

The text of that Senate amendment is pending at the desk, and I am asking, Will the Senator from Texas accept this amendment?

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, with all due respect to the Senator from Montana, I don't see how we can take part but not all of the tax reconciliation bill. It is time to do away with the AMT.

I appreciate the fact that the Senator from Montana has said he, too, wants to do that and that we need to do it right. To do it right we need to do the whole tax reconciliation bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BAUCUS. I ask the Senator, will she object to an amendment I suggested that the whole AMT be held harmless and that it count under pay-go in terms of the tax, the budget provisions which provide for \$70 billion over the next 5 years? Those are the two conditions.

Mr. KYL. Reserving the right to object to the proposed amendment to the unanimous consent, I believe on our side we would not object to the form of the so-called AMT patch that the Senator from Montana has proposed. Of course, we would object to his counting of that against the reconciliation number, or the so-called pay-go provision.

I guess I ask for an amendment to his proposed amendment which would accept the broader AMT patch, as the Senator first described it, but nothing in addition to that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. As I hear their response, they will not agree to my two suggested conditions and amendments. Therefore, I must respectfully object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. An objection has been heard.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I do hope the Senator from Montana, working with the chairman of the Committee on Finance, will make it a priority early next year to have the tax reconciliation package go through with AMT and with the other tax cuts that would be extended to show the American people they can rely on the tax cuts that have been passed and have helped the economy in its recovery.

It is very important we not leave any question in anyone's mind that the tax cuts that started the economic upturn 2 years ago will be extended. The American people will get to keep the money in their pocketbooks, spend it, and fuel the jobs our economy has produced.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I listened carefully to the Senator from Texas. I think we all agree we have to do something about the AMT. It is a big problem.

I, frankly, tell the Senator I have introduced a bill to totally repeal AMT. It is a pernicious stealth tax and should not be incurred. We would like to work with the Senator to try and find a way to accomplish that.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I sign on to that effort immediately. With this kind of

coalition maybe we can do something very important by doing away with the AMT in this country.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 2164

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, as part of a bipartisan action this morning, Democrats and Republicans agree to send a reconciliation bill back to the House of Representatives for further consideration. Even though the vast majority of this bill hurts working families and the most vulnerable among them, there were a handful of important proposals that we support in that bill that need to be enacted immediately. That is why I am going to be asking unanimous consent in just a moment for the Senate to pass the Health and Welfare Relief Act of Senator STABENOW of Michigan.

This bill prevents the scheduled reduction in Medicare physician payments while holding Part B premiums harmless for beneficiaries. The bill extends TANF and transitional medical assistance, TMA, for an additional year. Finally, the bill provides temporary Medicaid relief to Katrina victims.

We should all be able to agree, even if there are parts of the bill subject to a point of order, parts that will be debated, there are many provisions in that bill that meet pressing needs that are important and need to be addressed on a timely basis. Many of them are taken directly from the conference report my friends across the aisle have just supported. I hope we can take up this bill and pass it today.

Therefore, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 2164, the Health and Welfare Relief Act of 2005, introduced earlier by Senators STABENOW, REID, BAUCUS, and others; that the bill be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table without any intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I object.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I have a series of judicial nominations that have been cleared on both sides. I ask unanimous consent the Senate immediately proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations on today's Executive Calendar: Nos. 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 471, and 472. I further ask unanimous consent that the nominations be confirmed, the motions 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.

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

THE JUDICIARY

Joseph Frank Bianco, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

Timothy Mark Burgess, of Alaska, to be United States District Judge for the District of Alaska.

Gregory F. Van Tatenhove, of Kentucky, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

Eric Nicholas Vitaliano, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of New York.

Kristi Dubose, of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of Alabama.

W. Keith Watkins, of Alabama, to be United States District Judge for the Middle District of Alabama.

Virginia Mary Kendall, of Illinois, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Michael Joseph Copps, of Virginia, to be a Member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of five years from July 1, 2005. (Reappointment)

Deborah Taylor Tate, of Tennessee, to be a Member of the Federal Communications Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2007.

NOMINATION OF GREG VAN TATENHOVE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, if I may, Calendar No. 459, that I just read and was just confirmed by the Senate, is a former member of my staff, Greg Van Tatenhove, who is, at the moment, the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky. He is an outstanding lawyer. He will be a fine addition to the Federal judiciary.

As a former staff member of mine, I say to my colleagues, you have done a great thing in confirming him. He will be a distinguished member of the Federal judiciary.

Mr. President, I strongly support the nomination of Greg Van Tatenhove to the U.S. District Court in the Eastern District of Kentucky.

Greg Van Tatenhove has been an outstanding public servant for the better part of 20 years. I first met Greg when he was a young aide to a Member of Congress. He later joined my legislative staff, where he performed superbly before leaving to attend law school.

Greg distinguished himself in law school by being chosen as an Articles Editor of the Kentucky Law Journal and receiving a citation for Excellence in Oral Advocacy in the Moot Court Program. After graduation from law school, Greg spent a year as clerk to U.S. District Court Judge Eugene Siler.

Greg was then chosen to join the Federal Programs Branch of the Department of Justice through the Attorney General's Honors Program. He was one of only eleven young attorneys to be chosen nationwide out of hundreds of applicants for this prestigious branch. This branch is well known for handling especially complex and precedent-setting legal cases on behalf of the United States. During his 4 years