable for Members of Congress to accept an unlimited number of gifts from lobbyists.

Let me repeat that. Under the McConnell proposal, lobbyists could give legislators as many gifts as they can possibly afford. How can anyone come out on the Senate floor and suggest that allowing an unlimited number of gifts—and it is unlimited—can be accurately portrayed as a gift ban or can accurately be portrayed as reform?

It is the polar opposite of reform. It is a total giving in to the current system.

Last year, Mr. President, when our gift ban and lobbying reform legislation was defeated only by a filibuster from the other side, we actually could hear the lobbyists gathered outside the Senate Chamber cheering in victory. But that is nothing, because if the McConnell proposal goes through, I think we are going to hear the sound of champagne corks popping outside this

Chamber, because it will be a permanent enshrining of the gift-giving practice. That is, because under the McConnell proposal, the following could still happen.

Just one example, the Senator from Minnesota was pointing out the total dollar value of what one lobbyist can do in 1 year for a Member of the Senate. We came up with the $36,500 figure. Let me give an example of how a lobbyist's week might go if he or she wanted to show a legislator a good time before a key vote.

They could take a Senator out for Chateaubriand and good wine on Monday. They could take him or her down to the Orioles game on Tuesday with box seats. Then on Wednesday a good concert, maybe over at the Kennedy Center. Then Thursday, a nice bottle of cognac could arrive at the Senator's office from the same lobbyist. And then to top it off, on the weekend, just before the vote the following Tuesday, a little trip to the Virgin Islands for the whole family, and that is all legal under the McConnell reform proposal, totally legal.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Will the Senator yield? After listening to him lay out this week, is the Senator sure he wants to stay with his position? It sounds pretty good.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I do want to stay with my position. I am used to it. I think that is the whole point. The public perks that have been eliminated, things like haircuts and the free gym, those things sound pretty good. But when you lay out what we are talking about—which is not just theoretical, this does happen, as I gave the example of the American Bankers Association—it sounds real good. When you are talking about people who already receive $133,000 in salary a year, which a lot of Americans think is pretty high——

Mr. LEVIN. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Then you are really talking about an exceptional practice. I yield to the Senator from Michigan for a question.

Mr. LEVIN. Actually, the McConnell substitute is even weaker, believe it or not, than my friend from Wisconsin says, because it is not $100 per day, it is $100 a gift.

Mr. FEINGOLD. The Senator is correct. What the Senator from Minnesota and I have been doing, because we are so staggered as to how much can be done in a day, we are giving the minimum interpretation. I think the Senator is right, it is not a minimum interpretation; it could be several instances in a day. I have to sort of do the higher math. I guess what we are talking about, if you can do it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, I guess what we are talking about is $100,000 a year.

Mr. LEVIN. I guess there is probably no way to give the total calculation, because it is $100 per gift. Presumably you could have lunch, dinner, and tickets. If you really want to calculate it, one would have to figure out how many gifts of $99 might be realistically possible in a day.

It is even a weaker approach, if that is possible, than the one that has been described, because that $100 gift, which does not count, does not even count toward the maximum, is a limit per gift which does not count and not a daily amount. I know the Senator knows that.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I do, and I appreciate the Senator from Michigan making the point. What he is telling us is the ability to give meals and wine in one given day probably outstrips the ability to consume of any Member of Congress. They could not possibly consume in one day the potential amount that is allowed under the so-called McConnell amendment.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Will the Senator yield for one more question?

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I wonder if the Senator from Wisconsin will yield for a question.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I yield to the Senator from Minnesota and then the Senator from Alaska for questions.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Just to be clear, I know the Senator wants to go on with other features. Just so we can clarify this point, going to what the Senator from Michigan asked the Senator from Wisconsin, the problem, as I understand it, is that—we are just talking about one provision in the McConnell-Dole substitute —is that Senators can receive from lobbyists up to $100, not per day, but per gift. There is no aggregate limit. So this is in perpetuity; correct?

Mr. FEINGOLD. That is my understanding.

Mr. WELLSTONE. So the minimum from one lobbyist per year could be 35——

Mr. FEINGOLD. $36,500.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Yes, $36,500; but that is a conservative estimate. Playing this out——

Mr. FEINGOLD. If I may interrupt the Senator from Minnesota, I think it is clear the Senator from Michigan is right, that is not even a conservative estimate. It is just a way to try to explain it, because it clearly allows, based on the reading of the way it is drafted right now, more than one time a day.

Mr. WELLSTONE. One other question I have is, there is no disclosure and there is not even any disclosure requirement, is my understanding.

Mr. FEINGOLD. That is my understanding.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Might I ask the Senator from Michigan, is that correct? The other question I had was, above and beyond it is not per day but per gift, my understanding is there is not any disclosure requirement either.

Mr. LEVIN. For gifts under $100, that is my understanding.

Mr. WELLSTONE. There is no aggregate limit, and there is no disclosure requirement?

