

generation, looking for an impression of the United States, doesn't come up with the wrong impression.

As we consider what we face today in the closing weeks of this session, let's make sure we do stand together in a bipartisan fashion for defending America as our homeland. Let's put the resources in place to make us safer. We continue to stand behind our troops, but let us not be so bull-headed that we won't consider any change in tactic or strategy that might start to bring our troops home safely, with their mission truly accomplished this time, and let's not give up on Afghanistan. We cannot allow the Taliban to have a resurgence of power and give al-Qaida another place to gather forces to launch against the world. That is our mission. That is our responsibility.

As we gathered yesterday, it was a reminder that at one time not that long ago we stood together in that effort.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

SECURITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR EVERY PORT ACT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4954, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4954) to improve maritime and cargo security through enhanced layered defenses, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Stevens (for DEMINT) amendment No. 4921, to establish a unified national hazard alert system.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, is the pending business the DeMint amendment?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Yes, it is.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 4929

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside, and I send an amendment to the desk.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Washington [Mrs. MURRAY] proposes an amendment numbered 4929.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 4929

(Purpose: To extend the merchandise processing fees, and for other purposes)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. _____. COBRA FEES.

(a) EXTENSION OF FEES.—Subparagraphs (A) and (B)(i) of section 13031(j)(3) of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (19 U.S.C. 58c(j)(3)(A) and (B)(i)) are amended by striking “2014” each place it appears and inserting “2015”.

(b) USE OF FEES.—Paragraph (2) of section 13031(f) of such Act (19 U.S.C. 58c(f)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following: “The provisions of the first and second sentences of this paragraph limiting the purposes for which amounts in the Customs User Fee Account may be made available shall not apply with respect to amounts in that Account during fiscal year 2015.”.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, this morning the Senate is considering a very important bill, the port security bill, which many Members have come to the floor to talk about. I am proud to be an original sponsor of this bill and have been working on it for a number of years; in fact, since five years ago, after September 11, when I was the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee chair. At that time I began to bring stakeholders together to talk about how we can make sure the cargo containers that are coming into this country are secure. It is a very complex issue. It is very difficult to do. We have a tremendous balancing act of making sure that cargo containers are safe when they come into our ports but also that we don't halt our economy as we move forward with this initiative.

I have been very proud to work with a number of Senators in getting us to this point, and I am hoping this bill will move forward in an expeditious manner. Obviously, there will be a number of amendments that come before us, and I look forward to working with other Senators on both sides of the aisle to move them forward.

The bill that is now before the Senate has one major hole. The original bill we have been working on with all of the committees contained a funding source for this bill that some Members had some concerns about. The original bill that we offered had tariff fees as the funding source. The Finance Committee has objected to that. They were

concerned about that. I understand that concern. Because of that objection, the bill that has come before us is an important bill, but it lacks the ability to put in place a secure system. It is essentially an empty shell without a funding source.

That is why I have sent to the desk right now an amendment we have been working on together with a number of people to make sure this bill is not just about rhetoric but actually has the funding behind it. If we pass this bill without funding it, we will not have done our job. The amendment I sent to the desk extends two existing Customs user fees for 1 year to fund this bill. Those are fees that are collected today that are going to expire, and all we are doing is extending the collection for an additional year.

The fees we are extending are the merchandise processing fee and the passenger conveyance fee. Extending those for just 1 year will produce close to \$2.5 billion in revenue and will importantly provide a dedicated funding stream to pay for the new security initiatives authorized in this bill. By voting for this amendment, this Senate will put money behind the rhetoric of port security. This Senate will put money behind the rhetoric. That is absolutely critical in today's world.

I sit on the Appropriations Committee. I sit on the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee. If we do not put a dedicated source of funding behind this bill, we will simply put port security in contention with all of the other functions of the Department of Homeland Security. We will be looking at Coast Guard money, FBI money, all of the important functions that we need to have within this bill, and port security will be just another issue that doesn't get funded. That is why this funding amendment is so absolutely critical.

The funding for this amendment is going to be used to hire new Customs and Border Protection officers. We can't just simply require our Customs and border officials to do more. They are important positions. Their eyes on the containers and their eyes on the tracking, their eyes on the containers as they are loaded and secured is absolutely critical. Without putting new Customs and Border Patrol agents in place to do the functions we are asking for in this bill, we simply will be sending an empty promise to America.

The funding also will improve the tracking and data collection of every container coming into our ports. That is essential funding which will make sure what we put into those containers is sealed, that someone is watching to make sure they haven't been tampered with, that no one has gotten into them, and that those containers have not gone someplace they are not supposed to. Just putting a tracking seal on it isn't going to make sure we know a container has not been tampered with. We need the personnel in place to do