

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 5652

Mr. REID. Mr. President, last month, the Senate passed the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization on a strong bipartisan vote of 68 to 31. Fifteen Republican Senators—including all the women on the other side of the aisle—joined Senate Democrats to support this important legislation. Senate Democrats strongly stand behind the bill we passed. It makes clear that all victims of domestic violence and sexual assault should enjoy the protections of the Violence Against Women Act. We don't believe we should be in the business of picking and choosing which victims deserve protection.

In contrast, the bill passed by House Republicans fails to include crucial protections for Native American women—I have 22 tribal organizations in my State, for example—gay and lesbian victims, battered immigrant women, and victims on college campuses and in subsidized housing. The House bill would roll back many important and longstanding protections in current law for abused immigrant victims—protections that have never been controversial and previously have enjoyed widespread bipartisan support.

So there are many differences to be worked out between the House and the Senate in this crucial piece of legislation. The right place to work out these differences is in conference. That is why we seek today to go to conference with the House on this important legislation, and that is why we object to simply passing the House bill that has been sent to us.

The House has raised, I think unfortunately, the so-called blue slip problem, which seems to be an issue they raise all the time when there is a bill they do not like.

Having said that, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of H.R. 5652, Calendar No. 398; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the language of S. 1925, the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization, as passed by the Senate on April 26 by a vote of 68 to 31, be inserted in lieu thereof; that the Senate insist on its 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, with all the above occurring with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 4970

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, let me make a few observations and then I intend to offer a consent request myself.

This is a problem that has been created by the majority, and I am sorry they will not accept our offer to fix their problem so we can move forward on this legislation. We have all known

for literally years when the Violence Against Women Act was going to expire. We have known that for years. During this time, Democrats controlled the Senate. Yet our friends on the other side waited until February of this year—nearly 6 months after the current authorization expired—before they even reported a bill out of committee, and they chose to wait almost 3 months more to bring a bill to the floor.

I don't know why that decision was made. Press reports indicate that members of the Democratic leadership thought they could use VAWA as a campaign issue. When they finally chose to bring this bill to the Senate floor, Republicans consented to going to the bill, Republicans consented to bringing the debate to a close, and Republicans consented to limiting ourselves to just two amendments—just two. Our Democratic colleagues also added an amendment. It was a complete substitute. They offered it at the last minute.

This substitute was a couple hundred pages long and it added new sections to the bill. One of those sections would generate revenue by assessing new fees on immigration visas. I gather our Democratic colleagues did this because their bill, unlike the Hutchison-Grassley bill, would add over \$100 million to the debt.

Including this provision is obviously a problem, in that adding a revenue provision in a Senate bill violates the Origination Clause of the U.S. Constitution. If we sent the Senate bill to the House in its current form, it would trigger a blue slip point of order, as it always does.

It is not our fault Senate Democrats waited until well after VAWA expired to start moving a bill. It is not our fault their bill would add to the debt. It is not our fault our friends waited until the last minute to try to fix the problem, and, in the course of doing so, they created yet another problem. We have offered to help them fix their problem. They do not have to accept our help, but they should stop demagoguing the issue and blaming others.

Therefore, I would offer another consent: I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 406, H.R. 4970, the House-passed Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act; provided further that all after the enacting clause be stricken, the text of the Senate-passed Violence Against Women bill, S. 1925, with a modification that strikes sections 805 and 810 related to the immigration provisions; that the bill be read three times and passed, the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate with a ratio agreed to by both leaders.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, the Republican

leader is now proposing an amendment to the Senate-passed bill—a Senate-passed bill that we are very proud of. It has been engineered and advocated by all Democratic Senators but mainly by the 12 women who are part of our caucus. This is an important piece of legislation. We all feel very strongly about this.

I haven't looked at all the details of this amendment, but I understand it. My first response is that the amendment is something the conferees should be working on. We can't do that without the proper input from all the interested parties, and we have 52, other than myself, on my side of the Capitol. That is why I have sought to go to conference with the product the Senate passed.

It may be that sometime in the future, after we evaluate all these pieces that have been suggested by my friend, the Republican leader, we may be able to proceed along this route, if, in fact, we get to conference. But we have to get to conference, and we have to have wider discussions airing the proposed amendment we have had just a little time to look at, at this stage.

I understand my friend's proposal, and I object to it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING BILL STEWART

Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, before I speak today about the bill before us, I want to commemorate the life of a dear friend and a true West Virginian, Bill Stewart.

Bill was taken from us 2 days ago at the age of 59, but he left behind a lifetime of memories and love for our State.

Bill Stewart was a proud West Virginian in every sense of the word, and he was the best cheerleader this State ever had. Whether it was playing ball at Fairmont State—where I first met him—or coaching West Virginia University to a Fiesta Bowl win—where he took an underdog team to a thrilling victory—you never had to worry about Bill's enthusiasm; he had enough for all of us. In fact, you were either a friend of Bill Stewart's or he hadn't met you yet.

Bill was raised in New Martinsville and was a West Virginian through-and-through. Countless young men thrived under his coaching, but he was also truly dedicated to his family—his wife Karen and his son Blaine. I hope Karen and Blaine know just how much Bill meant to the people of our State, how much we loved him and how much we all will miss him.