

Health Human Services, and Education. We are seeking short time agreements so we can finish this bill by the close of business tomorrow. Senator HARKIN and I, Senator REID and Senator COVERDELL's staff, are trying to get that done. We have not been able to move ahead at the moment because we cannot get consent to set aside the pending Nickles amendment, second-degree amendment. We are going to proceed now to foreign operations. We have consent on a proposal, which I am about to make.

I ask unanimous consent the pending first- and second-degree amendments be laid aside and the Senate now proceed to the conference report to accompany the foreign operations bill and there be 1 hour for debate equally divided; the conference report should be considered read.

I further ask the votes in relation to the pending amendment and the conference report occur following the use or yielding back of the time, and the votes occur in a stacked sequence with the second vote to be 10 minutes in duration.

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, and I shall not object, it is my understanding, then, we would vote first on the foreign operations conference report or the amendment of Senator NICKLES? Which do you want to vote on first?

Mr. SPECTER. Vote first on the conference report, since we will be taking that up.

Mr. REID. No objection.

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

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, therefore Senators may expect votes to occur perhaps as early as 11:45. We have lost about a half hour waiting for this transition, so it is my hope that although we have the unanimous consent agreement for 1 hour, we might accomplish the debate in a half hour and finish at 11:45, where we could then be expected to proceed to a vote. If the managers insist on taking the full hour, then the vote will start at 12:15. But it is hoped, so we can move this bill along, to repeat, that we can have the time yielded back and start the vote as early as 11:45.

FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING, AND RELATED PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the order, the Chair lays before the Senate a report of the committee of conference on the bill (H.R. 2606) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

The report will be stated.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2606), have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of September 27, 1999.)

Mr. REID. Mr. President, with the permission of the Senator from Pennsylvania, I ask a quorum call be initiated and the time run equally against both sides on this conference report.

Mr. SPECTER. Agreed.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senator from Oregon be allowed to speak as in morning business but the time would run against the underlying agreement on the foreign operations bill; he be allowed to speak for—5 minutes?

Mr. WYDEN. I appreciate the Senator's courtesy. If I could have 10, that would be appreciated. I know this is an important bill. I do not want to hold it up.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we need to get agreement.

The Senator is speaking for 10 minutes.

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

The Senator from Oregon.

SENIOR PRESCRIPTION INSURANCE COVERAGE EQUITY ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Nevada who has been a strong champion of the rights of seniors. He and I serve on the Committee on Aging.

I take this opportunity this morning to talk about an extraordinarily important issue for the older people of this country, and that is the need to make sure senior citizens can get prescription drug coverage as part of the Medicare program.

I am especially proud that Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE and I have introduced what is now the only bipartisan prescription drug bill before the Senate, and I am hopeful in the days ahead we can get this legislation before the Senate and ensure that the millions of vulnerable older people in this country get decent prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

I believe it is time to get this issue out of the beltway, get it out of Washington, DC, and get it to the grassroots of America. That is why Senator SNOWE and I have initiated a grassroots campaign to get prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

As folks can see in the example next to me, we are hoping in the next few weeks that senior citizens and their families from across the country will send in copies of their prescription drug bills to their Senators. We think our proposal, the Senior Prescription Insurance Coverage Equity Act, known as SPICE, is the way to proceed because it is bipartisan, it is market oriented, it gives senior citizens choice in the marketplace, and uses marketplace forces to hold down costs for prescription medicine.

We use as a model the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, which is what Members of Congress and their families have as the delivery system for health care. If it is good enough for Members of the Senate, Senator SNOWE and I believe it is good enough for the older people of our country.

We are hoping that instead of this just being a discussion within the beltway, with the various interest groups on one side or the other lining up, we hope in the days ahead, as a result of senior citizens sending in copies of their prescription drug bills and their families weighing in with their legislators, we can get our bipartisan bill moving.

More than 50 Members of the Senate have already voted for the funding proposal Senator SNOWE and I advocate. We propose there ought to be a tobacco tax to fund this program. We believe that is only right, because in this country, more than \$12 billion goes out of the Medicare program each year to handle tobacco-related illnesses. We believe there is a direct connection between the funding proposal we establish and making sure older people get this benefit. With more than 50 Members of the Senate on record for the budget vote that Senator SNOWE and I offered earlier this year, we ought to be able to build on that vote and actually get this program added to Medicare.

I am especially pleased the approach Senator SNOWE and I have taken is one that can help lower the cost of prescription drug coverage for older people. A key part of this debate is coverage, but equally as important is the need to hold down the costs of these prescriptions. We are seeing around this country that the big buyers of prescription drugs—the health maintenance organizations and the large purchasers—get a discount and senior citizens are hit with a double whammy. Not only does Medicare not cover their prescriptions, but when a senior citizen walks into a pharmacy and picks up their prescription, say, in Arkansas or