Mr. LEVIN. The Senator is correct, as far as I know.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Senator from Michigan. I just want to point that out in terms of what we might call hollow reform versus real reform.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I said I would yield to the Senator from Alaska for a question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER [Mr. KYL]. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I intend to speak at the appropriate time when my friend from Wisconsin has completed his statement, with the Chair's permission. But I would like to ask a question. I have been sitting here for the last 15 minutes or so, and I heard time and time again about this free haircut business.

The Senator from Alaska has been in this body for 15 years. I am not aware of what the procedure was prior to 15 years ago. I would appreciate it if the Senator from Wisconsin could enlighten me on just where those free haircuts allegedly have occurred over the last 15 years, because this Senator is certainly not knowledgeable. I go down and pay $17 for a haircut about every 2½ to 3 weeks. Could my friend from Wisconsin identify where these free haircuts occur and are available to Members of this body? I would get trimmed all the time.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I have no idea. I raised the issue of free haircuts because people always told me there were free haircuts. Mr. President, is the Senator asking me a question?

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we are trying to document accurately the circumstances, and I heard about these free haircuts all morning, but I know of none and my friend from Wisconsin evidently knows of none. So I encourage my colleagues to take a free haircut with a grain of salt because we can get trimmed on the edges, but if we do not portray accurately what this gift ban is all about, why, then I think we are misleading ourselves, as well as being misled on the issue itself. If we are going to talk about free haircuts——

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I have the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I thank the Chair.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I have the floor, and I am prepared to respond. You are being misled now by the Senator from Alaska, because I came out here and pointed out there were a number of public perks I was told existed. I do not know if they exist. I am not out here talking about the haircuts as something I am working on today. I thought that was taken care of. I got here 2½ years ago. I never found out where the Senate barber is. I could not get there if I had to. I have my own place where I go and pay just as the Senator from Alaska does.

I am not out here yelling and screaming about the public perks. If there are free haircuts, they should be eliminated. If there are not free haircuts, fine. That is not what I have been talking about.

In fact, I made the point that the public and others in this institution are talking about the public perks and some of them, as the Senator from Alaska points out, do not even exist. People say to me, ''Did you know you have that free gym over there in the Senate?'' I say, ''Well, by the time I got to the Senate, they already had a charge for that.'' I do not know if it is $35 or $40. I do not happen to be involved.

But I think the Senator actually is right, that we have to be accurate. I have not asserted that any of these things actually exist on the public side. If they do, they should be eliminated. But I have made it my practice here to identify the private perks which I do believe go on. I have pointed out several examples, such as the Bankers Association trip before the vote. We can document those. In fact, we can document the fact that in our office—and I can document this item for item—we have received 1,072 gifts in our office in the last 2½ years.

So, if there are free haircuts here, they should be eliminated; if there is not, fine. That is not the issue today. I have not asserted I can prove that there are free haircuts. This is a red herring. The issue here is what about the private perks. If there are more public perks out there, let us go after them.

The Senator from Alaska is right, it is our responsibility to first document that such a thing exists, and I will be happy to join with him to identify items of that kind.

Mr. President, under the McConnell proposal, charitable travel would have to be approved by the Senate Ethics Committee. It would not be just a completely free system as it is now.

Under our proposal, recreational travel is simply prohibited, but under the McConnell proposal, such travel is permitted if a Senator could get a stamp of approval from the Ethics Committee.

The Ethics Committee is an in-house committee made up of whom? Made up of Senators who themselves may want to partake in the same trip or a trip like it.

Now, without suggesting that members of the Ethics Committee would not exercise restraint in granting such approval, we should ask ourselves how this will look to the American public.

Under the McConnell proposal, we are giving ourselves, through the Ethics Committee, the ability to decide whether a certain trip is okay or not.

Mr. President, if this is not thumbing your nose at the American people, I do not know what is. To all those Americans that have lost faith in their Government and have developed a fundamental distrust of their political system, we are supposed to tell them that the key to banning these sorts of junkets is to have the Senators who go on the trips tell other Senators whether this one is a good one or a bad one.

I do not want to have to try and explain that one back home. I do not think that will go over, Mr. President. We have heard a lot of interesting arguments against our gift ban proposal last year. We heard that the Ethics Committee was going to have to triple its staff—triple its staff—they said, to deal with this problem, and that the whole system would fall prey to bureaucratic gridlock.

We heard an unbelievable argument. We should not pass the gift ban because it would be bad for business for all the Washington restaurants and theaters. I saw the restaurant owners up in the gallery looking pretty worried. We heard an argument that our legislation was going to make crooks out of a lot of honest people.

Mr. President, I have said it several times before but will have to say it again and again. This is not complicated. I served in the Wisconsin State legislature for 10 years. That legislature has operated under strict rules on the issue of gifts for over 20 years now. It is an even tougher rule in Wisconsin than contained in S. 101. The Wisconsin Legislature is simply prohibited from accepting anything of value from a lobbyist or an organization that employs a lobbyist. You cannot even get a cup of coffee from a lobbyist.

