

tonight, it is a political expression. It is not something that will become a functional, operative bill.

The House is out. We are about to go out. There will be no conference. We will be back to visit this again a week from now. The reason we will be back a week from now with or without action on the floor of the Senate tonight is we do not have answers to this problem. We are asking for those answers because this time I have told the Secretary, I have told OMB, and as chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee—Senator HUTCHISON is chairman of the Appropriations Committee and made it very clear, and my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are backing us on this—we will get the right figures and we will do it right.

Now, with the new progressions, now with the growth rates understood, now with the incoming out of Iraq and Afghanistan and those numbers clearly understandable, we will serve them as we have been serving them and no veteran so qualified will be denied.

That is what this Congress has done responsibly year after year and that is what this Congress will do. The Senate has acted. But in this hour there is nothing we can do, nor in this instance should do. In that time, no veteran will be denied service.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. It is interesting to hear the description given by the Senator who is the chairman of the veterans' committee. It is also interesting to put it in the context of where we have come over the last few days.

The amendment on the floor just a few days ago when the shortfall was noted on a bipartisan basis from Senator MURRAY was an amendment less than the one adopted. It was \$1.4 billion. The Senator, the chairman of the committee, as well as others, came together on a bipartisan basis and said, That is not enough. That is not enough, \$1.4 billion will not meet the shortfall. By our best estimate, they said 24 hours ago or whenever we debated it, we need more, we need \$1.5 billion. And we acceded to your knowledge of the agency and your knowledge of its need and came together on a bipartisan basis—I believe the vote was 96 to nothing—and said that is exactly what we will do, \$1.5 billion.

Then while we barely finished this work, the House came back and said no, the figure is \$975 million or whatever number they came up with, dramatically less than what we had approved.

It strikes me as interesting that we are going to back off of our best estimate and say let's err on the side of less money for the Veterans' Administration. Why wouldn't the Senate be holding fast to its position? Why wouldn't the Senate be holding fast to

its position and say we believe \$1.5 billion is the right number still, as we believed 24 hours ago when we voted on it? Why do we want to back off at this point and say it must be that much less?

It strikes me, unless there has been a dramatic infusion of new information and knowledge, that we are acceding to the House of Representatives because they have decided to go home.

Mr. REID. Regular order, Mr. President.

Mr. CRAIG. Will the Senator yield?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Regular order has been called for. Is there objection?

The majority leader.

Mr. FRIST. Reserving the right to object, and I will be brief, just listening to the conversation, I ask the minority leader's unanimous consent agreement be modified to simply clear the House legislation for 975, and that the House bill be considered read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator so modify his request?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader.

Mr. REID. 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 the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, with all due respect to the distinguished majority leader, my friend, I will not agree to the modification. I am standing on the unanimous consent request I offered a few minutes ago.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. FRIST. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the original request by the minority leader for the unanimous consent.

Mr. FRIST. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, for the short term, we have a problem that we will resolve when we return a week from now. By then I hope we have accurate figures, so that we can do as I think the Senate wants to do, and as the unanimous consent of the Senate expressed the other evening. At this late hour, all we could do is make a political expression. We could not resolve an issue. I think we are all intent on resolving a very important issue for the sake of our veterans. We hope to have those numbers, and I think we will. Those requests have gone to OMB, to see what their figures are, as I work with the Veterans' Administration, as appropriators do to make sure we have

those accurate figures. I think all of us this time want to get it right. I know this Senator does.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO BERNARD A. "TONY" GOETZ

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a Kentuckian who has spent much of his life dedicated to improving access to healthcare and educational opportunities for the people of the Commonwealth. Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Owensboro native, Mr. Bernard A. "Tony" Goetz, as he prepares to begin a new chapter in his life—retirement.

I have had the pleasure of working with Tony on several different occasions, particularly through his tenure at the University of Kentucky where he served as Associate Dean of the College of Medicine and later as Director of Government Relations. In addition, Tony dedicated more than half of his professional career to developing an effective alumni affairs program at UK. He also helped establish the UK Center for Rural Health, create the UK Area Health Education System and launch the McDowell Cancer Network, which later became the Kentucky Community Cancer Program.

Tony's background in healthcare education and advocacy dates back to 1965, when he first served as executive director of the Owensboro Council for Retarded Children. He then served as executive director of the Blue Grass Association for Mental Retardation. In his next two jobs, Tony served as chief executive officer of the Bluegrass Regional Health Planning Council, Inc. and the East Kentucky Health Systems Agency, Inc.

Continuing his pattern of selfless service, Tony most recently worked in the Office of the Governor in Frankfort, KY. For the past two sessions, he has served as liaison between the Governor and the Kentucky General Assembly, combining his legendary affable nature with encyclopedic command of details he helped the Commonwealth move forward on a number of legislative fronts. Though his employers and responsibilities have changed over the years, it is obvious that Tony was instrumental and effective at every position he held. He balanced many duties and he performed each of them with tremendous skill. I ask my colleagues in the Senate to join me in honoring Tony Goetz for his dedicated service. I wish him well in retirement.

EULOGY TO FORMER SENATOR JAMES EXON

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the eulogy given by former Senator Bob Kerrey at the funeral of our late colleague, Jim Exon, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: