

weekend because the markets now expect us to do something. And I want to say to the assistant leader, to our minority leader, and to others who have been on the floor that I certainly stand ready and available to work with others, to work with people on both sides of the aisle and in both bodies to make sure we solve this problem, we solve it prudently, and we do so in a timeframe that allows our financial markets to get back to somewhat normal operations as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### TRIBUTE TO RETIRING SENATORS

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I wish to make a few comments about some of our departing colleagues who will not be joining us for the next session of Congress. They are great colleagues, people whom I have enjoyed working with in my 3½ years here in the Senate. They include Senator ALLARD from Colorado, Senator PETE DOMENICI from New Mexico, Senator JOHN WARNER from Virginia, Senator CHUCK HAGEL from Nebraska, and Senator LARRY CRAIG from Idaho.

A quick word first about my colleague and the senior Senator from Colorado, Mr. WAYNE ALLARD. He has served the State of Colorado with distinction. In the days before he came to the Senate, now almost 12 years ago, he also served the people of the State of Colorado in the general assembly. I had the opportunity then to watch him work on matters ranging from education to protecting-the-water issues in the State of Colorado. I know well that he has been a strong voice for the State of Colorado and know that his services here, including the services of his acting as a veterinarian for colleagues like Senator KENNEDY and his dogs, are something that will be missed. I have enjoyed very much the time I have spent working with him on matters of mutual and common interest to the State of Colorado. I wish him well.

PETE DOMENICI from New Mexico, the senior Senator from New Mexico, is one of the Senators here who comes from the same place my family came from many generations ago.

His constant reminding me of the beauty of the Land of Enchantment and his work on behalf of securing an energy future for America is second to none. We will be missing him also in terms of his major contributions to the Energy Committee. He also has done a lot with respect to a whole host of other issues, too many to mention, but

in particular I want to mention his work on the mental health parity initiative which would not have happened without his leadership. We were successful in getting mental health parity in legislation we passed in the Senate yesterday, and it was in large part because of his passion and willingness to work hard on a bipartisan basis to bring people together to help create that achievement.

I want to say a word about my very good friend, Senator JOHN WARNER of Virginia. I often call him Moses because, as we have debated on the floor of the Senate over the last several years on one of the major issues of our time, the issue of war and peace and how we create a framework for a more peaceful world for our generation and those to come, it has often been Senator WARNER we have gone to get direction and counsel on how we might move forward. I had the opportunity of traveling with him to Iraq and Afghanistan and other places along with his very good friend, CARL LEVIN, chairman of the Armed Services Committee. The friendship between the two of them, between Senator LEVIN and Senator WARNER, is one that exemplifies the types of relationships that are important for this Chamber and for the good of America. I will miss my good friend, Senator JOHN WARNER, the man I call Moses, because of his willingness to try to bring people together to try to resolve major and difficult issues that face us in America.

Senator CHUCK HAGEL from Nebraska has likewise been one of those voices of independence, putting public purpose above partisanship and being a great example for all of us in doing so. He has some deep connections in Colorado, including his sister Claire who lives in Colorado, and his family whom I have met over time. Even though he teases me occasionally on the battleground between Nebraska and Colorado with respect to the Nebraska Cornhuskers and the University of Colorado Buffaloes, he has done a remarkable service in the Senate as a great Senator and someone whom I will sorely miss.

Finally, Senator LARRY CRAIG from Idaho has been a champion for agriculture and rural issues and for western values. When, yesterday, we were able to pass the payment in lieu of taxes, secure rural schools act, on which Senator WYDEN and others had worked so hard, it was Senator CRAIG who helped make sure at the beginning that payment in lieu of taxes, which is so important to the Presiding Officer's State and my State of Colorado, were, in fact, on the radar screen of Washington, DC. Sometimes those issues that are unique to the western part of the United States are not heard in the Halls in this Capitol. Senator CRAIG was an unrelenting advocate for making sure those western issues were, in fact, not forgotten by those of us who are here who have an ability to cast a vote.

I will miss my five colleagues. All of them are Republicans who are depart-

ing. Many of them brought a true spirit of bipartisanship and working together, which is worthy of the emulation of many Members of the Senate who will serve in this Chamber in the next Congress and in many Congresses to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

#### UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1315

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Chair lay before the Senate a message from the House on S. 1315, the Veterans Benefits Enhancement Act; that the Senate disagree with the House amendment, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Reserving the right to object, I ask my distinguished friend, the chairman, a question. It is my understanding that included in the fiscal year 2009 VA appropriations conference agreement is language denying the use of appropriated dollars putting into effect a repeal of the Hartness v. Nicholson decision. That is an agreement that has already been made.

As the chairman knows, this is the offset that is used in S. 1315 in order to fund all the entitlement spending in the bill for Filipino veterans. My question to him is, what is the point in us going to conference on a bill if the only available offsets have been pulled off the table from the standpoint of us using them in S. 1315?

Mr. AKAKA. As my friend and colleague knows, the appropriations measure is not yet law. And even if it were, there are various options available to the Veterans' Affairs Committee. So I urge my colleague to join me in seeking a conference on S. 1315. Together we can decide how our committee and the authorizing committee in the House can deal with the concern about the Hartness case.

Mr. BURR. Continuing my reservation of objection, it seems to me that any conference wouldn't move because it would not meet pay-go. The pay-go compliance doesn't exist. It doesn't make sense to proceed to a conference. The chairman and I had a lengthy debate as it related to this benefit. It disturbs me that we are on the floor of the Senate once again talking about the benefit at a time when we are talking about a financial crisis. It is also my understanding that the House continuing resolution will have \$200 million that goes to the benefits of Filipino veterans with money that has been pulled from somewhere yet unknown.

So with all the respect that I have for the chairman, I object at this time