years, without the concurrence of the head of the NCDO and a written certification to the President. Since over half of all original classification decisions made under E.O. 12958 are properly designated for more than 10 years (down from 95% under the previous Executive Order), implementation of this requirement would be unworkable without the employment of a huge new bureaucracy at the NCDO and hundreds of new certification writers at the agencies. The standards for duration of classification must be rewritten to make them compatible with the E.O. 12958 standards.

3. Section 4 establishes a Classification and Declassification Review Board, consisting exclusively of non-Government employees, to decide appeals from the public or agencies of decisions made by agencies or the NCDO. Agencies may appeal decisions of this Board only to the President. Given the new oversight authority assigned to the Director of the NCDO, and the existing rights of FOIA or Executive Order appeal, this new entity is redundant and unnecessary, and it is likely to be quite costly to operate. At a minimum, the legislation must be amended to permit the President to appoint Review Board members of his choosing, including current Government employees.

4. S. 712 locates the NCDO within the EOP, which is highly problematic given the traditional constraints on the budget and staffing levels of the EOP. Therefore, we believe the best organizational placement for the NCDO is the National Archives and Records Administration, which has a strong institutional commitment to declassifying public records as expeditiously as possible consistent with protecting national security interests. That said, we also would recommend the addition of language that would codify an ongoing NSC role in providing policy guidance to the NCDO and would enhance the prospects of adequate funding for the NCDO. With a continued NSC imprimatur and adequate assured funding, organizational placement outside the EOP would be a much less difficult issue.

5. Section 2(c)(4) requiring detailed written justifications for all classification decisions is the kind of administrative detail that should be left to the discretion of the executive branch. As drafted, this provision would increase paperwork and cost, without any assurance of improving classification decisions or the management of the program. However, we agree that it would make sense to require detailed justifications whenever classification decisions are incorporated into an agency's classification guide.

6. Section 3(d)(7) should be modified to limit NCDO access to the most sensitive records associated with a special access program. Limiting access to such records is consistent with E.O. 12958 but will not undermine the NCDO's ability to oversee special access programs.

I appreciate your continuing leadership on this matter. By working together on the difficult remaining issues, I think we have a chance to establish a statutory framework for the classification and declassification program that enhances the President's authority to manage the program effectively.

Sincerely,

SAMUEL R. BERGER,
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Mr. NICKLES. I ask unanimous consent that the conference report be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the conference report be printed in the RECORD.

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

The conference report was agreed to.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—CONFERENCE REPORT TO ACCOMPANY H.R. 1853

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the majority leader, after consultation with the Democratic leader, may turn to the consideration of the conference report accompanying H.R. 1853, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Act Amendments, and that the reading of the conference report be waived. I further ask unanimous consent that there be 30 minutes for debate equally divided between Senators JEFFORDS and KENNEDY, and that at the conclusion or yielding back of the time, the Senate proceed to vote on adoption of the conference report, without any intervening action or debate.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 2431

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate turn to H.R. 2431, that the cloture motion be vitiated, and that Senator LOTT or his designee be recognized to offer a substitute amendment; that there be 2½ hours of debate on the substitute amendment to be equally divided between the majority and minority leaders or their designees; and that following the expiration or yielding back of time, the substitute amendment be agreed to, that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that an amendment to the title then be offered and agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, the bill be advanced to third reading, and the Senate vote on final passage of H.R. 2431, as amended, without any intervening action or debate.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I shall not object. When this unanimous consent agreement was propounded initially, the distinguished assistant majority leader and I talked about including 20 minutes for me to speak. Will the Senator modify his request so that I may be recognized as soon as the Senator from Minnesota finishes his comments?

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I so modify the request.

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

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, we are ready to begin consideration on the International Religious Freedom Act.

