

There have been a number of amendments filed and that is very good. We are looking at a number of them closely to see if we can schedule a vote on one of them sometime this morning.

Looking at the schedule, we are going to have a couple of votes Friday morning, and everyone should understand that. The only way I can see that we will not have votes Friday morning is if we can figure out a way to finish minimum wage on Thursday. That is certainly possible. I am impressed with the seriousness of the amendments that have been offered. To this point, five amendments have been offered, and we certainly could complete this bill this week if we put our minds to it. I hope we can do that. If we cannot, it will spill over into next week. I am not sure that is good; we have so many things that we have to do. I have had a number of conversations with the Republican leader and we are going to have debate on Iraq. We are going to make that as meaningful as possible. We are going to work together to see if we can limit the subject matter of the debate on Iraq. We hope we can do that. We also have other things that are facing us down the road, not the least of which is stem cell research and negotiation on Medicare. But more importantly, we have to make sure the Government has money after February 15. That is something, again, I have had a number of conversations on with the distinguished Republican leader. The Appropriations Committee, with Democrats and Republicans, has worked very well on that. Senator COCHRAN has been fully engaged and all of the subcommittee chairs and ranking members have been engaged.

I think we are at a point where we have a pretty good idea of the subject matter of the CR. There will be no earmarks, zero, not a single earmark on the CR. That is what we have agreed upon. Senator McCONNELL agrees with that, as I do, and the two appropriating bodies agree with that. So we are going to move forward on the CR. It is not going to be fun. I have been an appropriator here for many years, as has Senator McCONNELL. We like to do the regular process, but in my opinion we cannot get to that unless we get the CR out of the way and work on the budget and get the appropriations bills done.

It is my goal to work very hard to get the appropriations bills done this year. It has been done before and we can do it again. It has been done under Republican leadership and under Democratic leadership in the Senate. We have been working on it on a bipartisan basis. I think we can get it done.

As a reminder, first-degree amendments must be filed at the desk by 2:30 p.m. this afternoon.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

CLOTURE

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, let me focus my remarks on the second cloture vote that will occur tomorrow. Were cloture to be invoked on what is generally referred to as a "clean minimum wage," the bipartisan compromise that has been put together between Senator BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY and Senator ENZI and others would be wiped out. So I think it is extremely important to mention to Members, those who would like to continue to go forward on a bipartisan basis, if cloture were to be invoked, that would eliminate the possibility of going forward on a bipartisan basis on minimum wage. I hope cloture will not be invoked—the second cloture vote would not be invoked, so that we can proceed with the substitute, which seems to enjoy broad, bipartisan support in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the first half of the time under the control of the minority and the second half of the time under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, it is always an exciting time when a new Congress takes its oath of office and the President comes to Capitol Hill to give his State of the Union Address. It is a time when our Nation takes its pulse and checks its health.

As we contemplate what the President might say and the agenda that this Congress might pursue, it occurs to me that this is a good time to express what I hope will be a priority of this Congress, and it relates to health.

I think, undoubtedly, the President will focus some of his remarks on Iraq. That continues as a major focus of public attention and a legitimate cause of its concern. But I think the American people would also very much appreciate our turning our focus to home, on things that affect the lives of everyday Americans and their families and on their individual concerns.

There is probably no greater individual concern than health care. I do hope the President will address health care because I know moms and dads are addressing it every day.

There are three issues I would like to speak to as it relates to health care, to

what I hope will be a focus of the 110th Congress.

When I think of health care in this Congress, the issues that come to mind are stem cells, mental health, and the uninsured. When I think of stem cells, I immediately think of some of the most loathesome diseases that affect humankind. Obviously, Parkinson's disease, which has certainly taken its toll in my family; Alzheimer's, which afflicts so many of our seniors and puts incredible burdens upon their caregivers; and diabetes. It is heartrending to meet with children afflicted with diabetes at an early age, that directs them down a path of lifelong suffering and dependence upon injections.

