Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent I be allowed to speak for 5 or 6 minutes in morning business.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 10:30 with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each. The time until 10 o'clock shall be under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee; in his absence, the Senator from Wyoming may proceed.

NOMINATION OF KEVIN GOVER TO BE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF INTERIOR FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I rise today as a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee to express some concerns that I have about the nomination of Kevin Gover to be the new Assistant Secretary of Interior for Indian Affairs, the head of the BIA, the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

I have consistently taken the position that in my experience the BIA is an agency that is in dire need of serious reform to make it more effective and more responsive to the needs of the tribes that it is established to serve. I therefore have a certain admiration for anyone who is willing to undertake this task, because it is a tough one. It is one that is difficult. Additionally, in this particular case, Mr. Gover's personal qualifications recommend him very highly for this position. He also has a Wyoming connection, which of course I am interested in. Over several years he has represented the Eastern Shoshone Tribe in several legal and legislative matters.

However, it wouldn't come as any surprise to my colleagues on that committee that given William Safire's recent op-ed piece on the Gover nomination in the New York Times, some questions have to be raised and are raised with respect to his nomination. According to the Safire piece, in private practice and representing the Tesuque Pueblo of New Mexico, Mr. Gover was present at one of President Clinton's infamous White House coffees. Soon therefore, the Pueblo made two contributions to the Democratic National Committee totaling $50,000. Some time later, Mr. Gover was nominated for this position.

An examination of the nominee's FBI file leads me to conclude that he committed no illegal acts. I believe at the very least they constitute an appearance of impropriety which should make many of us uncomfortable. I have no argument, of course, with the right of individuals to make political contributions to the party of their choice. That is provided by law and should be. I personally believe, however, it is a little unseemly for tribal governments to do so, to either party. It is no secret that all but two or three tribes in this country have little, if any, extra money to throw around. The overwhelming majority, even with Federal help, can hardly meet the day-to-day needs of their members—needs like shelter, health care, or education. There is a constant press for additional funding for those needs.

When a tribal government can't meet the basic needs of its people, then I seriously question the morality of that government making a political contribution.

Another fact that lends itself to the appearance of impropriety in this case is the special relationship between the tribes and the Federal Government. This relationship is like the relationship between a trustee and beneficiary; the United States has a unique fiduciary responsibility to the tribes and their members. Congress has turned over responsibility for day-to-day regulation of tribal affairs to the executive branch. So I can't think of many circumstances where national campaign contributions—especially to the party of a sitting President—would not carry with them the appearance of impropriety, an appearance of unseemly influence—the idea of a beneficiary influencing the trustee in its work.

And what about the appearance of a government body representing members of different political beliefs—in this case a tribal government—making a monetary contribution to a national political party on behalf of all of its members, whether or not that's their political belief. We prohibit Federal agencies from engaging in any lobbying efforts with taxpayer funds because it would look unseemly. We prohibit unions from making political contributions to one particular party with members' dues. Mr. President, the question might be posed that since it appears that nothing illegal took place in Mr. Gover's case, why all the fuss? My answer, Madam President, is that oftentimes the appearance of impropriety can be just as damning as an actual illegality.

The news these days is full of examples illustrating this conclusion—the subject of Senator THOMPSON's hearings, which just recently ended with credible allegations against Secretary Babbitt that tribal campaign contributions influenced the denial of a gaming license to a Midwestern tribe.

In order to get answers to some of my concerns, I met with Mr. Gover at length on November 4. Our conversation was somewhat reassuring to me, and left me feeling that my argument is not with Mr. Gover, who as far as I can tell at this time did nothing illegal, but with a system that allows tribes to make these kinds of donations.

So, Madam President, should the Gover nomination come to a vote on the floor, I do not plan to object. The BIA has been without leadership for a long time, something that Bureau can ill afford, and Mr. Gover is eminently qualified to lead it. But he can be sure while I support him, I and other Members will be watching closely to make sure he delivers on his promises to reform the Bureau, to make it more responsible and cost efficient, and to help untangle the present mess in Indian gaming.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. BAUCUS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana [Mr. BAUCUS], is recognized.

AFTER THE SUMMIT

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, I rise to discuss the state visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to the United States last week.

GOALS OF ASIA POLICY

Let me begin with a reminder of our goals in Asia policy. They are:

A peaceful Pacific, open trade, joint work on problems of mutual concern like environmental problems and international crime, and progress toward respect for internationally recognized human rights.

This morning I would like to discuss my view of the results.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SUMMIT

To begin with the positive, I believe this visit will be particularly helpful in the first area—that of ensuring a stable peace in the Pacific. The major elements of our security policy in the region are the United States alliance with Japan; a permanent troop presence in Asia; deterrence of North Korean aggression; a one-China policy coupled with a commitment to help Taiwan ensure its security; and preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We have had a chance to discuss all of these issues in detail with President Jiang and China's senior foreign policy officials. And we have emerged without any serious short-term differences, plus an important agreement on China's part to cease nuclear cooperation with Iran. This will reduce the chances of a crisis in the region, and make peace in the Pacific generally more stable and permanent.

I see this renewed strategic dialogue and understanding of our mutual interest in a peaceful region as the major accomplishment of the visit. I would also note some important specific agreements on a range of issues, including:

In return for China's halt of nuclear cooperation with Iran, we will open up sales of civil nuclear power technology to China; China will enter the Information Technology Agreement, thus eliminating tariffs on a range of high-tech products in which American companies are highly competitive—for example, semiconductors.

The United States will increase our assistance to China's efforts to combat pollution; the United States Justice Department will support efforts to develop the rule of law in China, and the