

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREE-
MENT—H.R. 2620 CONFERENCE
REPORT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate considers the conference report to accompany H.R. 2620, the VA-HUD appropriations bill, that there be 45 minutes for debate with respect to the report, with the time equally divided and controlled among the chairperson and ranking member of the subcommittee and Senator MCCAIN or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of all time, without further intervening action, the Senate proceed to vote on adoption of the conference report.

Mr. President, this would mean Senator MIKULSKI, Senator BOND, and Senator MCCAIN would each have 15 minutes if they choose to use that time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—
S. 739

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I see Senator MIKULSKI here; I assume Senator BOND will be here. I will just take but a moment.

For the fifth or sixth time in the last 2 weeks, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 191, S. 739, the Homeless Veterans Program Improvement Act; that the committee-reported substitute amendment be agreed to; that the bill, as amended, be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I know how committed the Senator is to this issue, and much of that issue I agree with. I hope sometime in the future we can deal with it. It is important, certainly to those who meet the standards and the qualifications which the Senator has proposed.

At this time I believe it necessary to object, and I do object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I have spoken about this before. The Senator from Idaho was objecting on behalf of someone else. He said: I hope

this legislation passes soon because we all support this, or because it is important, something to that effect.

This legislation passed the veterans committee on a 21-0 vote. It is the kind of legislation you message—LANE EVANS has done this in the House—so you get everybody agreeing. It is really important. I have gone through all the details before.

It is there in terms of making sure you have the job training, the services for people, and the health care for people struggling with addiction or struggling with posttraumatic stress syndrome, transition to other housing. It is really important to do.

Veterans Day is coming in just a few days.

My last point is that even though my colleague from Idaho says we all think it is a good thing to do, for 2 weeks I have come out here and I have asked: Who is the Senator who has an anonymous hold on this bill? If he or she opposes it, come out and debate it. This is no way to proceed. As a result, I have put a hold on every bill introduced by my colleagues from the other side, all of them that are unanimous consent and have a great deal of merit. I am not giving up any of my leverage.

It is unconscionable that this piece of legislation has been blocked through an anonymous hold. It is no way to say thanks to veterans. The veterans in the military say: We don't leave our wounded behind. We have a lot of wounded left behind on the streets of our country who are homeless.

If I got started on this issue, I could spend about 10 hours expressing my indignation at what has happened. Out of deference to Senator MIKULSKI, I will not.

Again, there aren't going to be any bills beyond appropriations and judicial appointments that are going to go through until this bill goes through. This should be a priority.

I make a plea to my colleagues from the other side of the aisle, find out who it is, the Senator who is blocking this consideration. No one has ever even given me the slightest hint why. Let's get this work done.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AF-
FAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT, AND INDE-
PENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRI-
ATIONS ACT, 2002—CONFERENCE
REPORT

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I submit a report of the committee of conference on the bill, H.R. 2620, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report.

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. 2620) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commission, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002, and for other purposes, having met have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment, signed by all of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

The Senate proceeded to consider the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of November 6, 2001, at page H7787.)

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, it is with a great deal of pride that I bring this conference report to the Senate. I take this opportunity to thank my Republican colleague, the ranking member, Senator BOND of Missouri. This has been a year of tumultuous change in our country.

On Tuesday a year ago, we thought we had elected the President. It went on for 35 days—unprecedented. We were turned into a 50-50 Senate—again unprecedented.

Senator BOND chaired the committee in January and then, after Senator JEFFORDS' decision, the reins passed to me.

I say publicly, I thank Senator BOND for the graciousness in the way he transited the gavel and the chairmanship to me. He did it with graciousness and efficiency. His staff could not have been more cooperative or collegial. Because of that, our subcommittee didn't miss a beat, and we didn't miss a buck. We went to work on behalf of veterans, housing, the environment, investments in space, science, technology, as well as other agencies. I thank him for that.

I bring to the Senate's attention a summary of the bill. This act provides for a total of \$112.7 billion for all the programs within the bill, which is \$4.8 billion or 4 percent over the fiscal year 2001 level. This includes \$27.3 billion in mandatory funding, an increase of \$1.8 billion over the fiscal year 2001 level, and \$85.4 billion in discretionary spending, which is an increase of \$3 billion over last year.

What this bill essentially does is meet compelling human need. It meets compelling human need in terms of our veterans, in terms of the poor, meeting the day-to-day needs of the working poor. It helps rebuild our neighborhoods and communities. Through its funding for FEMA, it protects our homeland security. And it invests in science and technology through NASA and the National Science Foundation.

For our veterans, we have increased veterans health care by over \$1 billion from last year, bringing it to a total of \$21.3 billion. This would allow the VA healthcare system to serve 4 million patients through 2002. This conference agreement also provides the VA the