I think of cardiovascular disease. Heart disease is probably our greatest killer as a people. Then, of course, there are those who, through accidents or other causes, suffer spinal cord injuries. All of these terrible afflictions have mystified our best and brightest minds in the scientific community, and yet stem cell research, in all of its forms—embryonic, adult stem cells, and some of the new breakthroughs that have been discovered through amniotic fluid—all hold great promise.

It does seem to me that one of the first steps of this Congress ought to be to return to this debate. The time is now to make progress. The time is now for us as a people to have the vast majority view heard and enacted into law. It is important for the Federal Government to show up to work on this issue. It is important because the Federal Government can provide the seed money. The Federal Government can provide the moral boundaries. The Federal Government can help to provide world leadership on this important biomedical ethical issue.

So as we enter this Congress, I do hope that by large majorities in the House and the Senate, we will pass embryonic stem cell research and further those other avenues in stem cell research that hold out so much promise. I have always believed that an ethic of life includes concern for the living as well. I believe it is time for us to unshackle the hands of our scientists so that we can unlock with the key of science these great mysteries.

Next, Mr. President, I speak of mental health. It has always been troubling to me, but especially in light of my family's history, that physical health is held at one level but mental health has always occupied a subordinate level. Because of the embarrassment and then the shame that attends mental health, a great stigma has attached to this issue, and because stigma attaches to it, society has caused those who suffer debilitating mental health issues not to seek treatment or to hide their afflictions. Yet it seems to me obvious that such issues as schizophrenia, bipolar condition, postpartum depression—it is hard to imagine anyone in this modern day and age who says these are not legitimate afflictions of

humankind. And if they are legitimate, then the Congress of the United States should begin to treat them as legitimate.

It seems to me that in all of its manifestations, these biases against mental health need to be removed. We find them in our statutes relative to Medicaid and Medicare. When it comes to copays, when it comes to reimbursement, the Federal Government has a prejudice against mental health. Why would that be? If you do not have mental health but you have physical health, you do not have health. The mind and body interact in a very direct way, and both are necessary if the American people are to have health.

I do believe the Congress needs to address the biases against mental health. I do believe we should enact mental health parity in insurance law. It is a source of pride to me that my own State of Oregon this past legislative session enacted mental health parity, so that on January 1 of this year, all Oregonians woke up to know that as a matter of law their health care covers mental health as well. And we should do no less as the Federal Government. We need to change this aspect. We need to change it in Medicaid, Medicare, in insurance law, in teaching parity in our medical schools, in our pharmaceutical policies—all of these things must elevate mental health to the same level as physical health.

Another part of mental health, in my own calculation, is a very personal passion of mine; that is, the reauthorization and full funding of the Garrett Lee Smith Memorial Act. There is a plague in this country, an epidemic, if you will, of youth suicide. It begins as depression and sometimes leads to the most tragic of results. It is my hope that this 110th Congress, the House and the Senate, united, will reauthorize and fully fund this great and important act. It is not the whole answer, but it is an important beginning because it incentivizes States to enact prevention and intervention programs—not just States but tribes, colleges, universities—to be able to respond to this issue which is costing the lives of over 3,000 young people a year. I hope we will do that. It is one of the actions the Congress before took which was truly bipartisan, which truly has made a difference in saving hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lives.

Finally, let me speak to access. I think it is a source of some national shame that 46 million Americans are uninsured. It is true that probably half of that number are uninsured by choice. They tend to be young people who would want to spend their money in other ways. But of that 46 million, 9 million of these are children, and that is a national shame.

I believe we need to reauthorize the SCHIP program. SCHIP, along with Medicaid, is one of the central strands in our public safety net. I believe we need to do this because of the 6 million children who are insured by this, some

3 million more are eligible but are not enrolled.

I believe, in addition to this, we need to look at all the good ideas we can find in this Congress to provide insurance coverage for the uninsured. Senator WYDEN of Oregon and I have a proposal for universal catastrophic coverage. We believe that, at least in America, if you lose your health, you should not lose your home.

