

If nominees were only considered in the order they were nominated, the process would, of course, grind to a halt. We have heard some comments about that. Some people have argued this is a queuing up process; we just queue up whoever is next in line; they should go next on the Senate floor. But we know that cannot happen. If nominees were only considered in the order they were nominated, the process would grind to a halt as more qualified nominees would back up behind questionable nominees.

I believe, if it were not for ORRIN HATCH's efforts, there would have been far fewer judges confirmed during this session of the Congress. But I am also sure that if ORRIN HATCH had not been chairman, other questionable nominations would have been made. Because of this man's integrity, because of this man's honesty, because of this man's proven track record, and because he takes his job so seriously, I am convinced that certain nominations this White House might have considered making simply were never made and were never submitted.

I commend Senator HATCH for his efforts in moving the nominees along, but also for his efforts in doing a thorough and complete job. I am very proud to have ORRIN HATCH as chairman of this committee. We are very honored to have him serve in that capacity.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be able to proceed as in morning business for up to 7 minutes to discuss digital mammography.

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

#### NATIONAL MAMMOGRAPHY DAY

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, we are now in the midst of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and the air has been filled with new and sometimes confusing statistics, new treatment, new research advances, and ever-present warnings about the seriousness of this dreaded disease.

One aspect of this issue that is close to my heart is National Mammography Day—a day to increase awareness of how routine periodic mammography and early diagnosis of breast cancer are responsible for huge increases in the numbers of long-term survivors of this disease.

I note parenthetically that my wife started an organization in my State to increase awareness—it is named after her, not me—called the BIDEN Breast Health Initiative, where she and her

group of advisers bring oncology nurses and oncologists into the local high schools throughout the State to make young women in high school aware of breast health examinations and self-examination because the key to survival is early detection.

Breast cancer is now an illness not to be feared as a death sentence but to be conquered commonly and routinely. This year, National Mammography Day, which I sponsored years ago, will occur on Friday, October 20. As in previous years, the Senate has adopted a resolution that I introduced affirming this designation.

This year's National Mammography Day will see the beginning of a tremendous new advance in early detection of breast cancer—digital mammography. This new technique offers many advantages over standard film-based mammography. From the patient's point of view, the usual 40-minute examination time can be cut in half, and the exposure to radiation can be reduced in almost all instances.

For many women, the mammogram images with digital technology are considerably more precise. The digital technology makes it possible for the radiologist to manipulate the images and to zoom in on questionable areas, thus providing more accurate diagnosis in reducing the need for repeat examinations.

The digital technology does away with the cost and the disposal problems as well of x-ray film.

In addition, the retrieval of prior film for comparison with current images no longer require the time-consuming manual search through an x-ray room.

Finally, by switching to the digital approach, this new technique allows all future advances in digital computer technology to be applied directly to saving women from breast cancer.

It is impossible, in my view, to overstate the importance of this digital technique's adaptability to new technological advances. Those of us old enough to remember how the first personal computers were a huge advance over the slide rule are also aware of how the incredible subsequent advances in computer technology meant that those first PCs were now useful only as doorstops. I look forward to a similarly rapid advance in the new digital technology as it moves into the field of breast cancer diagnosis.

Digital mammography is a revolutionary technology that must be offered to seniors and disabled who obtain their medical care through Medicare. And it should be done as soon as possible. I strongly encourage the Health Care Financing Administration to evaluate this product expeditiously and to set appropriate payment rates under the Medicare program.

What I don't want to see happen—I realize this may seem somewhat premature—is that digital mammography is only available for those who are able to pay, while all those on Medicare or

Medicaid, because the reimbursement cost is not sufficient to cover a digital mammography, will have to settle for what will prove to be an inferior test. The lives of many women who have yet to discover they have breast cancer may hang in the balance.

Therefore, I look forward to HCFA establishing a reasonable price at which reimbursement can be made under Medicare for those women on Medicare or Medicaid who seek a breast examination by use of digital mammography, the new emerging science, rather than one that is film based.

I thank the Chair. I yield the floor.

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. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the conference report to accompany the Interior appropriations bill, and the conference report be considered as having been read.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4578) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate, and agree to the same with an amendment and the Senate agree to the same, signed by all of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of September 29, 2000.)

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I say to those who are interested, we are going to the report, but there is no time agreement to run off. Nobody has given up their rights in that regard, but we are now going to be able to proceed to the conference report, and we will continue to work on the issues that are of interest to Senators.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now be in a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.