Mr. President, we are very proud that the Wisconsin legislators, is known as one of the most ethical in the country. Contrary to some of the notions put forth by opponents of the gift ban last year, we do not have Wisconsin legislators starving to death. No restaurants in our capital city have closed because of our gift ban. Our State ethics board has not had to hire an army of bureaucrats to interpret the gift rules.

Mr. President, it works just fine under Republican leadership, under Democrat leadership, Republican Governors, Democrat Governors, it does not matter; it has worked just fine. It is a simple rule that is easy to understand and operate under. There is not a single valid argument for not applying a similar gift prohibition to Congress.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD an editorial from today's Wisconsin State Journal entitled ''Ban Gifts and Boost Credibility.''

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

BAN GIFTS AND BOOST CREDIBILITY

Would a member of the U.S. Senate trade his or her vote for a fruit basket? Of course not. How about a bottle of cognac and dinner in a fancy Washington restaurant? The answer is still no.

But what if the shower of gifts includes free ski trips, golf outings and other vacation packages from special-interest groups—as well as other perks and meals that fall under a $100 per-gift limit? Again, few members of the Senate would be tempted to swap their integrity for freebies—after all, many of them are millionaires who don't need the help.

But at what point does the public perception of gift-giving practices on Capitol Hill begin to erode the credibility of Congress? That is the question being pushed by U.S. Sen. Russ Feingold, the Wisconsin Democrat who is leading the fight to dramatically restrict the kinds of gifts members of the Senate can legally accept.

Feingold isn't accusing his fellow senators of being on the take. He knows better. He's simply pointing out that so long as the American public believes Washington is a den of special-interest perks, the credibility of Congress will suffer.

Feingold is a product of the Wisconsin Legislature, where a ban on legislators accepting anything of value from lobbyists has served that institution well. Wisconsin has not been immune from lobbyist scandals—but those instances have been few in number and relatively minor compared to what happens in some states. People can and will disagree with the Legislature's actions but at least they need not worry that the fate of public policy in Madison hangs on who bought what senator the most expensive dinner at the Blue Marlin.

Since he took federal office in 1993, Feingold has been offered 1,072 gifts. With very few exceptions, he's returned them or donated them to charity.

Maybe he gets all these gifts because he's a nice guy. More likely, he gets them because various interest groups want to catch his eye or get his ear. What's amazing is that after 2½ years in office, the gifts keep coming, even though Feingold has made clear his policy from the beginning.

Some senators believe Feingold's push to embrace the Wisconsin model is overkill born of beachfront news footage of cavorting congressmen, or an attempt to score political points by beating up on the institution. U.S. Sen. Mitch O'Connell, R-Ky., says the Feingold bill is ''lined with legalistic punji sticks'' and would ''make a lot of honest, highly ethical people into crooks.''

There's nothing all that complicated about a ban on accepting gifts, free meals and trips from lobbyists. This is not a case of O'Connell and friends being unable to understand the language in S.101, Feingold's bill. It's a case of them not wanting to adopt it.

Congress has brought much of today's public cynicism upon itself. Passage of the Feingold bill would be a welcome step toward undoing that damage and bolstering faith in the Senate.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I will read one portion:

There's nothing all that complicated about a ban on accepting gifts, free meals and trips from lobbyists. This is not a case of McConnell and friends being unable to understand the language in S. 101, Feingold's bill. It's a case of them not wanting to adopt it.

Mr. President, I have said before, for most constituents back home, the Washington beltway has become more than a simple road, a boundary of sorts, that seems to separate Washington and the special interest community from the rest of America. The perception is that the beltway represents a safe haven for lobbyists and legislators where most of their interaction goes unreported and unbeknownst to the voters back home. The lobbying needs to be disclosed and the gift giving needs to be discontinued.

I am afraid the McConnell proposal, if enacted in its current form, is nothing more than a sham. It is counterfeit reform. It allows unlimited gifts from lobbyists. It allows recreational travel. It changes virtually nothing from the status quo. It sends a very clear message to the American people that the

U.S. Senate is as chained to the special interests as ever.

The Washington lobbyists, Mr. President, are on a roll. Here we are, 7 months into the new Congress, and this body has not passed or even considered a single piece of legislation to address the influence of special interests here in Washington.

Mr. President, the lobbyists asked for telecommunications reform and they get it. They ask for regulatory reform, and they may very well get it. They ask for tax breaks, and it looks like they will get them.

When the American people ask for campaign finance reform, the Congress ducks. When the American people ask for lobbying reform, the Congress dodges. When the American people ask for a tough gift ban, the Congress plays tricks and tries to offer a paper tiger.

