

SENATE—Friday, September 24, 1999

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Dr. Mark Dever, Washington, DC.

We are pleased to have you with us.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Dr. Mark Dever, offered the following prayer:

Great, all-powerful God, we come to You this morning in acknowledgment of Your greatness. We know something of Your power, that You have no need of us, that You are in no way dependent on our actions, that Your existence awaits no vote of this Chamber nor even our own personal assent.

We praise You that, being the One You are, out of Your love, You have made us in Your image.

We pray that You would today help this body in its deliberations. You know, Lord, the needs of the day, and You have promised Your daily provisions to those who truly call on You.

We ask that You would give a measure of Your wisdom to those gathered here today. Help them to pass laws that ennoble rather than enervate people. Give them wisdom to speak today with the liberty of knowing that they are about purposes that are not only great but are also good.

For those who are weary in well-doing and discouraged, finding only emptiness amid all the success which the world tells them they have, show them Yourself.

Thank You for the freedom of speech which we enjoy in this land. Help these Senators today to use that freedom, realizing what a privilege it is, for our good and for Your glory. In Christ's name we ask it. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MIKE DEWINE, a Senator from the State of Ohio, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, prior to beginning the

time, I would like to announce that this morning the Senate will resume consideration of the VA-HUD appropriations bill and the pending Wellstone amendment regarding atomic veterans. Following the 2 minutes for closing remarks, the Senate will proceed to a vote on or in relation to the Wellstone amendment. Senators can therefore expect the first rollcall vote this morning in just a couple of minutes. Following that vote, Senator KERRY of Massachusetts will be recognized to offer an amendment regarding section 8.

There are further amendments on the list that must be disposed of prior to the vote on final passage. However, we hope the Senate will complete action on the VA-HUD bill today at a reasonable time. Therefore, Senators can expect votes throughout the morning.

I thank my colleagues for their attention. I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2684, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2684) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Wellstone amendment No. 1789, to express the sense of the Senate that lung cancer, colon cancer, and brain and central nervous system cancer should be presumed to be service-connected disabilities as radiogenic diseases.

AMENDMENT NO. 1789

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 2 minutes for debate prior to the vote on amendment No. 1789.

The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, this amendment is to express the sense of the Senate—that is all we are doing—that lung cancer, colon cancer, and brain and central nervous system cancer should be presumed to be serv-

ice-connected disabilities as radiogenic diseases.

Colleagues, I am talking about Nagasaki and Hiroshima, atomic veterans who were in Nevada and Utah. They went to ground zero. Our government never told them they were in harm's way, never gave them any protective gear. It is just unbelievable, the incidents of cancer, and all I am saying is that we just right an injustice. We should make sure they get the health care they deserve; they should get the compensation they deserve. We do this presumption for Agent Orange and Vietnam vets. We should. We do it for Persian Gulf veterans. We should. We ought to do it for these atomic veterans. They have been waiting a half century. I understand the Department of Veterans Affairs is opposed to the Senate going on record with a sense-of-the-Senate amendment.

Let me just say that Ken Kizer, former Under Secretary of Health for the Department of Veterans Affairs, wrote that this is a mistake and that given our position on gulf war veterans and Agent Orange veterans, it is a matter of equity and fairness.

Please vote for this, colleagues. It is absolutely the right thing to do. These veterans have been waiting for justice for a half century.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I know the Senator from Minnesota has been a devoted advocate for veterans who have been exposed to atomic radiation. I commend him for his advocacy. He has for 3 years pursued attaching legislation to this bill. However, the legislation is properly under the VA subcommittee's jurisdiction. The VA has opposed amending this law because, No. 1, it would cost over \$500 million in additional entitlement payments over 5 years. The VA has the authority and the responsibility to make the medical judgments as to whether these are, in fact, service-connected disabilities, and I suggest that this body does not have before it the medical evidence or the scientific proof needed to make that kind of judgment. We commend the Senator for being interested and concerned about these veterans, but we are not in a position to make the medical judgment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?