

complete action on the welfare bill by next Tuesday, and I think we are making progress on our side and I hope it is going to be a bipartisan effort before it is over. I hope we will have Democratic support. But we would like to move forward and dispose of the Democratic proposal—by “dispose,” I mean either adopt it or not adopt it, that would be disposition; hopefully not adopt it—and then to move on to amendments, if necessary, and I assume some will be necessary, and then complete action by next Tuesday.

I think we have now completed action on seven appropriations bills. There are no other appropriations bills now ready for consideration. We may try a two-track system—I will discuss that with the Democratic leader—so we can keep abreast of the House on appropriations bills and have all appropriations bills in the President's hands by October 1.

So it may mean some late, late, late evenings. But we will try to accommodate major concerns that many Senators have from time to time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

CONGRATULATING THE LEADERSHIP

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I wonder if we could all join in thanking the distinguished majority leader for his assistance on getting this very important bill through. There were times just before the recess when the list of amendments was as long as your arm. Together with our distinguished chairman and the ranking member, and, indeed, the Democratic leader, we were able to condense an almost impossible list of amendments and proceed to this bill and set a time certain for a vote. I think there is a great value in the Senate when we can establish a time when Senators can expect to have a vote on a major piece of legislation like this.

I congratulate the distinguished chairman, Chairman THURMOND, of South Carolina. I think the people of his State can take great pride.

This is your first bill—although having served on the committee these many, many years—this is the first bill on which your name is on it as chairman of the committee. It was your leadership that enabled this bill to be passed right on time. That leadership started in the very early days of the hearings—first at the subcommittee level, then at the full committee, through markup, with the able assistance of the distinguished ranking member, Mr. NUNN of Georgia.

So, I congratulate our leadership. We are fortunate, and I think I may say to both, that they carried it on in the finest traditions established many years ago by your predecessors, both as chairman and ranking member, in a bipartisan way.

I yield the floor.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I would like to add my congratulations

to the committee chairman and the ranking member of our committee for the superb job they did in this authorization bill. Many people came together to make this bill happen. I think the chairman provided leadership. He stood for a strong national defense. It was a bipartisan effort on behalf of the full committee to try to make sure that when our young men and women sign up to protect our freedom, they will have the training and the backing of our country to do the job. That is what the chairman decided we were going to do. There was not a week that went by that the chairman did not talk to his fellow members and colleagues about the importance of keeping our strong national defense.

So I want to commend him for the great job that he did. I am proud to be a member of the Armed Services Committee. I also want to commend the leadership of Senator WARNER, the No. 2 person on the committee, who was deputized by the chairman to meet with people on the very important issue of theater missile defense, because this is an important long-term issue for our country. Senator WARNER led the effort, along with Senator COHEN, Senator NUNN, and Senator LEVIN, to make sure that we did have a strong commitment to our own defenses so that no matter what might happen in the field of technology in the next 10 years, we are going to protect our country and our shores.

So I commend Senator THURMOND, Senator NUNN, Senator WARNER, and all of those who made this very important bill happen, and I will look forward to working with them in the conference committee to maintain the freedom and the protection and security of our country in the fine tradition that we have had.

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, I wish to thank the able Senator from Texas for her kind remarks. She is a very prominent and able member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and does a great job. We appreciate all that she has done in connection with this particular bill.

Again, I wish to thank Senator WARNER for the fine job he has done, and Senator NUNN for his fine cooperation and assistance.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I wish to associate myself with the remarks of the chairman with respect to our distinguished colleague, the Senator from Texas. I am privileged to have her as a member of my subcommittee. She certainly looks out for the interests of not only the United States, but certainly the people of Texas.

I wish to recognize the occupant of the chair, the Presiding Officer, who was very helpful throughout this piece of legislation, although not a member of our committee, primarily because the senior Senator is a member and, therefore, he cannot be. But we look forward to working with him in the course of the conference on a number

of issues, primarily the issue of missile defense on which he is an acknowledged expert.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senator PRYOR is recognized.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I thank the Chair for recognizing me.

TESTING OF THEATER MISSILE DEFENSE INTERCEPTORS

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise to briefly discuss a small, and virtually unnoticed amendment to the DOD authorization bill that just passed the U.S. Senate. It was an amendment offered by Senator NUNN, Senator BINGAMAN, and myself to restore some common sense to the Missile Defense Act of 1995.

As my colleagues know, the Missile Defense Act of 1995 contains, among other things, an aggressive program to develop and deploy theater missile defenses in the form of sophisticated missile interceptors.

Our amendment to the DOD bill will help ensure that these interceptors are tested properly so we know how the taxpayer's money is being spent on these programs.

If we want to protect ourselves from the threat of missile attacks, we should make sure these interceptor programs are capable of destroying incoming missiles.

I was disappointed that this bill originally deleted a provision passed by Congress 2 years ago that would help us monitor these programs through a series of live-fire tests.

I believe it would be dangerous for the Senate to show a lack of interest in monitoring the progress of our theater missile defense interceptors. Our primary concern should be in making sure they are maturing properly.

Mr. President, I am pleased that the Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization [BMDO] and the Pentagon's Director of Operational Testing agreed to work together in an effort to help us properly emphasize the importance of testing our TMD interceptor programs.

I applaud the Director of the BMDO, Gen. Malcolm O'Neill, and the Director of Operational Testing, Phil Coyle, for working cooperatively in this effort.

Mr. President, this is a responsible amendment that asks the Pentagon to periodically assess the maturity of each interceptor program, and to advise the Congress on the progress we're making. It also asks the Secretary of Defense to certify to Congress that these programs work properly before they enter into full-rate production. Finally, this amendment will help prevent the wasteful practice of building weapon systems that do not work as expected.

This concept, Mr. President, is commonly referred to as “Fly Before You Buy.” Fly Before You Buy means that new weapons must demonstrate their progress and maturity in operational