

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you very much, Mr. President, and I thank my colleagues.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Mr. DORGAN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DORGAN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the rules, a Senator cannot reserve the right to object in calling off the quorum call.

Mr. DORGAN. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. An objection is heard. The clerk will continue to call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk continued to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes, and further, that the Senator from North Dakota be allowed 5 minutes as in morning business for debate only.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator has 5 minutes and the Senator from North Dakota has 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMAS. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. THOMAS pertaining to the introduction of S. 1268 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. DORGAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MCCAIN). The Senator from North Dakota is recognized for 5 minutes as in morning business.

EXPLANATION OF AMENDMENT NO. 2770

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I want to tell my colleagues who may be watching these proceedings where we are and why we are where we are.

I offered an amendment some while ago, about half hour ago. We intended to offer a second-degree amendment to it to slightly modify it. We intended to get a vote on it. At that point, the Senate was put into a quorum call. Since that time, two noncontroversial amendments have been adopted. Except for this morning business, the Senate has been in a quorum call.

I wanted to use this 5 minutes to explain what this amendment was and

why I am offering it and why there is no intent at all to delay the proceedings of the Senate today. I understand we want to finish this appropriations bill. I think we can do that quickly. On my amendment I would agree to a very short time limit. I told the chairman of the committee I would agree to a half hour time limit, if necessary. So we can finish this bill quickly.

My amendment does something very simple. Because the Finance Committee in the Senate next week will deal with Medicare and Medicaid, and because we have proposals on the table for substantial cuts in Medicare, proposals that were included in the budget that call for a very substantial tax cut, my amended is an amended amendment to try to send the sense of the Senate to the Finance Committee about priorities. I suggest if there is a tax cut coming out of the Senate Finance Committee—and I do not think we ought to cut taxes at this point; we ought to keep our eye on the goal of reducing the Federal deficit. Cutting taxes may be popular but, in my judgment, it ought to be discussed after we have managed to balance the Federal budget. My sense-of-the-Senate amendment is that if there is a tax cut that comes out of the Finance Committee, it be limited to those making \$100,000 a year or less. And by limiting the tax cut to those making under \$100,000 a year, the savings could be used to reduce the cut that is anticipated in Medicare. It is a very simple amendment with respect to priorities.

I know people here will grit their teeth because of this amendment. But the reason there is the requirement to offer it is that the minority will have very little opportunity in the Senate Finance Committee; they are not involved in writing the bill. I am not complaining about that. That is the way the system works. The majority won, they control, they write the legislation.

But we have an opportunity, it seems to me, to try to express ourselves on priorities. The priority here is the juxtaposition between tax cuts and the cut in Medicare. I hope very much that if there is to be a tax cut, it be a tax cut that is focused on those who earn less than \$100,000 a year. I was on a television program two mornings ago with a member of the majority party. The member of the majority party said, "Look, our tax cut is a family tax cut. It is going to go to working families, modest-income families." I said, "Then we will give you chance to vote on it. As a matter of priorities, let us decide that is what we are going to do." That is what my amendment does. When we tried to second-degree it, of course, there was an objection to the amendment being considered as read and, therefore, we were not able to offer the second degree, and the Senate was put into a quorum call.

I say to the chair that I have no intention of holding this bill up. But this amendment is not going to go away ei-

ther. You can second-degree this amendment and do it three or four times, and I will offer it again as a second degree to something else, because I believe we ought to have the right to vote on this. So it is not going to go away. We can dispose of it very quickly. I will agree to a time limit. I have no intention of impeding the working of the Senate this afternoon. I hope very much that you will allow us the opportunity at an early time here to vote on an amendment of this type.

Again, as I said, I think we should finish this bill this afternoon. The timeliness of this amendment is—the Senate Finance Committee begins work on this next week. I have no choice, really, but to offer this at this point. It is not a breach of any agreement or a breach of understanding by anybody. It is not an attempt to stretch out the time. It is about priorities in this country, and these are important priorities which I will speak on at a point in time when the opportunity exists for debate on the amendment itself.

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The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. JEFFORDS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 2770

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I understand the desires of the Senator from North Dakota, and this obviously is a very important amendment. However, we are dealing with the appropriations bill for the District of Columbia. It is my intention—after a brief period of time for the leader to debate—to move to table the Senator's amendment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. DOLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President we have already discussed the amendment. I wonder if we need anymore time. It has been explained two or three times by the Senator from North Dakota. If we can just have 1 minute on this side to explain our side, that would be sufficient. He has had 15 or 20 minutes. I do not see any reason for additional debate. A lot of colleagues on both sides of the aisle had hoped we might be finished with this bill and the other conference report by 12:30.

If the Senator from North Dakota could accommodate that, we will be prepared to table the amendment immediately.

Mr. DORGAN. I say to the majority leader that I have not had 10 or 15 minutes to debate this, but 5 minutes under morning business.

I have no intention of delaying. If the Senator wants to proceed and there will be a tabling motion, I accept that. I appreciate that.