of our committees on a bipartisan basis is a harbinger of good things ahead. I hope we can work across the aisle the way we have on this and demonstrate our commitment to catch up on the appropriations process and deliver on the request of the majority leader: that we report out and get to conference prior to the time we leave for the August recess. If we don’t do that, I will sincerely regret that we didn’t have the guidance and the leadership of Mr. Stevens, Chairman Inouye, and the ranking member, Danny Inouye, of the Defense Appropriations Committee subcommittee.

Mr. STEVENS. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BYRD. The Senator is correct. But those two, Ted Stevens and Danny Inouye, are just like Ted Stevens. It really doesn’t make a difference. If it weren’t for the fact that I am expected, if I leave the Chair momentarily, to call on a Democrat, I would just be as sure and as confident and secure if I turned it over to Ted Stevens. It would not make a bit of difference to me personally. I would say: Ted, I have to go out for a moment to see some constituents. Would you take over?

Mr. BYRD. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. STEVENS. The Senator is correct. But those two, Ted Stevens and Danny Inouye, are just like Ted Stevens. It really doesn’t make a difference. If it weren’t for the fact that I am expected, if I leave the Chair momentarily, to call on a Democrat, I would just be as sure and as confident and secure if I turned it over to Ted Stevens. It would not make a bit of difference to me personally. I would say: Ted, I have to go out for a moment to see some constituents. Would you take over?

Mr. BYRD. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, I thank the Chair. My, “how sweet it is,” as Jackie Gleason used to say, how sweet it is to serve with men and women like we have on our Appropriations Committee.

I yield the floor.

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, I thank Senator BYRD for his comments in honor of Terry Sauvain who is now staff director of the full committee. This is his first bill in that capacity. This demonstrates his basic approach, and we are blessed by his presence and knowledge, that he also has decided to proceed, as Senator BYRD and I have, on a bipartisan basis. He has been very gracious to all Members on our side. I thank Senator BYRD for commenting about Steve Cortese, a brilliant former staff director, now staff director for the minority. He really is a key man in the Senate as far as I am concerned; and Andy Givens and I, along with Lisa Sutherland; and I am pleased Senator BYRD mentioned Senator THAD COCHRAN, who is here, who was a member of our conference and has really contributed greatly to the outcome of this bill.

It is my understanding when I yield the floor the bill will pass; is that correct, Madam President?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. BYRD. Will the Senator yield.

Mr. STEVENS. Forgive me for asking him to yield one more time. In speaking of our ranking member, I must not overlook the splendid work of the paradigm of patriotism that is constantly and consistently and always and never-endingly shown by DANNY INOUYE, the ranking member of our committee on this side of the aisle, and how fortunate we are to have, in this particular bill which deals mostly with defense, how fortunate we are to have the guidance and the leadership of the chairman, Ted Stevens, and the ranking member, Danny Inouye of the Defense Appropriations Committee subcommittee.

Mr. STEVENS. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. BYRD. Yes.

Mr. STEVENS. Turn that over. We have just changed seats.

Mr. BYRD. Yes, OK.

Mr. STEVENS. Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Stevens.

Mr. BYRD. The Senator is correct. But those two, Ted Stevens and Danny Inouye, are just like Ted Stevens. It really doesn’t make a difference. If it weren’t for the fact that I am expected, if I leave the Chair momentarily, to call on a Democrat, I would just be as sure and as confident and secure if I turned it over to Ted Stevens. It would not make a bit of difference to me personally. I would say: Ted, I have to go out for a moment to see some constituents. Would you take over?

We are fortunate, though, in having Ted Stevens and Danny as the two men who are national defense active in the helm of our development and managing of this supplemental. I thank the Senator.

Mr. STEVENS. I was going to mention Senator INOUYE because he mentioned to me earlier we ought to do something to try to see if we can get this bill finished today. So we have met Senator Inouye’s request.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the conference report?

If not, under the previous order, the conference report is agreed to. The motion to reconsider is laid upon the table.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam 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. BYRD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

The Senator from West Virginia.

COMPLIMENTING SENATOR STABENOW AND HER FRESHMEN COLLEGUES

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I would not want this beautiful July afternoon to pass without my paying compliments to the Senator who is presiding over the Senate at this point. She presides with a dignity and bearing and manner and presence that are so rare as a day in June.

