

when we first started this Senate bill, and worked tirelessly from beginning to end to deliver on the promise that we all have to the American people. In large part it was accomplished because of their work and their partnership in many ways.

Senator JOHN BREAUX deserves huge credit. I have worked with Senator BREAUX over the last 7 years. There was a Breaux-Frist bill that came out of the Bipartisan Commission. He has demonstrated real leadership and, in my mind, has been at it in terms of the final product longer than anybody in the Senate, working together on the model we ended up with.

All members of the conference committee showed a degree of dedication and resolve that is seldom seen in either Chamber. There were Senators ORRIN HATCH and DON NICKLES and JOHN KYL. We simply would not have reached this point if we had not worked together with strong leadership on the part of the conferees.

In addition, there were people such as Senators JEFFORDS, GREGG, HAGEL, ENSIGN, WYDEN, and SNOWE, who have focused on a tripartisan, bipartisan approach to health care reform, which has been instrumental in many ways.

Senators BUNNING, THOMAS, SMITH, LOTT, and SANTORUM all made huge contributions working through the Finance Committee.

Members of this body who voted against final passage also contributed in remarkable ways to this product.

I do also want to mention, just in passing, the House leadership because the House leadership, especially Speaker DENNIS HASTERT and Leader TOM DELAY, deserve very special recognition. I worked very closely, and our leadership worked very closely with them, especially in the final 2 weeks of that conference.

I had the opportunity to call yesterday Chairman BILL THOMAS. He is really the mind behind what we accomplished. He was able to assimilate very complex policy and put it into a portrait that ultimately became the substrate for this bill. He demonstrated real leadership, real patience.

Also, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Chairman BILLY TAUZIN, we simply would not be here without his active participation as well.

My dedicated staff—Dean Rosen, Elizabeth Scanlon, Rohit Kumar, and Craig Burton—put in hundreds of hours and poured over thousands of details. Lee Rawls, Eric Ueland, David Schiappa and his wonderful staff here really made it possible.

So in closing, to everyone who worked so hard and have given so much of themselves, working hard on this effort, I thank them. I thank you, the Senate thanks you, America thanks you, and, most of all, America's seniors thank you.

Madam President, I appreciate the Senator from New Jersey giving me the floor for those few minutes. I look for-

ward to listening to what he has to say on a very important issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, first, I want to say thank you—

Mr. CORNYN. Will the Senator yield for a brief UC?

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Sure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of the Senator from New Jersey—I believe he told me he would speak for about 10 minutes or so—I be recognized for remarks that I might make at that time.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, and I will not object, I wonder if the Senator might add to that UC—about how long does the Senator plan to speak, so I could then try to amend that UC to place myself in order?

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I would make my remarks no longer than 15 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I ask the Senator if he would modify his unanimous consent request to allow the Senator from Michigan, and then I believe the Senator from Washington, to each have 10 minutes following his remarks?

Mr. CORNYN. That is acceptable.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. LAUTENBERG. No objection, Madam President.

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

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I would just note that the gracious statement of the Senator from Texas said "10 minutes or so." I would hope, for clarification, if "or so" is 3 or 4 minutes longer, it will not be a violation of the unanimous consent agreement that we just heard.

#### COMMENDING THE MAJORITY LEADER

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, before the majority leader leaves the floor, I want to say that I have been back here about a year now, and working with the majority leader, when he took office, has been an interesting and a positive experience. We are all cognizant of the wonderful work that Dr. FRIST has done in his time before the Senate and how he served populations so desperately in need. He took the risks and the time necessary to do that.

We all congratulate him for that, for his generosity of spirit, and his skill as a surgeon and physician.

I have found on the rare occasions that I—I hope they are rare—called on Senator FRIST for an ear, he was more than willing to lend it. If he disagreed, he said so. And if he agreed—even rarer—that was done with dispatch and a straightforwardness which I greatly

respect. I hope he and his family will enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday.

As we muse over what happened in the last week, since Senator FRIST is a physician, I hope he can prescribe a way we can heal some of the bruises that occurred in this last contentious period.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1602

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, it is about 26 months since the assault on our families, our people, and our invincibility that took place at the World Trade Center, at the Pentagon, and in a field in Pennsylvania where it was so heroically disrupted on its way to a target. Therefore, I am outraged that we can't find enough time to further pay attention to the memory of the 9/11 victims by passing a bill to extend the deadline for victims' families, enabling them to apply for victims' compensation which is in a fund that was passed in the Senate and passed in the House and that is about to expire.

Though we have just been through a difficult and contentious period with some acrimony, no matter how much I or others might have agreed with the outcome, our business for this year is not yet done. We are facing the expiration of this compensation fund, and there are lots of families who have yet to participate in this program that was designed for them.

The need for this 9/11 victims bill is urgent. If we don't vote on it before Thanksgiving, this bill will become obsolete because the current filing deadline is December 22, 2003.

We are reminded that a truly joyous part of the year is just beginning. It starts with Thanksgiving, goes through to Christmas and Hanukkah. It is just around the corner. A lone, anonymous Republican Senator is holding up a bill that would make these holidays less stressful for the 9/11 families. As we requested or will request in a unanimous consent request, the Senate must take up and pass this bill today in order to fulfill our commitments to compensate the victims' families.

So far, out of approximately 3,000 killed, about 1,800 families, or only 60 percent of those eligible, have filed claims on behalf of relatives who were killed. This is far too low a percentage.

Helping the families of 9/11 victims is not just the responsibility of the Senators in the Northeast, it is a national commitment we made that we owed to those who suffered on that tragic day. I am distressed by the fact that because of somebody in the majority, having just spent 39 hours of time talking about a handful of judicial nominees, we can't even commit a few minutes today to take up a simple but critical bill and pass it.

The bill is vital to thousands of Americans who lost loved ones or who were themselves injured in the 9/11 attacks. Many of these families will mourn forever. Many of these families