

Staff Sergeant Kyu H. Chay, of Fayetteville, North Carolina

Private Michael V. Bailey, of Waldorf, Maryland

Specialist Jason A. Lucas, of Columbus, Ohio

Chief Warrant Officer Scott W. Dyer, of Cocoa Beach, Florida

Specialist Fernando D. Robinson, of Hawthorne, California

Angelo J. Vaccaro, of Deltooa Florida

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I want their families to know that they can find their names in the permanent RECORD. Around many dinner tables across the Nation this Thanksgiving, the conversation will no doubt turn to the Iraq war. By this Thanksgiving, we will have been at war in Iraq as long as we were in World War II. I served in that war for almost 3 years. By reading these names today, my hope is that the dinner table conversations will discuss our foreign policy and the reasons that we are there, the reasons that they think put us there. I would ask them to contact their Senators, Representatives in Washington with views and questions that are on their minds.

Think about it. There are proposals now from outstanding leaders in this body suggesting that we need more troops than we have there, when it is the desire of most of us to get out of there. We can argue about timetables and should we have timetables, but we know this: we want our people home. It is shocking to hear suggestions that maybe we ought to be—maybe, that we ought to be sending more troops. Where were those suggestions when General Shinseki, a very high ranking chief of the Army, said to the Pentagon, to the President, to the American people that we ought to have at least 300,000 people on the ground there? Why, then, if this war was planned properly, didn't we respect the opinions of so many senior officers in the military who said we needed more and were denied?

When we hear pleas that say put more troops there, I, for one—I am sure colleagues of mine feel the same way—don't know where they are going to get them. We are stretched thin now. So I think it is a fairly arbitrary suggestion, unless there is a plan accompanying it that says whatever we do, this is what we intend to do. I don't want to get into that argument about timetables, and cut and run. No, stay and die. Is that the alternative that we are talking about? No.

I don't want us to leave in a fashion that negates some of the sacrifices that have been made, but we are now being left alone as other countries pull out the few people who were there as part of a coalition which never really materialized. We want a plan. We want some idea as to what the President, the administration thinks about when we can start to look ahead, think more about it from this side, from the American side, and not have some false hopes, dismal hopes that we are going to be able to stay there and correct this situation without telling the American

people, without telling the Congress that some program has to be presented that says we will not stay there forever. The price is far too costly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

DISASTER RELIEF FOR FARMERS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I want to say to my colleagues, I hope very much we are able to find some accommodation to work out the situation. I stand ready to try to resolve this matter. I did it yesterday. I withdrew an amendment with the assurance that we would go to the Agriculture appropriations bill today. I really expected that commitment would be kept. I don't know how else this place can run but on the good faith of Members. I did my best to accommodate colleagues yesterday and did so on the assurance, both public and private, that we would go to the Agriculture appropriations bill so we could have a vote—we could have a series of votes, if necessary—on the question of whether we are going to provide disaster assistance to farmers who have been hit by drought, flooding, and other natural disasters, something we have done routinely in the past, frankly, at far greater cost.

One of my colleagues asked me yesterday: How does this compare to disaster bills of the past? We looked it up. One year we had a disaster bill of \$16 billion, natural disaster. Another bill, another year it was \$14 billion.

This is \$4 billion for 2 years. This is not some outsized disaster assistance legislation; it is barebones. We recall that the bill that passed earlier was in the \$6 billion range, when I had earlier offered \$6.7 billion. We are down to \$4.5 billion, as we have taken out things the White House said they would object to. We took out the energy provisions, for a savings of \$1.8 billion. We stripped out some of the support for small businesses, for a savings of \$215 million. We did add steps to reduce the cost in response to complaints from the administration. We now have it stripped down to the barebones, \$4.5 billion for 2 years.

Mr. President, I thank very much those who have tried to work things out. I look forward to further discussions.

With that, 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. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, in line with the agreement we had reached yesterday, I now ask unanimous consent that we proceed to the Agriculture appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator, I object.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I know this is not necessarily the position of the occupant of the chair. He is being asked to do that on behalf of the other side. I regret that very much because we had what was to me a very clear understanding yesterday. It was very clear. We were going to go to the Agriculture appropriations bill today. I was to be given the right to offer my amendment. All other Senators would have their rights respected with respect to that bill. That meant they could call for a supermajority vote. They could try to invoke rule XVI. We were prepared to deal with any of those contingencies.

I must say that this action leaves us with very little choice but to now object to proceeding to other matters. If good faith means something in this Chamber, that means commitments are kept. I regret very much that we find ourselves in this circumstance. The commitment made to me yesterday was very clear, both public and private. We were going to go to the Agriculture appropriations bill today. We were going to have a chance to vote. It is not exactly a novel idea here that we vote. People have a chance to win or lose. That is what I am asking for. That is what I was assured yesterday would happen today.

So, again, I ask unanimous consent to proceed to the Agriculture appropriations bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator, I object.

Mr. CONRAD. Objection is clearly heard. Again, I regret that very much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota, Mr. DORGAN, is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, my colleague has sought unanimous consent to bring up the Agriculture appropriations bill. I recognize, and I know he recognizes, that we don't have the power of scheduling in the Senate. That is the basis of that request. Those who observe the process of legislating might wonder sometimes, if you are not doing anything, why are you not doing something?

