

floor today, that we can make it possible so he and Senator BYRD can lead us in completing that appropriations process.

So we look forward to working with you. Hopefully, we can get this done in the near future.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, after the Chair announces the period of morning business, I ask unanimous consent I be recognized in morning business, and then the Senator from New Hampshire, Mr. GREGG, be recognized for up to 40 minutes.

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

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for not to extend beyond the hour of 11:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Nevada.

LEGISLATION TO BE PASSED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we did have a meeting with the President yesterday. It was one where we talked about the things that need to be done. The people who were at the meeting are experienced and understand the legislative perils we face on a daily basis. But we also recognize there are things that need to be done for the country, and we have to work toward that.

I want to just briefly mention today that Senator DASCHLE introduced, on behalf of the Democratic caucus, bills that we believe are extremely important to pass. These are not necessarily in the order of importance, but the first bill introduced was S. 6, the Comprehensive Homeland Security Act.

Basically, this bill builds on legislative initiatives that were passed in the 107th Congress. It would authorize funding for important programs. We have big holes in our security blanket. We have to do something about chemical security, domestic nuclear plants. We have to do something about rail security, security of water treatment works, and border security efforts to combat terrorism generally. This legislation is, in my opinion, a must-do piece of legislation.

Prescription drugs has been talked about endlessly, with nothing having been done. It is so important that we pass legislation that makes Medicare a more meaningful, modern piece of legislation for our senior citizens.

When the Medicare legislation passed in 1965, there was really no need for

prescription drugs because they were not used as they are today to make people more comfortable, to save lives, and to prevent disease. But now that is part of the basic treatment that seniors have.

The average senior has 18 prescriptions filled every year. As a result, they pay large amounts out of their pocket for prescription drugs. What we have to do is provide a prescription drug benefit as part of Medicare. We need to do that and also in the process preserve Medicare. Medicare is not a perfect program, but it is a good program. People are saying it is about to go broke. Medicare is not about to go broke. And always remember that Medicare is a pay-as-you-go program. We continually have to refund and figure out ways to finance Medicare. That is the way it is. It is different than Social Security.

So a prescription drug benefit is important for Medicare. Also, it is important we get ahold of prescription drug prices generally for everybody. Prescription drugs in this country are tremendously expensive, more expensive than in any other country, even though we develop and manufacture and produce most of them. It is not fair we spend more on prescription drugs than other countries. It is not fair they are cheaper in Canada and cheaper in Mexico than they are in the United States.

The Leave No Child Behind Act is something that is an important piece of legislation, but the problem now is that it is not funded. We have to provide full funding for this No Child Left Behind Act. We have to hold States accountable for ensuring that all students have access to educational resources.

We have to guarantee full funding of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.

The Senator from New Hampshire has been a loud advocate for doing something to fund that program. We have to, as part of S. 8, help communities modernize public schools, and there are other things we need to do included in S. 8 that we need to debate and pass this year.

S. 9 is the protection for pensions. This is a buildup of last year's corporate scandals and the 3-year stock market decline. They have simply highlighted the need to strengthen pension protections. That is what S. 9 is all about.

S. 10 deals with the more than 40 million people who have no health insurance. There are many other people who have inadequate health insurance. We have to do something to provide some way of these people getting decent medical care. Over 40 million people with no health insurance says it all. That is what S. 10 is all about.

As to the Equal Rights and Equal Dignity for Americans Act, we believe that we have to expand hate crimes protection, strengthen enforcement of existing civil rights laws, support legal representation for indigent Americans,

and respond to the injustice of racial profiling. That is what S. 16 is all about. It is important legislation that needs to be passed.

Global warming is S. 17. There is no question, there is no debate—sensibly, logically, intellectually—that global warming is taking place. It is. The question is, what are we going to do about it? That is the key.

We as Democrats talk about the minimum wage. We do it because most people have the stereotype that people who draw the minimum wage are kids flipping hamburgers at McDonald's. That is not the case. In fact, 60 percent of the people who draw the minimum wage are women; for 40 percent of those women, that is the only money they get for them and their families. So it is really important that we do something to increase the minimum wage. The minimum wage act would in two steps raise the minimum wage by \$1.50: 75 cents when we pass the legislation; 75 cents after that. It is important we do that.

Many people who work two and sometimes three jobs, most of them part time, are paid the minimum wage. We need to increase that. That is the right thing to do.

I was very happy the leader included in his package of must-do legislation for the Democratic caucus this year the Veterans and Military Personnel Fairness Act. Among other provisions, this includes expanding full concurrent receipt of military retirement. We have made a little bit of progress over the last couple years. Last year we made the most progress, but we are still lacking.

If you retire from the military and have a medical disability, you cannot draw both pensions. Prior to last year, no one could. Last year we provided that people who are Purple Heart recipients basically can. We need to expand that. I was very happy the leader included this legislation that I authored and have worked on very closely with Senators LEVIN and WARNER. It has taken years to get where we are now. We will continue to try to expand until people who retire from the military and have a disability can draw the same pension as somebody who retires from Sears and Roebuck and the Department of Interior and has the military disability. They should be able to draw the pension just the same. We want that to happen.

S. 21, the Emergency Disaster Assistance Act, addresses severe drought and floods, natural disasters farmers and ranchers face all over the country. We need to do more to take care of these desperate people. Time magazine had their pictures of the year. I looked at that last night before going to bed. It is interesting to note that a number of those pictures deal with the drought that has taken place. One picture is of a 67-year-old farmer. For the first time in his career, he has nothing. He said: Farmers know what to do when it rains; we don't know what to do when it doesn't rain.