FREEDOM FROM RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION ACT OF 1998

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2431) to establish an Office of Religious Persecution Monitoring, to provide for the imposition of sanctions against countries engaged in a pattern of religious persecution, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 3789

(Purpose: To express United States foreign policy with respect to, and to strengthen United States advocacy on behalf of, individuals persecuted in foreign countries on account of religion; to authorize United States actions in response to violations of the right to religious freedom in foreign countries; to establish an Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom within the Department of State, a Commission on International Religious Freedom, and a Special Adviser on International Religious Freedom within the National Security Council; and for other purposes)

Mr. NICKLES. I send a substitute amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Oklahoma [Mr. NICKLES] proposes an amendment numbered 3789.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The text of the amendment (No. 3789) is printed in today's RECORD under ''Amendments Submitted.'')

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for their participation and cooperation in making this act a reality, and particularly my colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN, for cosponsoring this. We have 29 cosponsors of this bill.

Certainly, one of the principal cosponsors and leaders on combating religious persecution and promoting religious freedom throughout the world has been Senator SPECTER, the original cosponsor of the Specter–Wolf bill which passed the House overwhelmingly. I commend Congressman WOLF for his leadership and for the enormous vote they had in the House. I commend Senator SPECTER for combating religious persecution and promoting religious freedom throughout the world.

I yield 20 minutes to the Senator from Pennsylvania.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. SPECTER. At the outset, I congratulate my distinguished colleague from Oklahoma, Senator NICKLES, for his leadership on this important measure, along with Senator LIEBERMAN and Senator COATS.

This is a very important piece of legislation, which now appears to be near fruition, with joint action by the House of Representatives. This legislation, the International Religious Freedom Act, constitutes a very firm stand by the United States against religious persecution worldwide. A bipartisan group of Senators have spearheaded this effort, and the outcome is one in which the Senate can be proud.

The rockbed of America is religious freedom. That is the reason that the pilgrims came to this country, to the

settlements in Virginia in 1607 and in Massachusetts with the pilgrims in 1620. That was also the reason that my father, Harry Specter, came to this country in 1911 at the age of 18, and my mother, Lillie Shanin Specter, came to this country at the age of 5 with her family which had lived in a small town on the Russian-Polish border. Freedom of religion is the heart of the first amendment, the provisions for religious freedom.

We have seen worldwide unspeakable religious persecution. We have seen Catholic clerics mistreated and tortured in China. We have seen Christians sold into slavery in the Sudan. We have seen the risk of the death penalty in Egypt and in Saudi Arabia for those of the Islam faith who seek to convert to Christianity.

This legislation is a very forceful statement by the United States of America that religious persecution is intolerable wherever it exists, whether it is against Christians, whether it is against Jews, or whether it is against those of the Islam faith, Buddhist, or whatever the religious persuasion may be, it is intolerable. This issue, as I have already noted, goes to my own personal roots. I was motivated to act for legislative relief by a distinguished American named Michael Horowitz, who came to see me in early 1997 and said that there had been enormous support from the international Christian community to protect Soviet Jewry, and that there ought to be a firm, responsive action by those of the Jewish faith to try to help on the issue of persecution of Christians. It soon expanded beyond persecution of Christians to people of any religious persuasion.

I have been working in the Senate on the issue of religious persecution for several years now. At the end of the 104th Congress, I introduced Senate Resolution 283, which detailed the need for quick, decisive action and called upon the President to appoint a White House advisor on religious persecution. After that, I worked with Senators NICKLES, NUNN, and COATS on a broader Senate resolution, S. Con. Res. 71, which included my provisions on a White House Senior Advisor on religious persecution and expressed the sense of the Senate regarding persecution of Christians worldwide. S. Con. Res. 71, which I cosponsored, passed the Senate by voice vote but there was insufficient time remaining in the 104th Congress to secure passage in the House.

In collaboration with Congressman FRANK WOLF of Virginia, on May 21, 1997, I introduced legislation in the Senate, S. 772, and Congressman WOLF introduced companion legislation in the House of Representatives. We introduced a bill that directly confronted the horrendous situation in many countries. This legislation targeted those countries that engaged in the most egregious acts of persecution such as torture, slavery and forcible acts of conversion. The legislation was passed in the House of Representatives on May 14, 1998 by a vote of 375–41. The matter has been under consideration by the Senate. The provisions of Senate bill 772, which I introduced, had been criticized, or concerns were raised because of the sanctions which had been imposed.