Mr. President, I believe my time is up. I thank you for the time, and I focus our Nation's attention on a most pressing and urgent family and national urgency, which is health care.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

WASTEFUL SPENDING AMENDMENT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I rise in support of the amendment pending on the floor, the second look at wasteful spending amendment, otherwise known as the Gregg amendment, after the distinguished Senator from New Hampshire. The truth is, we might call this really the Daschle amendment or the Byrd amendment or the Levin amendment or Murray or Dodd, other Senators who have supported virtually this same proposal on previous occasions. I will explain that more in just a moment.

If we look at this amendment, compared with one offered by the former majority leader, Senator Tom Daschle, when the Democrats were, again, in leadership, we can see how the Gregg amendment corresponds virtually, precisely with the proposal made by then-Democratic majority leader Tom Daschle. It established a fast-track congressional process for consideration of Presidential rescissions. It required congressional affirmation of rescissions. It allowed the President to suspend funds for a maximum of 45 days. It does not permit the President to re-submit rescissions once rejected by the Congress. It allowed rescissions of discretionary funding and targeted tax benefits. It did not allow rescissions of new mandatory programs. That is one area where this differs from the Daschle amendment. The Gregg amendment would permit rescission of new mandatory spending.

I interject, if we are going to get a handle on runaway Federal spending, it is not going to be in discretionary spending alone. We have actually—contrary, perhaps, to popular perception—done a pretty good job limiting non-defense, nonhomeland security discretionary spending. But to paraphrase, that is not where the money is. Where the money is actually in mandatory spending—in entitlement spending, such as Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

So the Gregg amendment quite appropriately addresses rescission of new, not existing, new mandatory spending programs. We can see here that in vir-

tually every respect except two—the one I just mentioned and that only four rescission packages would be permitted annually under the Gregg amendment—there is virtual identity between these two amendments.

Why is this so important? I have to tell my colleagues that as I travel around my State of Texas, there are issues people talk to me about, as with other Members. They are concerned about our lack of border security. They are concerned, obviously, about the war on terror and the way forward in Iraq. But one of the really top three issues that my constituents talk to me about is Federal spending. They worry about the deficit. They worry about the long-term obligation under Social Security and Medicare, a bill that is going to be paid by our children and grandchildren, about the morality of basically putting this burden on their backs in the future. So what this amendment does, this second look at wasteful spending, it allows us to cut out some of the pork, cut out some of the waste in a way that I think responds to this very realistic concern by the American people.

You will note that in 1995, when Senator Daschle offered this amendment, this was, of course, during the Clinton administration—I want to note that—we had 21 Democratic Senators—virtually all of whom, I guess, are still in the Senate—who supported that Daschle amendment. My hope is they would vote for cloture so we can have an up-or-down vote on this Gregg amendment, which, as I showed a moment ago, is virtually identical.

Let's look at some of the quotes back then by distinguished Members of the Senate in support of the Daschle amendment. My hope would be that Senators would remember, perhaps have their recollection refreshed by this exercise in a way that would encourage them to have at least an open mind and possibly even embrace the Gregg amendment today as they did the Daschle amendment back in 1995.

Senator BYRD, the distinguished chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, someone who respects congressional prerogative and understands the separation of powers perhaps better than anybody else in this body, said:

I have no problem with giving the President another opportunity to select from appropriations bills certain items which he feels for his political or for whatever reasons, I have no problem with his sending them to the two Houses and our giving him a vote.

That was on March 22, 1995.

Then there is this comment by Senator FEINSTEIN, the distinguished Senator from California. She said:

Really, what a line-item veto is all about is deterrence, and that deterrence is aimed at the porkbarrel. I sincerely believe that a line-item veto will work.

What we are talking about, this so-called rescission provision, is in essence a version of the line-item veto, something Presidents have called for in