Acting on a tough gift ban will fundamentally reform the way Congress deals with thousands of benefits and other perks offered to Members each year. It would, Mr. President, be more than a cosmetic change. I believe now, even though I may have thought it was more minor when I got here, I believe this marks a major change in the way Washington, DC, does business.

I thank my colleagues from Minnesota and New Jersey for their persistence on the issue, and also the Senator from Michigan, Senator LEVIN, for his overall dedication to reform issues and his leadership in crafting the provisions of S. 101. I urge my colleagues to take a very hard look at this. This is an opportunity to put this issue behind Members so we do not have to keep coming out here and talking about it. It is unpleasant, and it really does not befit the dignity of this body.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I do not think there is any question that we need reform, and campaign finance gift ban, et cetera, are appropriate for this body to resolve, but I suggest that there are a few statements that do need some enlightenment.

I will refer briefly to a reference made by the Senator from Wisconsin with regard to the perception that Members get free hair cuts. Mr. President, as I stated, when I asked my friend from Wisconsin if he had any knowledge just where a person gets a free hair cut—I have been in this body 15 years, I have read it, that somehow Members are perceived to get free hair cuts—I know of no free hair cuts in existence during the 15 years I have been here.

I think this is part of the perception that is out there, that Members do get free hair cuts. We get clipped, we get shaved, but we do not get free hair cuts, Mr. President. It is a misnomer.

I think there are other extended examples where it is assumed that because there is a gym, that we get free services. We corrected that some time ago. Those Members that want to pay and receive the services of the gym pay an amount each year equivalent to the cost of those services. That is appropriate.

To suggest that somehow this is something that is extreme, that is not accepted in the private sector—if you are with a corporation, oftentimes you have the use of a gym or work-out facility, and anyone that looked at the facility here would come to the conclusion that it is pretty antiquated, I think about early 1910 or 1915, thereabouts.

But in any event, I want to put that issue aside, because the reality that somehow this is a gravy train, that there are benefits associated with this, are not applicable in the private sector, I think, bears further examination.

As we look at the merits of this legislation before the Senate, the Levin-Wellstone legislation, private entities would not be able to reimburse Members for the cost of transportation and lodging, for participation in charitable events.

If we think about this, Mr. President, there is an inconsistency here. Why is there not a ban on reimbursement for political events? What is a political event? A political event is something, perhaps, that occurs in Los Angeles, perhaps it occurs in the Bahamas, perhaps it occurs in Florida, and a Member can go down and participate and receive reimbursement for travel, reimbursement for transportation.

Now, under the bill before the Congress, the Levin-Wellstone legislation, Members would still be permitted to be privately reimbursed if they travel to a fundraising event for another Member, in other words, a political fundraiser.

Now, under the Senate Ethics Committee rules, the interpreted rule No. 193, it is my understanding that a Senator may accept travel expenses from an official of a district's political party organization in return for his or her appearance at a rally sponsored by that organization.

In other words, Mr. President, we are mandating that we will still allow reimbursement, private reimbursement, for political events. We can get our travel paid, we can get our hotel room paid.

Mr. President, every Member of this body, because we are all in the business of politics, has at one time or another made a campaign appearance for his party, or a candidate of his party, and often that means flying to another Member's home State, attending a party function, maybe making a speech, sharing a meal, maybe attending an entertainment or sports function. The entire cost is covered by lobbyists and other political contributors.

As we look at the merits of this legislation, we should recognize the inconsistency associated with the hypocritical posture that we are putting ourselves in. We are saying, in the gift ban/campaign finance reform, we are eliminating the reimbursement for participation in charities, and we are still allowing full reimbursement for political events for travel, and for lodging. Who pays for it? Political contributors—lobbyists. Why does this proposed campaign finance reform, gift ban and so forth not address political events?

Mr. President, we know why. Several Members do not want to talk about that. They are hoping that nobody will bring up the inconsistency and the hypocrisy associated with this bill in the manner it is currently structured. I fail to understand why the sponsors of the legislation would not simply go through and say, ''Let's clean the whole slate. Let's prohibit the other part of this, the unmentionable, the political events.'' It is rather curious, Mr. President, for convenience and other reasons, this has been left out.

We have a situation, again, where a Senator can travel all over the country, attending political fundraisers, have lodging, and transportation reimbursement, but a Senator cannot attend a charity event, and get reimbursed. A Senator cannot attend events that raise money for worthwhile causes and have the costs of travel and lodging reimbursed. Is that not an inconsistency? Does this really make sense?

Why is it all right for a political action committee to host a $500-a-plate political fundraiser or give a campaign check for $2,000 or $3,000 to an elected official but there can be no solicitation of corporations or other individuals to participate in a charitable event that only benefits a small community or State? I believe this whole notion of preventing Senators and corporations from sharing and raising money for a worthwhile cause outside the beltway, but allowing $5,000 to $10,000 gifts, smacks of sheer hypocrisy.