There is a widespread concern in Congress—and in the Senate, at least among some Senators—that the sanctions are counterproductive and that they ought not to be entertained.

My own personal view is that the sanctions would have been appropriate. But I think it is worthwhile to take two-thirds of a loaf, 70 percent of a loaf, I think substantially more than half a loaf, in the accommodation which we are making here in the legislation which has been introduced today.

Margaret Chase Smith, a distinguished Senator from Maine, articulated a very important concept talking about the principle of compromise as opposed to the compromise of principle. And in the legislation which is being advanced today there is not a compromise of principle, but we are making accommodations to put this legislation through.

Over the past 2 years, I have conducted four hearings throughout Pennsylvania to hear from panelists who have witnessed or experienced personally the horrors of religious persecution. These hearings were held in the Pittsburgh area, the Harrisburg area, Allentown/Reading area and the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area. In addition, I have had several meetings with evangelical leaders and leaders of missionary organizations who have been striving to expose those governments and other organizations that tolerate or perpetuate serious, physical acts of religious persecution against their own population.

It is clear from my meetings with religious leaders in Pennsylvania that there are regions of the world where the situation is particularly abhorrent. In China, the government distinguishes between ''Patriotic'' Catholic and Protestant churches that are endorsed by the government and the more than 50 million ''House'' church Christian Churches. The Chinese government recognizes officially only the Patriotic churches. Members of the House churches—those who refuse to register in a state religion, or who remain faithful to the Vatican—are regularly imprisoned for having bibles or holding worship services without permission.

Just over two years ago in August 1996, I traveled to China and met with Chinese Vice-Premier Qian Qichen to express my strong concerns about religious persecution in his country. The next month, however, the Chinese Government released a statement warning the Chinese people that open exercise of their religion could result in harsh retribution. This Summer, when President Clinton traveled to China there was real hope that the Chinese Government would begin to reverse decades of religious intolerance and persecution. Sadly, recent reports indicate that the situation has improved little.

This past January, I traveled to the Mideast and Africa to gather evidence on such practices in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Egypt and neighboring countries. I met with religious leaders and governmental officials in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Yemen. I had wanted to visit Sudan to investigate persecution of Christians by the fundamentalist Islamic Sudanese government, but was told by the State Department that Sudan was unsafe for American delegations. I did meet with the Sudanese government-in-exile in neighboring Eritrea, and discussed reports of Sudanese persecution with His Holiness Abuna Paulos, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and with the leadership of the Ethiopian Supreme Islamic Council in Addis Ababa. My fact finding corroborated the widespread reports of bias, mistreatment and persecution of religious minorities in these countries. It is now a well known fact that the government of Sudan has supported a campaign of forced enslavement and conversion of the Christian population in southern Sudan. Literally thousands of Christian children have been taken as slaves in the last six years. The government of Sudan permits the torture and forcible conversion of Christian worshipers.

I heard reports from Egyptian evangelicals who cited cases of eight and nine months in jail for Muslims who sought conversion to Christianity. Many of them complained about the long time it took to secure official permission to build churches. Eritrean Christians confirmed claims of Sudanese children being sold into slavery. They attributed it to profiteering by militia as part of the booty of war. One Eritrean Christian commented on Sudanese government action in closing churches in 1997.

Egyptian President Mubarak and Saudi Arabian Intelligence Director Prince Turki told me that public intolerance toward non-Muslim religions springs from the Koran. Conversion from Islam to Christianity or any other religion carries the death penalty under Muslim laws that are based on teachings of the Koran.

In Egypt, I talked to the Copts, saw situations where religious persecution was present. Congressman WOLF and I have talked about being criticized in the Egyptian press for our advocacy of religious freedom around the world. As the saying goes, you can tell a man or woman by their friends. And you can tell a man or woman by their enemies as well. Perhaps it is a mark of distinction to have been criticized, as Congressman WOLF and I had been in the Egyptian press, for articulating and pushing the principles of religious freedom.

