Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Jane E. Henney, of New Mexico, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services?

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then return to legislative session.

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

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Senators for allowing me to get these nominations moved. They have a way of becoming unapproved if you wait very long once they are approved. And so I thank you for your cooperation on that.

I yield the floor.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now return to legislative session.

Mr. ROBB addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair recognizes the Senator from Virginia.

Mr. ROBB. Thank you, Mr. President.

I appreciate the majority leader's concern, and I thank my colleague from Ohio.

THE OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Mr. ROBB. Mr. President, I would like to speak briefly on the omnibus appropriations bill that we approved this morning. It was roughly a $500 billion omnibus appropriations bill. And I would like to begin by saying that I am thankful that we did not shut down the Federal Government to resolve our spending differences this year. That was clearly a failed approach that disillusioned our Nation and unjustly punished the dedicated Federal employees who serve the American people. But I also have to say I have enormous concern with how we got here, and with some of the consequences of the road we traveled.

Like every one of our colleagues, I am pleased with many aspects of this bill, but disappointed with other aspects. I am pleased that we finally achieved justice for farmers who face racial discrimination at the USDA, that we have acted decisively to strengthen our Nation's defenses, that we have invested substantially in improving the education of our children, that we have refrained—for now at least—from interfering in the local operation of our region's airports, and that we were able to eliminate some of the most egregious anti-environmental riders.

I'm disappointed that we abandoned fiscal discipline and avoided, once again, making the tough choices to pay for our priorities. Instead, we spent $21 plus billion of the so-called ''surplus,'' which we should be saving to protect Social Security, and we failed to enact another round of base closures to help fund needed military readiness improvements. I'm also disappointed that we couldn't make the cuts necessary to find the funds needed to help localities that are struggling to modernize their schools.

Mostly I'm disappointed by the process that led us to an up or down vote, with virtually no debate, on eight separate annual spending bills consolidated into a giant roughly $500 billion package that funds nearly one third of our government. Mr. President, we have a obligation to debate our priorities in the open and make the tough decisions, just like American families are required to do every day.

I believe this process amounts to a dereliction of our duty as representatives of the people. While I appreciate the hard work of the appropriations committees, this all-encompassing appropriations bill has ultimately been the work product of too few people with no realistic opportunity for amendment. Members were left to hope that their interests, and the interests of those they represent, were being advanced. This is heavy burden to ask the appropriations committee and the leadership to bear, and we shouldn't be placing them in that position.

We should be able to debate, and vote, about whether funds should be spent on improving our system of education, and about how they should be spent. We should be able to debate, and vote, about how to remedy racial discrimination in the federal government. And we should able to debate, and vote, about the best way to protect the environment.

But instead of the open debate we need, instead of the careful consideration by each and every member of the public policy consequences that affect our states and nation, we have what amounts to a take-it-or-leave-it appropriations bill that will, again, fund nearly one-third of the federal government.

There's no question, Mr. President, that there are times when a take-it-or-leave it approach is necessary. I support, for example, the base closure process because it is the only mechanism we have devised which forces members of Congress to vote for the politically unpopular closure of unnecessary military facilities. And in order to maintain our role as the world's sole remaining superpower, the need to undertake another round of base closures to increase funding in critical areas will become an imperative. I also support take-it-or-leave-it fast track trade authority to promote free trade because it's the only way other governments will negotiate with us that can achieve meaningful results.

But when it comes to deciding our priorities in federal spending, we need a more open and rational process. Each year that we proceed in this fashion, I become more convinced that we should follow the lead of many states, like my own, Virginia, and undertake biennial budgeting. We should alternate a year of appropriations with a year of oversight. Just today, I signed onto an effort by Senator DOMENICI to institute biennial budgeting.

Due to our failure to pass a budget resolution this year, we have been guided in large part by the balanced budget agreement we reached two years ago. I supported that agreement, because when I came to the Senate in 1988, one of my highest priorities was fighting for fiscal responsibility.