This Senator is prepared to pursue legislation that would address corrective measures to include in this broad campaign finance gift ban prohibition on reimbursement for political events for travel and lodging. Why is it that, in the structure of the proposed legislation, we have eliminated reimbursement for charitable travel? We have had spirited debate about the role and influence that lobbyists and corporations play in shaping the public's perception of the political process in Washington. We have heard a little bit about that public perception. We have heard mentioned, time and time again, the free haircuts. There are not any free haircuts. I have been here 15 years and I defy a Member to suggest where you could get a free haircut in the last 15 years.

To get back to my point, much has been made of the fact that corporations have sponsored Senators' travel and lodging in connection with events designed to raise money for charity. But nobody is saying anything about the contributions from lobbyists and political contributors that will allow each of us to go off and attend a political fundraiser in the Bahamas or the Virgin Islands or Florida or Hawaii and get reimbursement for travel and lodging. Why do we not fix it all?

Clearly, it is too sensitive. Politics is our business and we want to exclude, in the perception of things, those that we feel have some exposure, but not those that we feel are necessary—yet provide the same base of support, political contributors and lobbyists.

When Senator MCCONNELL submitted the Senate gift rule reform resolution, Senate Resolution 126, it provided that Senators would be permitted to be privately reimbursed for lodging and transportation in connection with charitable fundraising events only if the Senate Select Committee on Ethics determined, ''that participating in the charity event is in the interests of the Senate and the United States.''

So, a Member of the Senate could be privately reimbursed for attending a charitable fundraiser only if the Ethics Committee makes a determination that the charitable function is in both the public interest as well as the interests of the Senate. I believe one of our responsibilities, as public officials, is to promote worthwhile charity causes. Most of us are inclined to associate ourselves with those, from time to time. Not everything that can be done for the public good derives from Government. We all know that. Private charities play a vital role in servicing many of the needs of our citizens.

Last year, in my State of Alaska, we had a situation that occurred where the mammogram machine in Fairbanks, AK, which had been in operation for several years, was growing older and it was difficult to get certified. This was a service that had been provided for many women. My wife is associated with it. It was started in the mid-1970's. They offered free mammograms for women in the Fairbanks area and surrounding smaller communities.

It became necessary to look at just how that group was going to continue to maintain that free service. We started a fundraiser to purchase a new mammogram machine for the Fairbanks Breast Cancer Detection Center in Fairbanks, AK. The idea was to hold a fishing event, a fishing tournament at a place called Waterfall, in southeastern Alaska. We held that event and raised $150,000, and were able to buy a new mammogram machine for the Fairbanks breast cancer clinic.

It was cleared by the Ethics Committee, corporations contributed, their members came, they fished, and the breast cancer clinic got a new mammogram machine. As a consequence, the center was able to continue to provide free breast cancer examinations and mammograms for some 3,700 women who came to the Fairbanks breast cancer clinic for screening. They came from 81 villages in my State of Alaska.

This August, my wife, Nancy, and I are going to be hosting a second event for the center to raise money for a second mammography unit. This is going to be a mobile mammography unit. It will fit into a van. It can traverse the limited highways in Alaska. But more important, it will be able to go into the National Guard C–130 aircraft, which will go out on their training missions and fly into the various villages where there are no roads, and offer this free service to many of the Native women in the bush area of Alaska.

This is an example of a function that would be banned under the current bill. We think we can raise, this year, another $150,000 to $175,000. This will allow us to buy a mobile unit. It alleviates a situation where many women will be covered who otherwise are unable to travel into Fairbanks and other areas for tests. They will be able to receive this free screening in their local communities. Otherwise, they would not be able to avail themselves to this technology. So, this kind of a contribution, this kind of charitable event, would be eliminated and, as a consequence, the opportunity to provide vital health services to many of Alaska's rural women would be lost.

The State's cancer mortality rate, I might add, is the third highest in the Nation. One in eight Alaska women, I am told, will develop some type of breast cancer. And breast cancer screening can reduce these amounts, I am told, by better than 30 percent.

I believe, without the money raised from these two fundraisers, the health of Alaska's women would be reduced to some extent. I am proud of the work my wife and other women, as well as members of the community, have done in providing volunteer efforts to operate these units. But the point is, if we change the rules on charitable events, why, these types of charities will have to find a new home. And if the rules had been changed prior to this, I am convinced that neither of these units would have become a reality.

I know of several Members who participate in charity events. Senator PRYOR has been running a golf tournament for some time in Texarkana to raise funds for children with development disabilities. Senator JAY ROCKEFELLER has been a supporter of funds for children's health care projects and nonprofit organizations, that I understand operates mobile vans in New York City and rural West Virginia and other locations.

Most of you know my colleague, former Senator Jake Garn of Utah, raised a great deal of money for the primary children's medical center in Salt Lake City. Many of us have been at those occasions to assist in the raising of those funds for those worthwhile causes. So, do we want to end our participation and the participation of corporations in these causes simply because there is a so-called perception problem?