In Saudi Arabia, I talked to Christians and Jews who had been persecuted there, and was outraged to find

that if you were a Christian in Saudi Arabia, you could not have a Christmas tree in your window, which could be viewed from the outside; that the Jewish men and women who are stationed there in the American forces did not want to wear their dog tags, their identification, because the indication of being Jewish was a source of possible reprisal.

I heard conflicting statements in Saudi Arabia about whether the death penalty is actually imposed on conversion. In some cases there is question about whether individuals are put to death solely because of their faith, or if other charges are involved. There is no doubt, however, that the religious police in Saudi Arabia are very repressive against Christians.

While in Saudi Arabia, I visited a tent city right in the center of the desert where we have 5,000 American soldiers who are there to protect the Saudis, living under I think intolerable conditions, where they cannot have an open exercise of their religious faith, be they Jewish or Christian.

From my discussions with foreign leaders and religious minorities, it was clear that the introduction of the Specter-Wolf bill has had a beneficial impact by raising the issue's visibility. For example, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Vatican Ambassador to Ethiopia, complimented the proposed legislation for raising the level of dialogue, adding that, if it were enacted with a ''little bite,'' then so much the better.

I think this measure goes a long way in articulating the basic principles of religious freedom, which we prize so highly in America, and that we are exporting a fundamental American value. The bill I think would have been preferable to have sanctions. But it would be impossible to move it through the Senate. So we are taking a very substantial step forward in the legislation as it is currently framed. The legislation brings fair and honest fact finding to the situation of religious minorities around the world. It provides the necessary balance of respecting cultural differences and promoting religious tolerance throughout the world. The legislation provides for a strong, independent commission that can make recommendations based on honest facts.

I want to compliment and commend especially New York Times columnist A.M. Rosenthal, who has had a very profound influence on the formulation of this legislation. You see his articles from time to time, or you see a column from time to time, and there may be some impact. But Mr. Rosenthal has published column after column and has brought to the American people through the impressive op-ed page, or editorial page of the New York Times, discussions of the problems of religious persecution around the world. I think it has had significant effect in moving this legislation forward.

In our discussions, again, I compliment our distinguished colleague from Oklahoma, Senator NICKLES, for his leadership, along with Senator LIEBERMAN. Senator COATS has been a tower of strength. There have been a number of kudos and compliments to Senator COATS as he leaves the U.S. Senate. However many compliments there have been, they are insufficient, because he has made a tremendous contribution to the U.S. Senate. But I believe that this bill will be a tribute, in effect, to Senator DAN COATS and I think to all of those who have worked so hard for its enactment.

Mr. President, how much of my 20 minutes remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. SPECTER. Will the Chair doublecheck that? I have spoken very fast if I have said all of that in 4 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has consumed 9 minutes. He has 11 minutes remaining.

Mr. SPECTER. I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. You would have done better on the first one.

Mr. SPECTER. It all depends on what is ''better,'' Mr. President.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma for permitting me to speak at the outset.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I want to again thank my colleague from Pennsylvania for his support of this bill and for his leadership on the bill that passed the House of Representatives.

I will mention and compare a little bit between the House bill and the Senate bill.

The House bill passed with an overwhelming vote. It came down very hard with punitive actions against countries that had gross violations of religious freedom, or had a lot of punitive action towards those countries that participated in really the most atrocious type of religious persecution—death, torture, imprisonment.

Again, I compliment Representative WOLF and Senator SPECTER for bringing that issue to the attention of the American people, maybe to the world's attention, because a lot of people didn't know that people were going to jail, that they were imprisoned for long periods of time, they might be tortured, they might be actually killed for their religious beliefs. This bill goes a little bit further than that. It might be a little milder on the sanctions side because it gives the President a lot of options, and I would agree and I happen to think that is the right action, but we also provide that we should recognize violations of religious freedom including violations such as assembling for peaceful religious activities, for speaking out on one's religion, for changing one's religious beliefs, for possessing or distributing religious materials or raising one's children in the religion of your choice.