But the problems we've encountered this year in passing our appropriations bills stem directly from the unrealistic goals we established in the balanced budget agreement. We all but ignored the 800 pound gorilla sitting in the room—entitlement spending—and instead focused on reducing our investments through future cuts in discretionary spending. I certainly support weeding out unnecessary discretionary spending, which is why I support the line-item veto, but effectively lowering discretionary caps in real terms, without regard to where those cuts might fall, is not the wisest approach.

The discretionary caps we established in 1997 did not require that tough decisions be made. It merely left to a future Congress the difficult choices in dividing a shrinking pie. We are now that ''future Congress'' and we're having a difficult time reaping what we have sewn. So we cut ''phantom'' future investments to preserve current consumption spending. But to reduce federal spending, and to someday reduce the national debt, we really need to reform entitlement programs. And the longer we wait, the more difficult the task will become.

So while I'm pleased that we reached our destination, I'm extremely disappointed with the road we took to get here. And I hope that during the next Congress, we will work to improve the appropriations process, to get our fiscal work done on time and in the open, and to begin the enormous task of reforming entitlement programs and saving Social Security by making the tough choices.

Mr. President, I reluctantly supported the appropriations bill today because, while the process that produced the bill is a terrible one, the failure to enact the bill would have been far worse. Without this bill there would have been another government shutdown, and the funds wouldn't be there to bolster our military, improve the education of our children, and render long-denied justice for those who've suffered discrimination. Despite all the benefits this bill will provide, however, I strongly object to violating our fiscal discipline and spending $21 billion of the surplus, which will ultimately make the job of saving Social Security more difficult.

Next year, we've got to do better.

With that, Mr. President, I wish our departing colleagues well during our adjournment and I yield the floor.

WORLD AFFAIRS

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, in a few short minutes the curtain will fall on this Congress. Today we complete our legislative business. Yet the business of global peace and national security will continue. Issues such as our global economy, regional stability, nuclear proliferation, proliferation of biological and chemical weapons—just to name a few—determine the condition of this business. It is a business that requires the daily attention of our world leaders, including the President of the United States, including his advisors, and including, yes, this Senate.

Yet today it is claimed that our national attention is not focused on the kinds of affairs that have a huge impact on our national security. It is claimed that our focus is not made on foreign affairs. Even our President, we are told, is not able to devote to foreign policy the level of commitment and leadership our country needs. We are told he is distracted. Some say he was distracted first by a lengthy independent counsel investigation, and now distracted by a congressional impeachment process. We are told he is distracted needlessly from doing the job at hand.

Distracted. That is a word that has gotten quite a bit of mileage lately. It has found its way into our editorial pages and into our Sunday morning talk shows. We are told by the political columnists and TV pundits that all of us were distracted in this country—all of us—by the Starr investigation and the Starr report.

Soon it will be the House impeachment process that draws our attention. We are told that all of us are distracted—the American people, the Congress, and first of all, the President—by all of this. We are told that that distraction is dangerous—dangerous because it could send the wrong signal to a rogue nation or a terrorist group or further complicate an already complex global economic slowdown.

The conclusion that seems to be reached by a number of people is that it is in our best interest, perhaps even our national security interest, to achieve an expedited resolution of the impeachment process, and to do it quickly. Some argue that what we need is an alternative to the impeachment process itself. Some have used the term ''censure'' or ''reprimand.'' I am deeply concerned that the upcoming impeachment process is perceived as a distraction, one that inhibits the kind of vision and strategic planning that we must expect from the leader of the world's sole superpower.

This perception is not lost on those around the globe who have a stake in American leadership. And who doesn't have a stake in American leadership? One European Finance Minister here in Washington for the annual IMF World Bank talks was quoted in the New York Times with the following:

> You might find that the leader of the world's biggest economy could spend more time figuring out ways to save the world economy if he was not trying to save his job.

There is no reason for the President of the United States to be distracted to the point of even remote danger to our national security. In other words, we must not let the perception of distraction dictate the reality. We can and must address our interests here and abroad in the midst of this constitutional impeachment process.