Clearly we are not doing anything at the moment. We have no business pending. We are attempting to do a piece of legislation dealing with the agricultural disaster for family farmers who suffered weather-related disasters. That is on the basis of the discussion yesterday, where the leader of the Senate wanted to finish the Military Construction bill, and my colleague, Senator CONRAD, withdrew his amendment dealing with farm disaster help in order to allow that bill to be completed yesterday. So the assumption was, with the back-and-forth my colleague read from the RECORD, that we would have the opportunity today for my colleague to offer an amendment to the Agriculture appropriations bill because the assumption and intent was to bring up the Agriculture appropriations bill first thing today. That has not been the case.

We came into session at 2:15, I believe, and we essentially are doing nothing. So someone watching these proceedings might want to ask the question: If you are not doing anything, why aren't you doing something? Are you not doing anything because there is nothing to do?

That is not the case. We are not doing anything, despite the fact that there are things to be done, because people object to doing things. That is a strange situation. What should be done? The Agriculture appropriations bill should be brought to the floor. That was the intention yesterday.

That bill is one I worked on last spring. I am a member of that agriculture appropriations subcommittee. I offered an amendment that my colleague Senator CONRAD and many others worked on on a bipartisan basis. That amendment, dealing with farm disaster aid to farmers, was agreed to. It went through the entire process. But the bill has not been brought to the floor. It needs to be modified now because we have had a devastating drought in the middle of 2006. My colleague would modify, with his amendment, the original amendment and provide the disaster aid we want to provide to family farmers.

This is not some notion out of left field. It is what this country has always done. If you have a devastating drought—and tens of thousands of farmers have seen their crops dry up in the field, and they have lost everything—the Congress has always said: We want to help you.

It is interesting to me that we go all over the world helping. I am proud that our country is there to say we want to help. But what about here at home, in the middle of our country, in the northern Great Plains in North Dakota, where farmers and ranchers had to sell their entire herds because there was nothing to eat? You cannot run a farm and you cannot keep a cow if you don't have feed. What about those folks who lost everything? Do we want to help them? I think so. It is what we have always done. But we have been blocked from bringing it to the floor of the Senate. We have things to do right now, and yet we are doing nothing because we have people blocking the attempt to bring up legislation we should be working on.

So my colleague, Senator CONRAD, asked unanimous consent to go to the Agriculture appropriations bill, which we thought we were going to do as of yesterday, and we believed that was the intent. If we cannot reach an agreement on that, let me ask consent of a different nature. My understanding today was they could not go to the Agriculture appropriations bill, or would not, or whatever, and they wanted to go to the India nuclear agreement.

Let me ask this: I ask unanimous consent that the Senate immediately proceed to the Agriculture appropriations bill pending the disposition of the Indian nuclear agreement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator, I object.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the point is to say the following: We are not doing anything at this moment. There is much work to be done, some of it very important. We have a lot of farm families wondering: Will we be able to have money to run our farms, for spring planting, or are we going to be told by our bankers and lenders that we cannot continue?

There is an urgency to this. If it cannot be the case that we move to that this afternoon, then OK. If it is the case that there are objections to moving to the Agriculture appropriations bill today and someone says let's bring up the India nuclear deal, the question I raise is, Can we get an agreement following that, so that we have certainty? We are not asking for the Moon here. All we are asking for is certainty to be able to bring to the floor of the Senate and to have a vote on a disaster relief package that is supported by almost three-fourths of the Senate.

My hope is that the majority leader and others will agree with us that we need to find a time. Perhaps the time cannot be today. Can it be at a future date? As my colleague indicated, the Presiding Officer is constrained to object on behalf of the majority leader. I understand that. That may not even be his position. I know he has farmers and agricultural folks in his State as well. My hope is that, with the cooperation of the majority leader, we can lock in a determination of when we have business on the floor of the Senate that will allow Senator CONRAD and I and others to offer the amendment to provide disaster aid. That is what we are asking.

This is not a puzzle for which there is no solution. This is very simple. We just need to understand, will there be an attempt to continue to block this or will there be an obvious opportunity for us to offer the amendment? If there is an opportunity, at that point I think we can lock in a time. My colleague, Senator CONRAD, and I and others would be satisfied with that and we would know we will get to the point to pass this for the farmers in the Senate. That would be an enormous and beneficial thing to do on behalf of thousands of families who work very hard in this country. They get up in the morning and do chores. We don't use the term "do chores" around here. Nobody does chores in the Senate; that is, getting up in the morning, feeding cattle, dealing with the hogs, chickens, and the horses—doing chores. These are people who work very hard. I think it is important for us to recognize that this devastating drought hurt a lot of families very badly. We helped those families as a result of the loss of crops in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of Hurricane Katrina. I am pleased we did that. We should not limit help in the form of disaster aid to just those folks who lost crops due to a disaster named "Hurricane Katrina." That is the point we are making.

I regret that we have not been able to get consent. My colleague has indicated—and I join him—that he would be constrained to object to moving on other issues until we get an agreement. When we get an agreement on when we are going to be able to vote on this amendment, at that point, then we can move on.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COBURN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

NUTRITION SERVICES TO OLDER AMERICANS

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 6326, which was received from the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 6326) to clarify the provision of nutrition services to older Americans.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 6326) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I have agreed to have these matters resolved because they are urgent matters, and I certainly didn't want to in any way impede action on those items that are absolutely essential.

I would very much like to resolve this matter so that the commitments that were made to me yesterday, both privately and publicly, be kept and we can move on. But I was assured yesterday that if I would take down my amendment, we would then go to the Agriculture appropriations bill today so that the amendment could be offered on that bill, with all Senators' rights reserved.

That was fair. I did it in good faith. But it is not to me good faith to have commitments made and then not kept. So I find myself in the situation where I have no alternative but to object to other business being done until and unless the commitment that was made to