In other words, we believe religious freedom should be a basic right for all Americans, for all people worldwide, and the United Nation's declaration includes such freedom. Countries that join the United Nations say, yes, we believe in religious freedom, but yet we find these things happening all the time.

As Members of the Senate and Members of the House, many of us have been engaged in trying to protect religious freedom when we find that maybe our constituents are denied access, denied the opportunity to worship, maybe put in prison because they share their faith or they wish to worship in a particular country and they find that it is not even available. So our bill goes a little bit further than the House bill in the fact that we include a lot of other violations of religious freedom.

I might mention a few other things, Mr. President, maybe outline some of the things that our bill does in comparison—not necessarily a comparison with what the House did but an explanation of what our bill does.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator from Oklahoma will yield for a question?

Mr. NICKLES. I would like to make a presentation of what is in the bill. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. DORGAN. I will wait until the gentleman is finished. I am going to ask a question about what is in the bill. I support the bill, but I want to have just a brief discussion of something.

Let me ask the Senator from Oklahoma to finish, and then if he will yield for a question, I would appreciate it.

Mr. NICKLES. I will be happy to.

Let me give a little rundown of what this bill does. And, again, I thank my colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN, for cosponsoring it and for his work. I will tell all my colleagues there has been a significant amount of work that has gone into this bill. Questions have been raised. We tried to alleviate some of those concerns.

I also wish to thank Senator BIDEN, Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator HAGEL, Senator GRAMM, and others who have raised questions and who have worked with us to try to solve some of those.

This bill creates a position with Ambassador rank called Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. This Ambassador will serve as a full-time, high-level, single-issue diplomat working with the State Department, trying to find out what religious persecution is happening in various places around the world and to represent the administration.

We also set up a Commission on International Religious Liberty. This is a 10-member, bipartisan commission with appointments from Congress and the President. It will provide an outside independent voice investigating religious persecution incidents, raising the profile of religious persecution while making substantive policy recommendations to the Congress and the White House.

On this commission of 10-members, the Ambassador at Large will be a nonvoting member. The President or the executive branch will be entitled to three commissioners and in Congress the President's party in each House will be entitled to an additional position on both sides for a total of five, and the opposing party, in this case it would be the Republicans—Democrats control the White House—the Republicans would be entitled to two appointments from both the House and the Senate, for four.

This commission, being an independent commission, will have the authority to investigate, to conduct hearings to find out what is happening with religious freedom around the world, and be able to make a report to the administration on their recommendations on how to alleviate religious persecution.

I might mention our goal is not to punish any country that is violating or persecuting anybody because of their religious beliefs. The goal is not to punish anybody. Our goal is to change behavior. Our goal is to eliminate religious persecution. Our goal is to expand religious freedom worldwide, and we have gone to great lengths to do that.

Our bill says the commission will make its recommendations to the President and to Congress by May 1. There is also an additional report that is made by the State Department on the advice of the Ambassador at Large, and the State Department gives a country-by-country review of religious freedom. They report that yes, there has been progress in some countries or no, there has not been progress, but rather significant persecution in basically all countries with whom we have relations.

I might mention we have human rights reports right now, human rights reports that cover these countries. But for the most part, in many cases, we have been silent on religious freedom in those countries. So now we will be talking about an annual report on religious freedom and persecution.

And then we talk about responses, what can we do if we find that some countries are violating individuals' or people's religious freedom. Under the proposal, we have some positive things to promote religious freedom.

The International Religious Freedom Act has several measures to promote religious liberty abroad. We have USAID funding for legal protection of religious freedoms in restrictive countries. International broadcasting can be used to promote religious freedom. Fulbright exchanges, for example, of religious leaders and scholars and legal experts can be used. Religious freedom awards and performance pay for meritorious Foreign Service officers; equal access to embassies for U.S. citizens at the embassy's discretion for nationals for religious activities on terms not less favorable for other nongovernmental activities; training for Foreign Service officers and refugee and asylum personnel to ensure the promotion of religious liberty, and accurate reporting of religious persecution and relief for victims of persecution.