For that reason, we cannot let this perceived distraction in any way undermine our constitutional duties as Members of Congress. Perhaps most important, we cannot let this argument of distraction serve as an excuse to avoid the kind of long-range planning and decisionmaking, the strategic thinking, that we need, and should expect, from our President in regard to the American foreign policy during these very difficult times.

These are difficult times, perhaps the most difficult and the most challenging period in the post-cold-war era. Since the end of the cold war we have experienced a combined period of peace and prosperity probably not seen in this country since the 1920s. However, ours has not been a tranquil peace. The President had to send ground troops to Somalia, Haiti, and most recently to Bosnia. We have taken to the air with swift military action in Iran, Sudan and the hills of Afghanistan. We made a show of force in Iraq, the Taiwan Straits, and recently in Serbia. If the last 7 years have proven one lesson, it is clear that the challenges of peace do not end with its achievement. It must be protected, enforced and advanced with the same vigilance and determination we used in the past to arrive at this point in history. As Henry Kissinger reminded our young allies more than 10 years ago:

> History knows no resting places. What does not advance must sooner or later decline.

The world has not been resting. Indeed, this has been a time of increasing restlessness. At no time since the fall of the Soviet Union has the world needed either individual or collective leadership more than it does today. We are in need of leadership that strives not just for quick fixes but solutions that look beyond the short term. When the world looks for leadership, it can only look one place, and that is to the United States. If the United States does not lead, there is no one else who can lead, no one else who will lead. We must lead.

The issues we face are numerous, complex, interrelated and potentially self-destructive. As we near a new millennium, we find ourselves at a virtual crossroad in so many different areas. We stand on the brink of a nuclear arms race in Asia and the Middle East. Nationalism raised the prospect of war in several regions, from Central Europe to Asia, and most ominous, we face a worldwide economic dislocation, and perhaps a global recession, a global recession that threatens to undermine, if not overwhelm, the progress of the democracies that we have seen springing up in virtually every corner of the world. Each one of these challenges has serious economic and security consequences for our own country. Each one of these issues requires leadership from the United States.

Let me expand briefly on each of these challenges. First, the threat of a nuclear arm race in Asia and the Middle East raises serious questions about the effectiveness of our own unilateral and our multilateral efforts to control the flow of materials, to control the flow of technology and information that is needed to build a nuclear weapon and the means to deliver. In May of this year, as we all recall, India and Pakistan both reinforced their status as nuclear powers. China, as we all know, has gone to great length to advance its own ballistic missile capability. And 3 years after an agreement with the Clinton administration to cease its nuclear weapons program, North Korea may still be moving forward to acquire nuclear weapons. In August, North Korea tested a two-stage ballistic missile that demonstrated its capability to deliver a nuclear payload.

When the Persian Gulf war ended in 1991, both sides agreed to a U.N. Security Council resolution that required the destruction and banned future possession and development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons in Iraq. But time and time again, Iraq has demonstrated its clear resolve never to abide by this resolution. The United Nations demonstrated it has no resolve to insist on compliance.

Iran continues to actively pursue a nuclear weapons program. The capability, if obtained, could fuel a nuclear arms race throughout Asia and the Middle East. Perhaps of greatest concern, nuclear proliferation in this region raises the risk that a nuclear device could end up in the hands of terrorist organizations or other elements hostile to the United States or hostile to the free world.

While these nations have challenged international nuclear nonproliferation policies and agreements, others are asserting nationalism as well as ethnic prerogatives, prerogatives which have tested the United Nations and our NATO allies.

Certainly we can point to the success of the stabilization forces to sustain the Dayton peace accords in Bosnia. However, when will the ultimate end game be in sight? At what point can our troops return home? At what point can real peace sustained by the Bosnians themselves ever be achieved?

While we struggle to find the end game of peace in Bosnia, we are just beginning to make the opening moves and struggle to restore peace in the neighboring Serbian province of