plans that lowering the maximum provider tax rate would make it harder for them to treat Medicaid recipients as States had to make up for lost revenue. This provision protects health care access for some of the most vulnerable in society.

While this legislation does not go as far as some would like, it accomplishes the goal of helping ensure the continuation of critical health care policies and programs.

I was disturbed when I heard one of my colleagues refer to this bill as an example of bad legislative practice. The critics imply that political defeat was somehow connected with this kind of legislative practice. With all due respect, these criticisms could not be more off the mark. This legislation was based on popular expiring provisions within the jurisdiction of the tax writing committees, provisions that were meant to expire so they are reviewed occasionally so we know the best possible tax policy is being pursued by the Congress of the United States.

The legislative business in this bill then is the people's business. Throughout the year, I pressed repeatedly to finish these matters. I was thwarted by others who sought to leverage these items for other purposes. I firmly believe that if we had dealt with these issues in a timely fashion, as was planned last May to do it in the pensions bill, we would have been rewarded politically.

We are where we are, but we are here because of politics on both sides of the aisle getting in the way of processing these items in a timely fashion.

I agree with the critics that this kind of omnibus bill is not the best way to finish this legislative business. The critics should know that the tax-writing committees had no choice.

In conclusion, I hope my colleagues will support this bill—a bill that should have been law last summer—to finally get it done to save the taxpayers and 19 million people from being adversely affected.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TELEPHONE RECORDS AND PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT OF 2006

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on the Judiciary be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4709 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4709) to amend title 18, United States Code, to strengthen protections for law enforcement officers and the public by providing criminal penalties for the fraudulent acquisition or unauthorized disclosure of phone records.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

TELEPHONE RECORDS AND PRIVACY PROTECTION ACT

Mr. SUNUNU: Mr. President, I support passage of H.R. 4709, the Telephone Records and Privacy Protection Act of 2006. This bill gets to the center of the practice known as ''pretexting''—a fraudulent technique to obtain access to confidential communications records—by imposing Federal criminal penalties on perpetrators.

There is one point that I would like clarification and assurance. This bill adopts a very broad definition of an ''IP-enabled voice service.'' That definition is broader than just replacements for traditional telephone service, and sweeps in many potential new applications. In my view this definition would be inappropriate in many other contexts. For instance, the Commerce Committee crafted a narrower definition when considering S. 1063, the IP Enabled Voice Communications and Public Safety Act.

It is my understanding—and I ask if the distinguished chairman shares this understanding—that this broad definition applies only to this bill, and is not meant to be an indication of the Congress's view of the appropriate scope of voice-over-Internet-Protocol or VoIP services for other purposes or to serve as precedent for future action. It is certainly not meant to suggest that the FCC adopt this definition as it considers the appropriate views on VoIP services. Does the distinguished chairman agree with my understanding?

Mr. STEVENS. Yes. The definition of ''IP enabled voice service'' in this bill is not meant to be the universal definition of ''IP enabled voice service'' to be used in future legislation that involves other contexts. And, it should not be interpreted as a signal to the FCC that it should alter or change the definitions of Interconnected or IP enabled voice services that it has used in other contexts.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and that any statements relating to the measure be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 4709) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I know a number of our colleagues are wondering what time bills are going to be arriving from the House. I believe in a little bit, in the next 30 minutes or so, things will pick up and we will begin voting. I will come back and address this issue once things become a little bit clearer.

TRIBUTE TO ERIC UELAND

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I wish to pause for a moment to pay respect to one man, Eric Ueland, my chief of staff. Tucked away in a corner of Eric Ueland's office is a well-worn copy of the book ''Master of the Senate.'' This comes as no surprise to those of us who know him. In fact, my staff used to joke that he was reading his own biography.

Eric is gifted with a passion for history, a thirst for knowledge, and a high reverence for the Senate. These talents have made him a uniquely capable adviser and leader in the majority leader's office.

He contextualizes every Senate debate, recalls appropriate precedent, and draws parallels to moments in history. A nameplate is discretely displayed on his desk, and the name it bears: ''Information.''

As the press corps knows, information is his trade and the enigmatic quote his trademark. How do you pay tribute to a man who is the first to know of Britney Spear's pregnancy and Don Rumsfeld's resignation?

Eric delights in a secret and encyclopedic knowledge of popular culture. Copies of People magazine and the entertainment gossip columns are strewn in the back seat of his classic car. And he knows everything about the media. Yet he doesn't have home Internet access or even cable TV. How does he do that?

Eric finds unique and, some would say, unusual pleasure in memorizing the complex rules, the arcane precedents, and early history of the Senate. ''Chart 4—mere child's play.'' You would expect he would know that combining his customary bow ties and beards could be a violation of the Senate Code of Conduct.

But his extraordinary talents are not what I have come to respect most about Eric Ueland. He is a man of deep humility, a man of quiet faith, a man of sterling character. He is a person true to his convictions, both political and personal. He has maintained his integrity in the rough and tumble of politics. His standards are high.

I know of no staffer who has had a more profound regard for the institution, our institution, the institution of the Senate. And, in turn, Eric has earned the gratitude and respect of so many who have had the honor to serve here. Eric came to the Senate 17 years ago and worked for Senator Don Nickles at the Republican Policy Committee and then as his chief of staff in the assistant Republican leader's office.

Senator Nickles writes:

I have had the pleasure of working with hundreds of individuals throughout my Senate career and Eric stands out in many ways. He is an exceptionally intelligent individual with unequaled knowledge of the Senate. His knowledge of Senate history, rules, process and customs, as well as the individuals who have served in the body for the last couple of decades, is remarkable. He has devoted much of his life to the Senate and helped make the Senate function much more effectively. He was a tremendous asset to me as well as a valued friend.