

with the debt on a debt ceiling increase. I would ask that question of my friend.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I would be delighted to say a few words about that for my colleague from California.

The regulatory reform bill presents the most radical, overreaching effort to undo 25 years of environmental protection for the people of this country.

The regulatory reform bill that is attached to the debt limit will undo the protection of our citizens for the inspection of food for the potential of carcinogens in that food. To everybody who has read about E. coli poisoning, the incidents of people who have died or gotten seriously ill as a consequence of the lack of inspection, that will now be liberated. That will occur as a consequence of this.

I just share a list here. This is a long, rolling list. These are the 88 different openings for people to stop the process of putting out legitimate regulations within the Environmental Protection Agency. This list, which could not pass the Senate, has been attached to the debt limit.

Mr. NICKLES. We are not on debt limit.

Mr. KERRY. No, but it is attached to it. It is attached to it. What we are talking about here is whether or not the President of the United States is going to have this kind of gun held to his head or not.

Just take the continuing resolution. They have restrictions on Federal grants, lobbying to public interest groups; they have Medicare part B premium increases, abolition of certain agencies. These are not items that ought to be on what the Senator from Connecticut has adequately pointed out ought to be very simply an extension of the continuing resolution.

Mr. President, I know my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are going to say, look, we have been here for years, and we have never balanced the budget. That is correct. Some of us tried. We tried with Gramm-Rudman-Hollings. We tried with other efforts. We finally have come to an agreement that this year we are going to try to do it. The question is how are we going to do it, not whether we are going to do it.

So when anybody hears our colleagues come to the floor and say the Democrats do not want to balance the budget, I hope America will say, "Wrong; not true." We voted, 39 of us, for a 7-year balanced budget on this side of the aisle. The difference is we did not do it by making it more expensive for kids to go to college. We did not do it by cutting out the volunteer corps of America, AmeriCorps. We did not do it by cutting student capacity to have summer jobs. We did not do it by taking hot lunches away from kids. We did not do it by raiding the pension funds of this country. We did not do it by denying the people at the lowest scale of income the earned-income tax credit, the ability to be able to work out of poverty.

Do you know how we did it? We did it by not giving to people this extraordinary \$245 billion tax break, most of which is unexplainable in the face of this kind of a deficit.

Mr. DODD. Will my colleague yield?

Mr. LOTT. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. KERRY. I would be happy to yield, Mr. President.

Mr. DODD. I just wanted to ask—

Mr. KERRY. I yield for a question.

Mr. DODD. My colleague, did I understand him to say that we have an increase in premiums for Medicare in this continuing resolution? We are going to have Medicare put on a continuing resolution and not save that debate for the kind of attention it deserves with 37 million Americans depending upon Medicare? That is wrapped up in the continuing resolution?

Mr. KERRY. The Senator from Connecticut is absolutely correct.

Mr. DODD. Can my colleague from Massachusetts explain, what is the wisdom of taking a simple extension of the continuing resolution and incorporating a critically important program to millions of Americans and their families in something like the continuing resolution? Why not leave that for the broader debate? Is there some rationale that my colleague from Massachusetts, Mr. President, is aware of as to why we would have an increase in premium costs in Medicare put on something like this?

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I would say to my friend, there is certainly no legitimate or fair rationale. I can certainly explain to my colleague a political and craven rationale but not one that I think would meet the test and standard of fairness.

Now, I know that the acting majority leader wanted to ask a question. I would be happy to yield for a question.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I understood when the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts started speaking he indicated he would speak until we were ready to dispense with the other issues pending, and we have gotten an agreement on that and I am ready to ask for that consent when he completes his statement.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, the Senator from Mississippi knows how to silence the Senator from Massachusetts. If we can get consent on this, the Senator from Massachusetts would be delighted to terminate his colloquy. So I would be happy to move to that consent if we can.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREE-
MENT—HOUSE MESSAGE ON H.R.
927

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the House message regarding H.R. 927 no longer be pending.

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

Mr. LOTT. I must say, Mr. President, that that is unfortunate because this is an issue which passed the Senate on October 19 by an overwhelming vote, 74 to 24. There was a lot of discussion here about the position of the Senate being preserved. This is one where we are just trying to appoint conferees on an issue that passed, three-fifths of the Senators voting for it in a bipartisan vote, and now we are being told that there is opposition to appointing conferees to go to conference on a bill that has broad support. So it is our intention to renew this motion later but not tonight so that we will be able to go to morning business at this point.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent there be a period for the transaction of morning business until the hour of 12 midnight, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. DODD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Mr. DODD. I just want to comment briefly, if I could, and I appreciate the acting majority leaders's willingness to lay this matter aside.

Let me say to my colleagues, I understand normally appointing conferees is a relatively routine matter. While I have underlying objection to the bill, I was in the minority. The bill did pass. The Senator from Mississippi is absolutely correct; it passed with a pretty good margin.

However, I point out to my colleagues that the principal author of this legislation is also holding up 18 nominees to serve as Ambassadors for this country, every single treaty including START II as well as the chemical weapons treaty. Frankly, moving this kind of bill to the forefront while every other major piece of legislation on the Foreign Relations Committee is held hostage because of one other piece of legislation he is interested in, I say, with all due respect, this legislation does not have the kind of urgency to it that the absence of a United States representative in the People's Republic of China, in Indonesia, I think warrants.

So I have objected to this in the hopes that these holds that have now gone for weeks—I would normally not