One of the other things that is even more important than perceptions is proximity, because if we eliminate the ability to participate in charitable events, from the standpoint of travel and reimbursement for lodging, it does not exclude charitable events in the beltway area. So, for those of us who live great distances, we have a problem. But for those who are close to Washington, DC, they can hold a charitable event right here in Washington where there is no need for reimbursement for travel—transportation. So my point, I think, is one of equity. It would basically eliminate charitable events in my State, in California, Oregon, Washington, the West—where, indeed, for a Member to come out, there is a transportation expense of some significance as well as lodging. But if you have it here, where you do not have a problem for reimbursement for transportation or for lodging, why, you can have it. That discriminates against those of us out West.

If you eliminate the reimbursement for transportation and lodging then you are in a situation where the only alternative is to hold the event in Washington, DC, and perhaps if you are a large national charitable organization that has the clout to hold such an event in Washington, DC, why you can go ahead and have it successfully. But for those of us in the Western part of the United States, it is just not practical to expect we are going to be able to put on a charitable event here, in Washington, DC, and have the degree of success that we would have if we are able to hold it in our own State. Certainly, if you are a small organization like the Fairbanks Breast Cancer Detection Center, or some of the other charities that I have mentioned, you do not have the resources or the capability to hold your event in the Nation's capital. If Senators cannot receive transportation and lodging reimbursement, events like mine, and others, are going to disappear. They are going to disappear because it costs too much to get to Alaska or to get to other small States.

So, Mr. President, in conclusion, I am very sensitive to the prohibition that is in this legislation which would disallow reimbursement for travel and lodging for participation in charitable events. Let us face it, Mr. President. In many of these cases, the presence of the Senators is significant in the ability to raise money for the charitable event itself. This would be eliminated. I hope there still will be some way that we can meet some kind of a compromise in this area. The legitimacy of the event, of course, is the fact that it would have to receive approval from the Ethics Committee.

Those who say, ''Well, since the Ethics Committee is made of up Senators, how in the world could you have an unbiased evaluation of the merits?'' That is absolutely ridiculous thinking. If we cannot police ourselves within the Ethics Committee structure to set certain oversight and criteria for charitable events, why, probably none of us should be here.

So I am quite confident that the Ethics Committee can set precedents to ensure that the perceptions associated with the worthiness of participation in these charitable events is handled in such a way as to provide a check and a

balance and a public disclosure. Let us ask the public what they think about the ability and the worthiness of some of these charitable contributions that have been made as a consequence of the presence of a Senator.

Mr. President, I feel so strongly about this that I am seriously thinking of pursuing legislation on the Levin-Wellstone bill that would preclude reimbursement for the cost of transportation and lodging for political events—if, indeed, my colleagues feel that we must have sweeping legislation with regard to campaign reform and gift ban—because of the inconsistency, because of the hypocrisy associated with addressing charitable functions and not addressing the other.

The other is where Members receive payment from the political organization or the political function or political event which is made up of contributions of lobbyists and other political contributors so that we can travel for those events, and so that we can stay at the elegant hotels in Florida or Virginia, in the Bahamas, and Hawaii.

So I think we had better examine a little more thoroughly the ramifications of just what we are doing and just what we are trying to sell to the American public. We are trying to sell to the American public gift ban, finance reform, and convince the American public that there are no free haircuts—and there have not been. But what we are not doing, very cleverly—we do not hear this mentioned—is that we are not banning reimbursement for political events, transportation and lodging, but we are reaching out in a prohibition against participation in charitable events.

Well, I find that hypocritical, so hypocritical that this Senator is proposing at some point in time, if we do not get some balance in this process so we can continue a worthwhile contribution to charitable events under whatever set of rules is appropriate for the Ethics Committee to come down with, that I would propose that we also include a ban on reimbursement for transportation and lodging to those political events, because Members are still permitted to be reimbursed for travel to a fundraising event for another Member, or political organization. This is under the Senate Ethics Committee's interpretative rules that a Senator may accept travel expenses from an official of a district's political party organization in return for his appearance at a rally sponsored by that organization.

And again, Mr. President, let us look at the makeup of those organizations. Those organizations are supported by lobbyists, political contributors, and that is where the funds come from for reimbursement for each Member who might attend as he or she seeks reimbursement for travel and lodging.

So I guess my concluding question is, if we are going to cut out reimbursement for charitable events for travel and transportation after it has been cleared by our own Ethics Committee, why are we not doing the same thing, banning reimbursement for travel and lodging, for political events? It is hypocritical to do one and not the other.

So I hope, as the day goes on and we debate this matter fully, that we examine a little bit more the inconsistency, and that the American public wakes up to what is attempting to be done here. It is a bit of window dressing. It is a bit of telling the American people that we have this grandiose scheme for campaign finance, gift ban, and no more free haircuts, as if we have ever had them. But what we are not telling the American public is we are going to still keep our ability to seek reimbursement for travel and lodging for political events.

