

it is the seventh Division I national championship for the University of North Dakota hockey team.

I am an alumnus of that great school, and it was with great pride I watched the game on television last Saturday evening and saw the North Dakota Fighting Sioux win that contest. We are the home of great skaters, great hockey players, and great tradition. This year, once again, we demonstrated that you don't have to have a 40,000-student population to be a Division I national champion.

I called the White House this morning and asked if they would invite that team to the White House, as is often the custom for championship teams—college football, basketball, and other teams, including professional teams who have been invited to the White House by the President to say congratulations to them. I hope he will do the same for this wonderful group of young men from North Dakota who are now this Nation's champions in Division I hockey.

So my hat is off to the University of North Dakota. It is a wonderful school. I am proud to have gotten my undergraduate degree there. I am increasingly proud year after year as I watch that school. Not only are they great athletes and hockey players, these are also great students and good young men. This is an athletic program without parallel around the country, in my judgment. Again, I congratulate those young men. I am very proud of them.

#### THE SENATE AGENDA

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I will discuss for a moment the issues that face the Congress, where we are and why we are here, and suggest perhaps a slightly more robust agenda for the next couple of months.

It is now a Monday in April, and it is not quite clear to me what the agenda will be on the floor of the Senate this week. I guess it is not quite clear yet to anyone. We know that in the coming weeks we will do our work as appropriators. I am on the Appropriations Committee, and we will do our work as appropriators and bring appropriations bills to the floor of the Senate, and there are some authorization bills that must get done. But beyond that, it is not quite clear what the agenda is.

Recognizing that my political party, the one I represent in this Chamber, did not win the election, it is also clear we don't set the agenda in the Senate. The political system has a unique way of describing who controls institutions such as this. And those who have the most members, who get the most votes in a general election, have the opportunity to control and create an agenda. That is as it should be. But it is perhaps frustrating for me and others that our agenda is not nearly as robust as it could or should be.

Let me describe some of the things I think we ought to be doing and that I hope the majority leader and others will agree at some point in the coming weeks that we will do.

First, we passed some long time ago a Patients' Bill of Rights. I didn't support the Senate version of it because I didn't think it was a good bill. But the House of Representatives passed a bipartisan piece of legislation coauthored by a Democrat and a Republican in the House of Representatives. It was a very vigorous battle in the House. They passed a real Patients' Bill of Rights bill.

It says in this contest of wills between patients, doctors, the insurance companies, and HMOs, that there are certain rights that patients ought to have.

Every patient in this country who seeks medical treatment ought to have the right to understand all of their options for medical treatment—not just what's the least expensive.

Those who need emergency room treatment ought to be able to expect to have emergency room treatment when needed.

When a woman falls off a 40-foot cliff and is hauled into an emergency room comatose, and then the HMO later says: We will not approve your emergency room cost because you didn't get preapproval for emergency room treatment—there is something wrong with the system.

Are there certain rights that patients ought to have in this health care system? The answer yes. Among those are the rights embodied in the bill in the House of Representatives called the Patients' Bill of Rights. It is now in conference. It is not likely to produce 67 votes, unfortunately, under current circumstances because the House-appointed conferees, who in most cases didn't vote for the bill, sent it to conference.

The Senate, of course, has a piece of legislation that does not do the job. But those of us who support a strong Patients' Bill of Rights remain hopeful that between now and the end of this legislative session we will pass a bipartisan piece of legislation called a Patients' Bill of Rights that really provides the rights and the assistance to patients in dealing with their insurance companies with respect to their health care treatment.

Juvenile justice: We passed a juvenile justice bill in the Senate. That bill was passed in Senate legislation that many do not like.

Among the two pieces of legislation that people do not like on that bill—and the reason I guess it is stalled—is some legislation dealing with guns. We provided two simple components to that piece of legislation.

