where the disease occurs in our country. It was objected to. That is too bad.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

POLITICAL EXERCISES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, what we are going to witness for the next 3 hours is the kind of thing that gives the public such a low impression of Congress. Looking at the new Gallup poll that just came out, the President has a 37-percent approval rating—certainly not anything to applaud if you are a Republican. But the Democratic Congress has a 22-percent approval rating, 15 percent below the President. Why is that? I think it is because the American public thought they sent us here to legislate. Obviously, in a body such as the Senate, in order to legislate you have to do things on a bipartisan basis. We are very different from the House of Representatives. We are actually beginning to make progress on the farm bill, although I must say we have only had one vote this entire week. It is Wednesday morning, and we have had one vote. The farm bill now is ready to move forward, and we are taking, at the insistence of the majority, 3 hours this morning to finger-point and make excuses and try to explain to the American people why we haven't been able to do enough on a bipartisan basis to achieve anything on their behalf.

It is now December 12, nearly a quarter of the way through the fiscal year. To date, we have had only one spending bill signed into law. The troops in the field haven't been funded. The Energy bill is still pending. Updates to the laws governing our terrorist surveillance program so that we can track terrorists and prevent attacks haven't been addressed.

As I indicated, we are spending 3 hours this morning engaged in what will essentially be a finger-pointing exercise instead of making further progress on the farm bill, which is poised to be completed if we will just stay on it. Christmas is less than 2 weeks away. You would think there would be a flurry of activity on the floor. You would think we would be doing everything possible so we could finish our work before New Year's Eve. But, as I indicated earlier, so far this week we have had one vote, and this is Wednesday.

Surely the majority has scheduled votes all day today; right? Wrong. We will not even consider the pending business, the farm bill, until at least this afternoon. And why do we have to wait until this afternoon? Is it so we can spend the morning addressing tax relief or the cost of gasoline or our troops and veterans? None of the above. We are gathered here this morning so the majority can spend hours of valuable floor time trying to score political points instead of trying to make law.

As I indicated earlier, they have set aside 3 hours to try to show that this session's very limited accomplishments haven't been their fault, that the endless investigations and midnight Iraq votes were not the cause. They have set aside this time as if magically in the next 3 hours they will somehow pass the litany of things they have not been able to accomplish over the past 3 months.

Let's not waste even more time relearning the lessons of the past. Partisanship and refusal to work with the minority may get you a headline, but it won't get bills signed into law. If you are serious about accomplishments, let's get back to work. Let's work together so that instead of pointing fingers, this Congress can actually point to some accomplishments. It is December 12. There is simply no time for political exercises on the Senate floor. We simply don't have the luxury of putting off our fundamental responsibilities any longer.

If the majority is serious about finishing our work and not merely about making a political point, they will not object to the following unanimous consent request which I will now make.

I ask unanimous consent that we return to the pending business of the farm bill in order to make further progress on this important measure.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period of morning business for 3 hours, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees and with Senators permitted to speak up to 10 minutes each, with the majority controlling the first half and Republicans controlling the final half.

The assistant majority leader.

OBSTRUCTION BY FILIBUSTER

Mr. DURBIN. Isn't this perfect? The minority leader on the Republican side comes to the floor, lamenting the fact that we aren't moving to the farm bill immediately. I think there is something in the water in the U.S. Capitol that leads to political amnesia. The Senator from Kentucky has obviously forgotten that we sat on the floor and languished for more than 2 weeks because the Republicans presented us with 200 amendments to the farm bill and wouldn't narrow them down to a reasonable number we could consider. We sat here for 2 straight weeks and did nothing. Now the Senator from Kentucky has great angst over the thought that we might even talk about anything else before we return to the farm bill at noon.

Trust me, we will return at noon. We should have finished it weeks ago. We could have finished it weeks ago if the Senator from Kentucky had gathered his Republican conference together and said: Please, once every 5 years we consider a farm bill. We don't consider amendments of everything under the sun—the Tax Code, medical malpractice. We focus on the farm bill, on nutrition and rural development and agricultural programs. If he had done that, if he had gathered his Republicans together and asked for a modicum of cooperation, we would have finished the farm bill weeks ago.

Now he comes to the Senate floor with a heavy heart that we might spend the next 2½ hours talking about something other than the farm bill. He has forgotten, obviously, what has transpired. But the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD tells the story. The record is there for America to see.

This Republican minority has taken us to a new place in the Senate. They have broken a record. I don't think another Congress will be able to match what they have been able to do, at least I hope not. There is something in the Senate called a filibuster. A filibuster is a time-honored tradition where an individual Senator can virtually stop debate on a measure by standing and speaking. Most people are familiar with it because of the popular movie of 50 or 60 years ago, ''Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.'' Jimmy Stewart stood at his desk, this brandnew Senator, fighting against the odds and against the establishment until he crumbled in exhaustion. His filibuster ended as he was physically spent. That was an image emblazoned on the minds of many across America of a Senate where one person can stand and fight to the bitter end.

There is some truth to that movie. In a filibuster, any Senator can take the floor on an amendable measure and hold the floor as long as they are physically able to do so. The record may be held by Senator Thurmond of South Carolina. If I am not mistaken, he spent some 24 hours once in the midst of one of these filibusters.

I remember reading an account, incidentally. The first man I ever worked for in the Senate was a Senator from Illinois named Paul Douglas. They knew Strom Thurmond was going to initiate this filibuster. They also knew they might be able to end the filibuster early if he had to take a break for a trip to the restroom. They knew Senator Thurmond was partial to orange juice, and they brought a pitcher of orange juice on the Senate floor next to his desk, hoping he would drink it and