

this long to confirm an Attorney General. SCHIP is a good example. They knew that was going to be vetoed. It was vetoed. They had the veto override vote and it was sustained. So they came up with a new SCHIP bill which actually spent more money but covered fewer children than the original bill sent to the President.

My point is, many of these initiatives that are being undertaken by our colleagues on the Democratic side are designed to prove a political point, not to solve problems. The American people want us to solve problems, which is precisely why the approval ratings of the Congress are so low.

The Labor-HHS appropriations bill which was passed by this body yesterday is \$9 billion over budget. There are 33 States with operating budgets that are lower than the \$9 billion in over-spending contained in the Labor, HHS, and Education appropriations bill that passed the Senate yesterday.

These are some pretty staggering numbers when we think about it. We have \$3 gasoline, oil at \$93 a barrel, and no Energy bill. Again, it is bogged down in the Congress, languishing because of the political bickering going on back and forth.

We have the alternative minimum tax that is going to kick in this year. Only 54 days until 2008, and we still don't have a solution to that. On the other hand, in terms of numbers, we have had 57 votes in the Congress, the House and the Senate, on Iraq. I have to say, because I serve on the Armed Services Committee, what is going on in Iraq and our national security, there is nothing more important when it comes to the role of Government than to protect the American people. But there has been a lot of political debate about Iraq over the course of the past 10 months, much of which was designed to promote showdowns with the President, to create political opportunity for Members on the other side to earn points with liberal interest groups. That is 57 votes on Iraq in the last 10 months at the same time that we don't have an Energy bill, at the same time that we haven't passed a single appropriations bill, that we haven't confirmed an Attorney General, that we have FISA legislation, the lack of passage of which is inhibiting our ability to catch bad people and terrorists trying to do harm to the American people.

These are all numbers and facts that I believe the American people want to see this Congress address, rather than engaging in political arguments that are designed for no other reason than to prove a political point or to embarrass the administration or to satisfy a liberal special interest group.

I submit we still have time. We don't have a lot of time, but it would behoove the Congress and the Democratic leadership in the Senate and House to work together to try to solve the problems the American people care about, rather than engaging in more political arguments, rather than sending the

President bills the Congress knows he is going to veto.

Let's get after some of these more important issues, such as the high cost of energy, passing appropriations bills that control Federal spending and I think adhere to the American people's sense of fiscal responsibility and a belief that the American Congress ought to be responsive to the American people by being responsible in the use of their tax dollars.

So I see our time is winding up in terms of morning business, and I know the WRDA bill is pending before the Senate. We are going to take that up. But I simply hope in the remaining days of this calendar year, 2007, we can actually do something that will create a record of accomplishment for the American people rather than continuing to have the Democrat majority in the Senate trying to make political statements and score political points.

With that, Mr. President, I yield my time.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry: What is the time situation now for the body?

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator will withhold, morning business is closed.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2007—VETO

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the veto message on H.R. 1495, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Veto message to accompany H.R. 1495, a bill to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the vote on the veto message occur at 11:45, with half of that debate time equally divided between Senators BOXER and INHOFE and the remaining half under the control of the Republican leader.

This has been approved by both sides. The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, if I could, I will take a couple minutes at this time.

I have been watching the Congress pretty closely now for 35 years as a Member of the House and the Senate, and I have been involved in end of sessions 19 times in the Senate, but I must say, it is about as big a mess as I have ever seen. We are not going to have a single appropriations bill down to the President signed for the whole year, even by the end of this week.

The bill that is on the way, the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, which is \$9.8 billion above what the President asked for and has lots of problems, is going to be vetoed, and will be back up here next week. Hopefully, we will find a way before this week is out to pass the Defense appropriations bill so our men and women will know they are going to get the assistance they need, the equipment they need, the protections they need. That would be the first appropriations bill to get to the President that he might actually sign.

It is true right across the board. All year long, it has been about political positioning. It has all been about fighting over Iraq. There are so few things where we have come together and worked together and gotten something produced.

Thank goodness a couple weeks ago we did the Amtrak authorization bill. I have urged, all year long: Let's quit finding issues we can fight over, and let's find some issues we can work together on, get bipartisan agreements on that would help the American people.

I believe, actually, the WRDA bill, the Water Resources Development Act, is one of the few things we can look at and say we did something good for our country and for our constituents this year. It is bipartisan. It has been laboriously developed over the last 5 or 6 years—a long time coming.

It is one of the few areas where we actually do something constructive, where you can see physically something the Federal Government has done. It creates jobs. It provides safety and protection, safe drinking water. It is one of the only bills that I think actually produces a positive result.

I have always been proud of the Corps of Engineers because the Corps of Engineers is one of the few Government entities that actually does something, produces something—something you can see and feel and helps the quality of life. We are always involved in social welfare programs, giveaway programs, and we are always trying to find a way to raise taxes and do things that are not good for our constituents. This one actually does something good.

Sure, there are disagreements. There are some programs in here that probably are not sufficiently justified. I know from past experience, almost every President has opposed this type of bill. I remember Jimmy Carter did not like the Corps of Engineers. We had a fight with him over river projects, water projects, the same thing with George H.W. Bush, the same thing with Bill Clinton. He had people in his administration, in the Office of Management and Budget—oh, they didn't like water resources projects.

Here it is again. The President has vetoed this bill. So I must say, I am not boasting about it, but I have no qualms about saying the President's views notwithstanding, I will vote to override his veto on this legislation.