Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3139, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3139) to redesignate the United States Post Office and Courthouse building located at 9 East Broad Street, Cookeville, Tennessee, shall be known and designated as the “L. Clure Morton United States Post Office and Courthouse.”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 500, which is House bill H.R. 1975.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1975) to improve the management of royalties from Federal and Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas leases, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MURkowski. Mr. President, I rise to urge my Senate colleagues to support H.R. 1975, the Federal Oil and Gas Royalty Fairness and Simplification Act, also known as the “royalty fairness” bill, which passed the House of Representatives on July 16, 1996. H.R. 1975 is identical in every respect to S. 1014, reported to the Senate by the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on May 1 by a unanimous voice vote, with one exception: It makes a technical amendment in the effective date section that was not made in S. 1014. The technical amendment was included at the urging of the administration and, as a result, the Clinton administration strongly supports H.R. 1975. The bill also is supported by the governors of fourteen States.

This is historic legislation, Mr. President. It is the only legislative initiative taken in the last 14 years to cost effectively increase the Nation’s third largest source of revenue—mineral royalties from Federal lands, more specifically, oil and gas royalties. This legislation would establish a comprehensive statutory plan to increase the collection of royalty receipts due the United States. Those receipts will help reduce our budget deficit. Without this legislation, an ineffective and costly royalty collection system will continue, perpetuating long delays and uncollected royalties.

Let me make clear, Mr. President: This legislation does not apply to Indian lands. It applies only to royalties from oil and gas production on Federal lands.

Let me also make absolutely clear that this bill does not—repeat, does not—provide royalty relief or lower royalty rates for oil and gas producers who operate on Federal onshore lands or the Outer Continental Shelf. H.R. 1975 is about royalty collection, not royalty rates. This bill is about improving government efficiency, not about increasing government bureaucracy. And this bill is about increasing...