We also have steps to directly target those agents and those countries that are responsible for religious persecution, and we have several of those. Some people have said, well, those are various sanctions. And these people, talking about sanctions, they usually think, well, we are going to have a wheat embargo. That is what happened during the Carter administration when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. I don't see that happening.

There are several items, so-called sanctions. We have 1 through 15, and I might mention the first one is a private demarche. The second one is an official demarche. Those can be letters to the embassy: We have reports of people being persecuted; we hope you don't do that anymore. It might be a call to the Ambassador. It might be a call to the Secretary of State or to the diplomatic personnel that there are reports of religious persecution; we want that to be changed. Or it could be more serious. We could cancel a scientific visit. We could have cancellation of a cultural exchange. We could deny one or more State visits. We can cancel State visits. We can do several things.

And then we go into the possible range of economic sanctions. Some people say, well, wait a minute, should you do this? Let's talk about it. These economic sanctions are only for the most egregious or the more, what we define under our bill as particularly severe violations of religious freedom. And particularly severe violations of religious freedom deals again with torture, imprisonment, deals with death, again the most egregious forms of religious persecution. And in those areas we have some economics—the withdrawal, limitation or suspension of development assistance. We have direction of the director of OPEC or TDA or EXIM not to approve guarantees, or we have the withdrawal, limitation or suspension of security assistance. I might mention it says ''limitation.'' It wouldn't have to be 100 percent. It could be 5 percent or it could be a little bit more.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

Mr. NICKLES. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The bill clerk continued with the call of the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask——

Mr. GRAMM. I object.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. LOTT. So that everybody will relax, I understand when I make some remarks and schedule announcements we will go back in a quorum. Nobody is disadvantaged. Nothing is going to change.

I have requested this time for two purposes.

No. 1, to say that we do have a lot of work we need to do. One of the things I am considering doing here momentarily is going to a nomination so we will have time to work through and agree on a unanimous consent request.

But the other thing is, I think right now we are seeing the worst of the Senate, the worst of the Senate on all sides. We have work to do. We have about 48 hours left. We have several bills that people want to get done, vocational education, religious persecution—a number of other bills that have been worked on all over this Capitol. Many of them will be overwhelmingly or unanimously supported. And here we are, now, locked in a procedure where neither side will agree to anything. I just don't think it is in the best tradition of the Senate. I realize the Senate always works at the pleasure of any one Senator, but I think we also work because we always seek consensus.

I am for H.R. 10. I have been for that legislation from the beginning. I have given a lot of time to try to move it forward. I know there are people who have objections to it. As a matter of fact, some of the objections that they have, I agree with. It is not a perfect bill. But I think that we need to try to find a way to work through this, where we can continue to do business. I will do everything I can to make sure that neither side is disadvantaged. I have two of my very closest friends and colleagues that have major problems with this bill, but I am also very committed to dealing fairly with those who are for the bill. I want to try to continue to work to find a way to get it done. So I don't think it really serves either side to just shut us down here at 6:15, 2 days before we go out, and not allow us to get anything else done tonight.

So, I am going to appeal to both sides to work with me, to try to find a way to get this business done that we can do, some nominations that are not controversial on either side, and the religious persecution bill, and vocational education—and without disadvantages to anybody. So I ask Senators on both sides to do that. I appeal to them. And I will help try to make this happen.

But I want to go on the record saying that I think this spectacle that we are seeing right now is very unbecoming of the Senate, and rather than just steam about it, I thought I would say it publicly. I feel better now, Mr. President.

Momentarily I will move to a nomination or I will ask for a unanimous consent agreement that will allow us to complete action on the religious persecution bill. But I must say to both sides, I will not let either side gridlock the Senate. I will not do it. I will use