

of scope, to the issue of exhaustion of remedies, to the issue of clinical trials, to the issue of medical necessity, on which we have worked with Senators BAYH and CARPER to make sure we have a consensus on what is covered, giving proper deference to the contract and the contractual language but making sure the independent reviewers have the ability to make sure that if particular treatments are needed, they can be provided.

So we started 2 weeks ago with a series of obstacles in front of us, starting with scope and running throughout the legislation. What has happened during the course of this debate, and the work that has been done, is that one by one those obstacles, those barriers, have fallen, and we have been able to reach consensus agreement.

There is great momentum to do something that really matters to the American people. The winners in this debate are not politicians. The winners of this debate are not the people within this Chamber. The winners are the American people and the families all over this country.

We have in this body an opportunity to do an extraordinary thing, which is to give people more control over their lives and more control, specifically, over their health care decisions, the things that affect their families and members of their families.

All of us have worked very hard—Republicans and Democrats—to try to get to the place where we have consensus on this legislation, and one by one by one the barriers to passing real patient protection have fallen to the floor.

We have more work to do. We will have issues of liability that remain to be resolved. But the reality is, we are a long way down the road. We have tremendous momentum for doing what there is a consensus in this country to do. Not just in the Senate, not just in the House of Representatives, but all across America, all of us who have spent time in our States have heard over and over that the American people expect us to do something about this issue.

The time has come. It is time to quit talking about it. It is time for the political debate to stop. It is time to do something that can really affect people's lives. We have an extraordinary opportunity to do something important. We have made extraordinary progress toward that goal, but we are not quite there. We need to keep our nose to the grindstone, keep working, keep debating, and finish this legislation, get it through the House, and get it on the President's desk, with great hope and optimism that the President, when confronted with legislation that during his campaign he vowed to support, will stand by his vow and do what he has told us he would do. We are optimistic about that. We believe the President will do what is right for the American people.

So I thank my colleagues for all their work on this issue.

I ask my colleagues to vote, tomorrow morning, against the Collins amendment and for the Breaux amendment, which is a bipartisan consensus that has been reached. And we will continue our work toward providing the American people the protection they need and they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

EXPLANATION OF VOTE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I regret I was not present to cast my vote on the motion to table the amendment offered by the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KYL) and the Senator from Nebraska (Mr. NELSON). I wish the RECORD to reflect that had I been present, I would have voted "nay."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Majority Leader DASCHLE was asked earlier today, on several occasions by Senator BYRD and Senator STEVENS, if he would bring to the floor a unanimous consent request that there be a time set on the supplemental appropriations bill that is now with the Appropriations Committee that would set a time certain for filing of amendments on this most important legislation.

Such a request has been cleared by Senator DASCHLE and the majority, but objection has been raised by the minority. So the request by Senators BYRD and STEVENS cannot be met tonight. Hopefully, this request will be cleared by the minority tomorrow so that there can be a time certain set for the amendments on this, as I said, most important piece of legislation, the supplemental appropriations bill.

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.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent there now be a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

OFFSHORE OIL

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I want to take a moment while the leadership of the Senate is, at this

very moment, deciding which course the rest of the day will take with regard to this important legislation, the Patients' Bill of Rights. While we have a moment in which we might reflect on other items, I want to draw to the attention of the Senate the considerable concern of 16 million Floridians that the Bush administration is trying to drill for oil and gas off the shores of the State of Florida.

It is most instructive, if one looks at a map of the Gulf of Mexico, where colored in on the gulf waters are the active drilling leases. One will see clearly that, from the central Gulf of Mexico all the way to the western Gulf of Mexico, almost all of the waters of the gulf are shaded in, indicating active oil and gas drilling leases. Indeed, there is a reason for that. It is because the reserves were there, the oil and gas deposits are there, the future reserves are expected to be there. As a matter of fact, I believe it is 80 percent of all economically recoverable, undiscovered gas reserves on the Outer Continental Shelf—which not only includes the gulf but also the Atlantic and Pacific—80 percent of the Nation's known, recoverable gas reserves in the central and western gulf and 60 percent of the future recoverable oil reserves are in that area too. They are no in the area off the State of Florida.

The State of Florida has consistently taken the position that we should not have oil and gas drilling because of the high cost and potential damage to our environment and to our economy. One of our primary industries is the tourism industry, which so often is dependent upon those pure, sugary white beaches being unspoiled so millions of visitors who come to Florida to enjoy the sunshine and the waters and the beaches can do so without having to worry about having oil spread across the beach.

I can tell you that 16 million Floridians, in unison, do not want oil lapping up on our beaches. The cost to our environment and the cost to our economy would be simply too high.

Why, you would ask, other than that the oil and gas reserves are in the central and western gulf, is there not any drilling off the coast of Florida? It goes back to the early 1980s, under the Reagan administration and a Secretary of the Interior, James Watt. He offered tracts for lease from as far north as Cape Hatteras, NC, in the Atlantic, south all the way as far as Fort Pierce, FL.

I had the privilege of being a Member of the House of Representatives at the time. So I went to work, knowing the people of my congressional district, in the early 1980s, didn't want oil lapping up onto their beaches. We were able to persuade the appropriations subcommittee on the Department of the Interior appropriations bill to insert language that said no money appropriated under this act shall be used for