Well, I hope the American public and the media pick up and understand the difference. I hope that some balance remains in this body, and that we recognize the significance of what our contributions and corporate contributions mean to the charities in this country. If we are going to ban the charities and not ban the political events, why, indeed, hypocrisy is the note of the day.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. LAUTENBERG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I am pleased to be joining in the sponsorship of the legislation that is being considered, one that would prohibit the lobbyists from providing gifts and meals and travel for Members of Congress.

Mr. President, it is quite apparent that the American people—and who knows it better than Members of this body as we have seen the onslaught of change take over—are unhappy with the political system and want change. The American people want Congress to respond first and foremost to the needs of ordinary Americans, not just the special interests, not just the wealthy, and not just to the lobbyists.

When I first introduced the proposal for a gift ban in the last Congress, many here on Capitol Hill did not understand or appreciate the depth of the public's distaste for the status quo. Today, I hope we all do. It is way past time, frankly, to finally translate that rage into a positive action.

Mr. President, this is a deeply emotional issue. It is an emotional issue for millions of ordinary citizens who feel that their Government has been taken away from them, who feel that they do not have the same voice as the powerhouses in Washington and State capitals around the country. But it is also an emotional issue here in the U.S. Senate. Just as our constituents are angry about being shut out of the process, many Senators are angry because they think somehow or other this bill implies that Members are corrupt. That is not the point at all. I do not think of any of my colleagues, no matter how much I may disagree with them, as being corrupt. I may be angry at their point of view. I may think that they are hardhearted. I may think that they are disengaged through the process. But corrupt? Not at all. So that is not the issue. And I think we ought to make that clear. We have all kinds of references, adjectives that describe how things are and what constitutes various conditions of honesty or hypocrisy.

Mr. President, I do not think that Members of Congress, of the Senate, are selling their votes for a cup of coffee or a trip to the Caribbean or to some glamorous event. To the contrary. The Members of this body are dedicated public servants who make enormous sacrifices to serve the public. That is true across the board. Some of my colleagues may be asking themselves. ''Well, if that is true, then what do we need this piece of legislation for? Why the bill?''

There are a couple of answers to that. The first answer is that the bill can begin the process of restoring public trust in the Congress. That does not solve the problem by itself. But it is a good place to start. This bill can make it happen. That is important because, until we restore public trust, Congress will never be able to have public confidence that we are, in fact, addressing the serious problems facing our Nation.

But, Mr. President, the need for a gift ban goes well beyond the need to change public perception. There is also a substantive issue involved.

The issue is not corruption. It is access. And perhaps more fundamentally it is an issue of fairness to ordinary Americans.

When lobbyists take a Senator to dinner, they are not just buying a meal for a nice person. The meal involves time, and time means access. When a lobbyist buys a Senator a meal, they do not usually sit at separate tables. He does not say typically, ''Well, why don't you and your friends go out to dinner and I'll pay for it,'' because the dinner includes a tete-a-tete, face to face, a discussion. Nothing surreptitious, nothing immoral, nothing illegal, but access. It is a chance to get a Senator's ear, a Senator's eyes, a Senator's attention for an hour or two or three, and if the wine flows generously then it may even last longer.

Mr. President, ordinary citizens do not have that access. They cannot just take their Senator to a quiet dinner at a fancy restaurant and explain what it is like to be unemployed, explain what it is like to be worried about a child's education, explain what it is like to worry about the loss of health care insurance, explain what it is like to be up against the wall and not know which way to turn. Those calls do not even get through, much less to have the ability to sit with the Senator. And there are millions of people who would like to do it, even if it was just to tell us off, millions of people who would love to sit there and say, ''Senator, do you know what it is like to lose your job, to come home to your family that

is dependent upon you for their food, shelter, clothing, and leadership, and to say I have been fired, my job is out?'' Let them have a chance to explain it to a Senator.

I would ask anybody here how many times have they have sat down with an ordinary, hard-working citizen for an hour or a half-hour or for 2 or 3 hours and let that person explain to them the real conditions of life, not what it is like to make sure that company A, company B, or company C has an appropriate tax deduction for their particular interest or that they can expand their power to communicate because they think it is good for the public.

They certainly cannot take Members to a beach resort in the Caribbean to discuss a problem that they individually are having with the Tax Code or how far behind they have fallen on their mortgage payments.

Lobbyists have lots of time under the present structure to do just those things. And it certainly gives them an edge over John Q. Public, whether a lobbyist goes on a trip with an individual and you sit on the deck of a boat fishing for 3 days, or you go to a tennis tournament where the pro fakes his inability to beat the Senator just to win a couple of points, or you are out on a golf trip where you get a golf bag as part of the trip, or you go to a ski tournament—and I have seen them first hand—where it is a uniform, a jacket that could be expensive, maybe a pair of skis, free lessons from one of the top pros in the ski business, sitting in a chair lift going up the side of the mountain that can be a 20 or 25 minute ride in some places, and the lobbyist is sitting alongside of you, and it is Joe and Harry and they talk 20 minutes at a clip riding up and down the mountain.