I look at that smile. I have never seen a more beautiful smile than that the Presiding Officer today constantly wears.

Walt Whitman said:

A man is a great thing upon the earth and throughout eternity, but every jot of the greatness of man is unfolded out of woman. . . .

How fortunate we are to have had a degree of presiding professionalism as we see in the new Members of this Senate as they are called upon to preside every day. It is a chore. They have to take their valuable time away from their office and desk where they may be reading letters from constituents, signing letters to constituents, dictating letters to constituents, or working in a hundred other ways every day in the service of the Nation, the service of the people of their State. Yet they give their time to come here and preside.

This group of Presiding Officers in this new class of Senators is the best overall group I have seen in my 43 years of service in the foremost upper body in the world today. This is a good example.
The Presiding Officer, DEBBIE STABENOW from Michigan, is not reading a magazine. She is not sitting up there reading the newspapers. She is not sitting up there signing mail. There used to be a telephone up there. When I became majority leader, I yanked that telephone out so people who are presiding cannot sit there and talk on the telephone. I urge all new Members when they sit up there and preside to pay attention to the Senate. Please don’t be signing your mail up there. Please don’t be reading a magazine. Please don’t be reading newspapers. Be alert to what is being done on the Senate floor.

It is a suggestion that goes over very well at first, but then so many times I have noticed they lapse into the same old habit of reading and signing their mail. It just kind of makes my spirit fall. But I hope these new Senators doing that. They do not bring their mail up there. They sit there, very alert. And when they ask for order, they get it.

I will have more to say about this on Monday, I promise you. But I just couldn’t let this occasion pass or this fleeting moment go by without complimenting the Senator from Michigan, DEBBIE STABENOW, who sets a fine example as a Senator and as a Presiding Officer.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

COMMENDATION OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS

Mr. DASCHLE. Madam President, I know the distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee just complimented the Presiding Officer, and I, too, want to add my commendation. She is an outstanding Presiding Officer, and she is willing to spend the time and make the commitment to preside over the Senate. As the chairman has indicated, we have a number of extraordinary Senators who are spending the time and making that kind of commitment. I applaud all of them and I appreciate the way in which they are presiding. I commend especially the distinguished Senator from Michigan.

I am disappointed that beginning next week we will not have bipartisan Presiding Officers. I appreciate the importance of the job of the Presiding Officer, especially late in the day on a Friday.

This activity as I feel they are better suited to conduct and oversee this type of long term research activity. In doing so, I hope that this activity would be provided by the Senate Rules and House Administration Committees and through these Committees, the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress.

Mr. DURBIN. Who is the Senator now proposing to manage this activity?

Mr. BINGAMAN. It has been suggested that the General Accounting Office can better serve this function. I feel that the General Accounting Office may not be suited for such a long term research activity. The GAO is investigatory in nature. However, it is better to start an initial pilot program utilizing the OTA technology assessment method rather than no pilot program at all. So, I offer this amendment to use the General Accounting Office. But, I ask the Chairman that during conference, serious consideration be given to my request of having the Congressional Research Service manage this pilot program.

Mr. DURBIN. How will the initial studies be chosen for the pilot program and how will it be reported?

Mr. BINGAMAN. The General Accounting Office should submit a listing of Congressionally relevant technology assessment studies to its oversight committees, the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on Government Reform. From this list, two projects should be chosen, one by each Committee no later than October 31st, 2001. The technology assessment studies should then begin with a report given to both Committees, and the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, no later than June 15, 2002. At that time the decision can be made as to whether this technology assessment program was beneficial enough to continue it a second year. If this pilot program is to continue, I recommend that the funding be executed using the Office of Technology Assessment authorization language. Rather than OTA’s 200 person, $20 million budget, the organization would be a small legislative branch staff using outside non-profit groups to perform the in-depth research.

ACCESS TO VA HEALTH CARE IN WEST VIRGINIA

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Madam President, as chairman of the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs, I want to share with my colleagues some of the concerns voiced by veterans at a recent field hearing in my state of West Virginia.

On July 16, the Committee held a hearing in Huntington, West Virginia, to examine the challenges facing veterans and our rural veterans’ health care through the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Committee held its last West Virginia field hearing on access to rural VA health care in 1993.