I come from North Dakota. I grew up hunting. I had a gun when I was a teenager. I pheasant hunted, I deer hunted,

and practiced target shooting. I know about guns. I am not somebody running into this Chamber saying let's have gun control. That is not my orientation at all.

But the two pieces dealing with guns that we added to the Juvenile Justice Act are so sensible. One is mandatory trigger locks for handguns. When 6-year-olds go to school and shoot another 6-year-old, ought we not to understand the need for trigger locks on handguns? It seems to me that is eminently sensible.

Second, the issue of gun shows, and the question of whether at gun shows that people set up around this country on Saturdays or Sundays there ought to be an instant check when guns are sold to find out whether you are selling a gun to a convicted felon.

Go to a gun store anywhere in this country and try to buy a gun. They are going to run your name through an instant check to find out if you are a convicted felon because if you are, you cannot buy a gun. But we have a loophole at gun shows which are big, and getting bigger. There are more of them. Many feel—including the Senate, incidentally, by a rather close vote—that we ought to have the opportunity to close that loophole and say if you are going to buy a gun, it does not matter whether it is in a gun store or at a gun show, you ought to have to have your name run through an instant check so we can make sure we are not selling a gun to a felon.

Those two issues—trigger locks for handguns for the safety of children in this country, and closing the gun show loophole—have meant that the juvenile justice bill, which is so important, is now in conference, and apparently we can't get it out. I hope we can be more sensible about this and get that bill out of conference, bring it to the floor of the Senate and the House, and get it to the President for his signature.

There are other items we continue to struggle with, such as the issue of school construction.

I have spoken at great length about walking into the Cannon Ball School and seeing little Rosie Two Bears, a third grader, who says: Mr. Senator, are you going to build me a new school?

I said: No, I don't have the money to build you a new school, Rosie.

This is a school with 150 kids, one water fountain, two toilets, and closings of the school building which is not fit for classes, where sewer gas comes up and they have to evacuate the rooms. Rosie isn't getting the kind of education we want for her as an American.

When we say let's help rebuild, renovate, and construct some of America's schools to bring them back up to standard, we are told, no. You can't do that. That is not the Federal Government's job.

It is interesting. There was a piece in *Newsweek* by Jonathan Alter, a rather interesting columnist. He said about 4 or 5 years ago the Congress decided they were going to spend \$8 billion to upgrade jails and prisons. The State and local governments absolutely spent the money for jails and prisons. The Federal Government can upgrade the jails and prisons but not the schools. Is it less important to bring schools up to standard than a jail or a prison somewhere?

If we can spend \$8 billion to improve places to incarcerate criminals, we ought to be able to spend a few billion dollars to help kids go into a classroom door in a school that we as parents could be proud of. That ought to be done in this session of the Congress as well.

Judicial nominations, we want to get through. We don't have a committee in this Congress for lost and found. Almost everywhere else—hotels, airports, every other institution—when you lose something and ask where the lost and found is, they send you there. There is a lost and found over there. In Congress there is no place you can go to the lost and found. Maybe we need a committee on the lost and found. When these policy issues leave here, you never hear from them again.

I hope that in the coming days Republicans and Democrats together can decide that there are certain common elements to an agenda that will strengthen this country and make this a better place in which to live. I don't believe that we have a circumstance where one side of the political aisle is all right, and the other side all wrong. That is not the case. We have good men and women serving in this Chamber on both sides of the political aisle. But it remains a frustration that in some areas where we have passed legislation, it gets sent to a conference somewhere never to be seen again because a small minority refuses to accept sensible judgments of the majority in both the House and the Senate.

I think that is the case with the Patients' Bill of Rights with respect to the vote in the House, and certainly is the case with juvenile justice and decisions in the Senate on things such as trigger locks and also closing the gun show loophole.

I hope we can find a way to address some of these important issues in the coming weeks and months.