What do you think the lobbyist talks about, horticulture or the latest way to make a healthy salad? He has a mission, a mission for which he or she is paid, and the mission is to try to develop an attitude within that Senator that has to be favorable to my company, my course of action, my industry, my association. The average citizen does not have a chance to do that. And when they see Members of Congress at the fanciest restaurants getting wined, getting dined, they resent it. They think the deck is stacked against them. They think it is wrong. And I agree. They do not respect a system that operates that way.

Mr. President, I said it before. I do not stand before my colleagues to criticize anyone or to question anyone's motives. I am not claiming to be the holy one around here; I am not. But I do think we all need to change the way we do business. The public certainly thinks so, and it is about time we get it done.

The bill before us is a strong piece of legislation, with tough new rules on gifts. It would ban all gifts—all gifts—from lobbyists. It would prohibit lobbyists from taking Members on recreational trips.

Unfortunately, the purpose of this legislation is being either misunderstood or misrepresented because I, like the distinguished Senator from Alaska, who spoke just a few minutes ago, believe that wherever possible we ought to support voluntary groups that have a humanitarian or social mission. But if the organizations sponsoring the trip spend more on feeding and hosting Senators and their travel to get to an event than the ultimate beneficiary gets, there is something in that arithmetic that does not sound particularly honest. And as a consequence what we have said is any trip that is substantially recreational is prohibited. There is no prohibition to participating in charitable events as long as the focus is on the charity.

So, Mr. President, we are at a point in time when we have to step up to the plate. Under the Republican proposal, Members of Congress would be able to accept an unlimited number of gifts so long as each gift is worth less than $100. That means it can be lunch; it can be theater tickets; it can be dinner the next day; it can be a tennis racket, if they still cost less than $100; it can be anything as often as a lobbyist likes as long as it costs less than $100. The $99.95 special is OK, and it can continue forever.

Well, it does not take long for a few of those to convince someone that this lobbyist is more than a good friend who just wants to be a nice guy.

Lobbyists under the proposal that our Republican friends are putting up could give Senators tickets to the opera one day, tickets to the Super Bowl the next day, tickets to a fancy restaurant the next day, as long as they are buying tickets that cost less than $100, and so on and so on. Mr. President, that is not reform. It is a sad joke, and it is just not going to wash with the American people.

Before I conclude, I wish to express my appreciation to Senator LEVIN and Senator WELLSTONE and Senator FEINGOLD, all of whom have played critical roles in the development of this legislation. We have been close allies in what has been a long and difficult battle. I appreciate their effort, their skill, and their cooperation.

In conclusion, I urge my colleagues to support this bill and to reject the Republican alternative. Let us finally ban gifts from lobbyists. Let us try to win the confidence of the American people up front, and let us do it the right way.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, we have before us a bipartisan, very tough gift reform bill, and this bill will finally put an end to the situation where we get free tickets and free meals and we get recreational travel paid for courtesy of special interests. It is a tough bill, but cynicism is running deep in this country, and they want political reform. The worst thing we could do would be to pretend we are reforming gifts when we are not doing it.

Now, the McConnell substitute represents business as usual. We are pretending to be tough in the McConnell substitute, but basically we are continuing the current rules—pretending to be tough but basically maintaining the status quo. It is what I would call a sheep in wolf's clothing. It is pretend reform. If you can give an unlimited number of $99 gifts without disclosure, without accumulating them, that is sham reform. This recreational travel where we can get fancy resorts, fancy meals paid for by special interests, a vacation because it is billed as a charitable event, because part of the money which the special interest pays into the charity goes to the charity, what is left over after they pay for our recreational travel, that has to stop. That has helped to bring this body into disrepute. We must change it. I hope we will change it and do real reform today or tomorrow or when we finally resolve the gift issue.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding that at 11 o'clock, the Senator from New Jersey is to be recognized to offer an amendment on the lobbying reform bill; that we are now returning to lobbying reform, and that the time will then be divided where he will control half the time and the Senator from Kentucky or whoever the majority manager of the bill is will control the other half of that 1-hour debate time. Is the Senator from Michigan correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT OF 1995

The PRESIDING OFFICER. May the Chair announce at this time that under the previous order, the hour of 11 a.m. having arrived, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 1060, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1060) to provide for the disclosure of lobbying activities to influence the Federal Government, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from New Jersey is recognized to offer an amendment on which there shall be 60 minutes of debate.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, that 60 minutes is to be divided, as I understand it, between my legislation proponents and those who oppose, to just alert those who are interested.