

with mesothelioma, based on exposure to asbestos while serving in the U.S. Navy. He underwent a tracheotomy but only survived for just a few months.

Here is a rather famous actor from my generation, Steve McQueen. He died of mesothelioma. It turns out, as a young man he had been exposed to asbestos when he was working odd jobs in construction areas. And McQueen was one of these handsome, dashing heroes on the movie set who ultimately was reduced to a shell of a man by this crippling and debilitating disease.

I tell you this because I want you to understand in the course of the debate that it is not just the blue-collar workers who are the victims—and many of them are—but people who went on to high and lofty positions in life, whether they served in the U.S. Navy or became movie stars or went on to Congress, never knowing they were carrying within their lungs the seeds of their death, the asbestos-related fibers.

When we say we want to make certain that tomorrow's victims are going to be compensated, it is because we do not know how many time bombs are ticking in America today. I do not know if I have been exposed to asbestos. No one listening to this debate can possibly say whether they have been

exposed to asbestos because it was so prevalent and was to be found in almost every place we turned.

So when we talk about having adequate funds in the trust fund for this to be a payout that is worthy of the disease and death that it has caused, I think it is not an unreasonable request.

Many say this debate this week and the vote is really just symbolic. Sadly, too many things around here have just become symbolism. There was no real genuine effort to hammer out a bipartisan agreement, no effort to compromise. We are being given this bill on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Each of us will get up and say a few words about the bill. I obviously oppose it. But I sincerely hope, after it is defeated—I think it will be—we will sit down and talk about a trust fund that is fair to victims, a trust fund that is fair to companies. And I would implore those company representatives who come to see me, and their insurance companies, to come up with a dollar figure that is fair, that gives you some certainty about your future. That is what you tell me over and over is what you want. You want to know what your liability is going to be so you can plan for it. It is the uncertainty of the current sys-

tem, you say, that makes it so difficult to stay in business. I want to work with you on that. I think a lot of the Members of the Senate do, on both sides of the aisle.

But bringing a bill with a take-it-or-leave-it number in it of less than \$124 billion is not an answer.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I want to personally thank you for staying. I did not realize you had a 7 o'clock appointment. I hope I can return the favor to you.

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ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.  
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands adjourned until 9:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:25 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, April 21, 2004, at 9:30 a.m.

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#### NOMINATIONS

Executive nomination received by the Senate April 20, 2004:

##### THE JUDICIARY

VIRGINIA MARIA HERNANDEZ COVINGTON, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA, VICE RALPH W. NIMMONS, JR., DECEASED.