

amendments be in order; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the bill be read the third time, and the Senate proceed to a vote in relation to the measure, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, this is obviously a very important matter, and we should address this in a very careful and appropriate way. I might say to Senators, this matter has not been referred to the Senate Finance Committee. The committee has jurisdiction on it. Rather, it is coming straight to the floor with a request that there be no amendments, which I think is a little bit bizarre.

I might also point out that in other sanctions areas, for example, China, we had a long, deep, involved debate a few years ago and agreed to how we should address sanctions, particularly trade sanctions against China.

I might also inform Senators, I have been in consultation with the chairman of the Finance Committee who agrees with me that it would be inappropriate to proceed at this time, certainly in the manner suggested by the Senator from Kentucky.

I might ask the Senator if he will agree to modify his request in a way I think is much more appropriate, particularly even stronger than the resolution suggested by the Senator. And that would be for similar, as was the case with China MFN, annual extensions or annual sanctions, but that the President would suggest that the sanctions be continued and that would be the case unless there is a motion of disapproval passed by both Houses of Congress. I believe the executive branch should be part of this. This is not just a legislative branch issue. When it comes to sanctions, clearly the executive branch should play a very important role.

I might ask the Senator if he would agree to modify his request in the nature of an annual request. If the President wants to continue, he certainly could make an annual request, and that would be subject to disapproval by both Houses of Congress.

Is the Senator agreeable to make that change?

Mr. MCCONNELL. I would say to my friend from Montana, there is already a sunset provision in the bill. It occurs as soon as democracy is restored in Burma. There was a legitimate election there in 1990. Aung San Suu Kyi and her party won 80 percent of the vote. She has been under house arrest now for 14 years. The sanctions would terminate under the bill that I hope we will pass just as soon as she is allowed to take power. Such a provision is already in the bill. I am happy to continue the discussions with my friend from Montana.

The reason the Finance Committee didn't get the bill is because the Parliamentarian sent it to the Foreign Re-

lations Committee and both the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and the ranking member support the bill, as do the majority and minority leaders of the Senate.

I know the majority leader is waiting to speak on another issue. If I could, I will proceed to try to get this on the calendar. I understand S. 1215 is at the desk and is due for its second reading.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, I know the deepness of the feelings of the Senator from Kentucky. I want the record to reflect that this is bipartisan legislation. One of the chief cosponsors is the Senator from California. This was not an objection made on the other side; it was an objection made by the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee. I hope this most important issue can be resolved along the lines suggested by the ranking member and the chairman of the Finance Committee, that this resolution will be passed and that each year it would stay in effect until both Houses of Congress say it should stay in effect. I think that would be a reasonable resolution of this most important issue. I, therefore, object.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator HARKIN be added as a cosponsor.

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

MEASURE PLACED ON CALENDAR—S. 1215

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand that S. 1215 is at the desk and due for its second reading; is that correct?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that it be in order to read the title of the measure.

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

The clerk will read the title of the bill for the second time.

A bill (S. 1215) to sanction the ruling Burmese military junta, to strengthen Burma's democratic forces and support and recognize the National League of Democracy as the legitimate representative of the Burmese people, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask that the Senate proceed to the measure and object to further proceeding.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard. The item will be placed on the calendar under rule XIV.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, this measure has broad bipartisan support. It was referred to the Foreign Relations Committee, not the Finance Committee. Both the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and the ranking member support this measure, as do the majority and minority leaders of the Senate.

It is time to act. Aung San Suu Kyi, we hope, is still alive. There is some urgency about this. This is an unusual situation. The U.S. needs to send a message about this now and lead the rest of the world into a policy of multilateral sanctions that truly squeeze this regime. I hope we can continue our discussion and get this bill up for a vote no later than sometime today.

I thank the majority leader.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I wish to make a few comments on Medicare and the importance of strengthening and improving Medicare. We are addressing this in the Finance Committee currently and will have it on the floor of the Senate. I want to take this opportunity first to comment on the exchange that we heard on the floor.