I hope we can demonstrate to the American people that we care about education and health care, address the crime issue in a thoughtful way, get nominations through this Chamber, and appoint Federal judges to fill vacancies, which are things that represent part of the agenda that needs to be completed as soon as possible in the Senate.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. 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. LOTT. 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. LOTT. Mr. President, are we in a period of morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leader is correct. Under the previous order, the leadership time has been reserved.

#### SENATE SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I will talk a few minutes about the schedule for the week and then comment specifically on some of the issues we will be addressing during the schedule for Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

We have several important issues before the Senate to take up and hopefully complete action on. One of them is the question of our national energy policy. That will be brought to the Senate during the day on Tuesday with a vote on the gas tax issue.

Following that, we will be discussing the marriage penalty tax. This past Saturday, I had occasion to be in a store and one of the other customers asked me: Are we finally going to get rid of the unfair marriage penalty tax? I said we would try to and hoped to do it this week.

I went on about my business and the customer went on about his. The customer came back later and said: Do you think you actually will begin to eliminate the very unfair tax? I said: That is what we are trying to do.

Then he came back a third time and said: You are going to have a vote next week? I said: Yes, we are. He asked if he could get the names of those voting against getting rid of the unfair tax. I said: Yes, it will be in the RECORD. Call my office; we will be glad to get it to you.

That is what we hear in the real world, off of Capitol Hill. People say this is a real problem.

We have been talking about eliminating the marriage penalty tax for years. It is time we get it done. We will have that debate on Wednesday and, I presume, a vote Wednesday or Thursday to see exactly where the Senate is: Do we want to eliminate the marriage penalty tax or not? I think we should. I certainly will vote that way.

Before the week is out, we hope to take up a number of Executive Calendar nominations. We have a number of nominations that we should be able to clear. We will work with interested Senators and committees involved on both sides of the aisle to see if we can clear a number of these nominations.

Last and certainly not least is the fact we will also want to complete action on the conference on the budget.

We completed action on the budget resolution of the Senate on Friday. I understand the conferees will be working together during the next 2 days, hopefully, to file the necessary report by Tuesday night. Then we will have the necessary debate, whatever time that might be. It could be up to as much as 10 hours. Then we will have a vote on that conference report Thursday evening or Friday morning.

That leads me to another point I want to be sure to make early in the week. As I have notified Senators in the past, during these weeks right before a recess—in this case the Easter recess—we will go home and be with our constituents and families. Senators should anticipate the possibility or even the likelihood of votes on Friday. If we can complete the work I have outlined by Thursday night then we will not be in session on Friday. But if for some reason we have not been able to complete at least the vote on the conference report on the budget, then we will be in session on Friday. We certainly hope to finish it by noon on Friday, but that will depend on how much time is needed and when the Senate wishes to get to a final vote.

I wanted to go over the schedule for the week so Senators know what to anticipate on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and the possibility even of Friday votes on the budget resolution conference report.

Now let me go back and talk about some of these issues, to try to make clear what I am trying to do by moving these bills, and explain what the situation is with regard to the gas tax, for instance.

There have been those who said the Senate voted last week during the debate on the budget resolution on a sense of the Senate that basically the Senate would not temporarily suspend or in any way remove the gas tax.

The Federal gasoline tax is 4.3 cents a gallon. That was added back in 1993. But the total amount of the Federal tax is 18.4 cents a gallon. I remind my colleagues, that does not count the State taxes and in many cases local taxes on gasoline. Where I am from, we even have, in addition to the State and Federal taxes, what is known as the seawall tax.

That is quite curious because quite often we do not see anything happening on the seawall, but the tax is being collected and spent on general improvement of roads. Most people do not gripe because we have a developing area and we want to have good roads. I think that is a very important thing.

But, as a matter of fact, the total tax on gasoline in most States is as much as a quarter or a third or more of the total cost of a gallon of gasoline. So the taxes on gasoline are significant.

With regard to this vote last week, the so-called Byrd sense-of-the-Senate resolution said it is the sense of the