As my friend and distinguished colleague from Kentucky stated, both the majority leader and the minority leader are sponsors and strongly support the legislation on Burma. Burma's brutal military regime is perpetrating a wave of crackdowns, including incarcerating the Nobel Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi. That is why there is this sense of immediacy and why we feel very strongly that this bill should be addressed on the floor of the Senate. I am very hopeful, in spite of the reaction to the unanimous consent request we just heard on the floor, that over the course of the morning we can work out what is necessary to bring this legislation to the floor and have a vote on it today.

I do join my colleagues in supporting this and the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003, introduced by Senator MCCONNELL and cosponsored by a bipartisan group of Senators, including Senators FEINSTEIN, MCCAIN, LEAHY, SPECTER, KENNEDY, MIKULSKI, KYL, DASCHLE, and many others who will be added over the course of the morning.

The legislation, importantly, among other things, would impose a U.S. import ban on goods manufactured in Burma and those made by what is called the State Peace and Development Council, SPDC, and companies that are owned by the SPDC. It would also freeze the assets of the regime itself that are held in the U.S. and require the U.S. to oppose and vote against loans or other assistance proposed for Burma by international financial institutions.

Why? Because the situation in Burma indeed is severe. After what apparently was an assassination attempt of Aung San Suu Kyi, who won a landslide victory in Burma's last election, authorities now hold, as we all know, this duly elected leader and numerous other activists—we don't know exactly how many—incommunicado. Reports indicate that Suu Kyi is being held in a military camp about 40 kilometers outside of Rangoon. It is believed that she does suffer from some injuries and lacerations of her face and an injured

shoulder. This is all current news. Again, there is a sense of urgency for us as a government to act and demonstrate our focus on this issue.

Meanwhile, it is reported that the military regime has raided the offices of Suu Kyi's political party, the National League for Democracy, tearing down party flags and padlocking doors all across the country. Reportedly, military intelligence agents are posted outside the offices, preventing any entry at the offices in Rangoon and Mandalay. The regime has placed numerous democracy movement leaders under house arrest, surrounding their homes and severing telephone lines. I mention this again to explain why we are attempting to bring this legislation directly to the floor.

I commend my colleagues for their efforts on behalf of the Burmese people. As the strongest and most free nation in the world, I do believe we have a profound duty to support that struggle for freedom. Again, I am hopeful that we can address it this morning and over the course of the day.

Mr. REID. Will the majority leader yield for a unanimous consent request?

Mr. FRIST. Yes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be added as a cosponsor of this resolution on Burma with my friend from Kentucky.

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

MEDICARE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, let me take a few minutes to comment on what is taking place today in the release of some initial working documents on Medicare modernization by members of the Finance Committee.

Prefacing that, I will say that we have a lot of work to do over the next 3 weeks in order to address an issue that is important to every single American, and that is giving our seniors and individuals with disabilities health care security.

Today there are about 35 million seniors on Medicare and about 5 million individuals with disabilities. We are also speaking to and acting for those soon-to-be seniors in future generations.

I commend my colleagues who have done yeoman's work—Senator BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY—and for their commitment to advancing Medicare modernization, strengthening and moving Medicare down the field so we can deliver that health care security to our seniors. The goal is twofold: to strengthen and improve Medicare and, at the same time, provide meaningful prescription drug benefits to seniors and Americans with disabilities.

I recognize it is a huge challenge to address this very complex program but it is one that I know this body is up to, one we have been working very hard on for years, and it is one that I believe we can accomplish in the next 3 weeks in the Senate.

There were a couple of concerns raised in the last several days that I briefly want to mention. First, where are we and why act now? Why can we not wait and put this off? It is driven very much by the demographics of the aging population, where, over the next 30 years, we will have a doubling in the number of seniors; but in terms of workers actually paying into the program itself, that will be falling off continually over time. Thus, we need to take this opportunity while we are adding this prescription drug benefit to modernize the program so seniors and individuals with disabilities will continue to get good care and hopefully improve that care in this environment where we have to address the issues of solvency and sustainability.

The Finance Committee has held over 30 hearings on Medicare over the past 4 years, at least 7 devoted to prescription drug coverage alone. Last Friday, now 4 days ago, the Finance Committee had another hearing to focus very specifically on the proposal put forth by Chairman GRASSLEY and Senator BAUCUS. That was the third committee hearing this year on Medicare.

On Thursday of this week, the day after tomorrow, the Finance Committee will meet in executive session to amend and vote on the Grassley-Baucus proposal. And then the following week, on that Monday, that bill will be brought to the floor of the Senate and will be debated and likely amended in some shape or form over a 2-week period.

We are approaching this issue in a systematic way, in an orderly way, in a way that is reasonable, and in a way that is thoughtful.

Some concerns people are talking about are that Medicare denies some seniors coverage. Let me be clear, we will make sure this coverage is available to every senior everywhere. We will specifically be working to ensure access in rural areas. We will be creating public-private partnerships that will offer choice—again, it is voluntary—but will be offering choice for all seniors in every corner of America.

Secondly, many seniors want the certainty of knowing nothing is going to be taken away from them. Seniors might ask: Do I have to give up what I have now? Are you forcing me into some new system? The answer is no. This is a voluntary program. All of us will be able to look every senior in their eyes and say: You can keep exactly what you have now if that is what you want, if that is what you desire. We will be able for the first time to say there are options that include choices you may not have today in Medicare, such as preventive care, such as chronic disease management.

The fact is the current program is fragmented. It does not provide adequate coverage. I know as a physician and I strongly believe as a policymaker it does not adequately cover preventive care. It does not cover disease manage-

ment or chronic disease management. As we all know, it does not cover outpatient prescription drugs. I do believe good health depends on giving seniors good options, the opportunity to choose the plan that best meets their needs.

I have also heard about Medicare reform proposals relating to HMOs, forcing people into HMOs. This plan does not do that. Simply, this plan does not force anybody into an HMO. It is a voluntary proposal. Some HMOs have performed very well. But the better comparison, instead of looking at HMOs, is the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program. Seniors will have the option to get a plan similar to what we have as Senators, Members of the House, and other Federal employees have. I should add, this program has a longer history than Medicare. We have learned how to improve it, modify it, and make it a better program over the last 40 years.

I close by saying I believe seniors deserve the options that Federal employees have. We know Federal employees are very satisfied with the quality of care they receive. Seniors deserve this opportunity to choose. They deserve the opportunity to obtain care that is more flexible, that is less bureaucratic, and that has less paperwork.

Seniors deserve care that keeps them healthy by incorporating those preventive measures. Seniors deserve care that protects them from catastrophic out-of-pocket expenses. America's seniors should have the ability to see the doctor they choose, even if that doctor is outside the network. America's seniors deserve a system that focuses on their needs to keep them healthy and not just to respond to acute episodic illness.

Since 1965, Medicare has admirably served a generation of America's seniors. We owe tomorrow's seniors no less. That will take a response in this body to give seniors access to the care they truly deserve. I look forward to working with my colleagues to strengthen and improve Medicare over the next few weeks.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we have conferred with floor staff. Senator MIKULSKI is in the Chamber, and she has a statement regarding prescription drugs. I ask unanimous consent that she have an opportunity to respond to the statement of the Senator from Tennessee and that she be given 7½ minutes to do that. Following that, it is my understanding the leader is looking to vote around 11 o'clock on the Dorgan amendment and that the time after the statement by Senator MIKULSKI will basically be evenly divided. I am not asking unanimous consent. The time will basically be divided between the Senator from North Dakota and whoever opposes his amendment.