

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

**MILITARY VOTING PROTECTION
ACT**

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as the Senate knows, yesterday we voted to pass the Defense authorization bill. However, one of the casualties of yesterday's process—which was unique, to my knowledge; we actually had only two rollcall votes on amendments to the Defense authorization bill, which I don't think has ever happened before, and many important amendments were blocked by the process, amendments that might have been included in the managers' package. I wish to mention just one of those, which is the Military Voting Protection Act.

This was originally offered as a free-standing bill earlier, but then it changed to become an amendment to the Defense authorization bill because we thought it was particularly appropriate, as we were dealing with the needs of the men and women in uniform around the world, that we also respect and enforce their right to cast a vote.

We know from 2006 statistics alone that of all of the eligible civilian and military voters around the world who were eligible and who actually requested an absentee by mail ballot, only 5.5 percent of those votes were actually counted. That is a disgraceful statistic and one we need to do something about.

I compliment Senator LEVIN, Senator FEINSTEIN, and others for working with us during the process of the Defense authorization bill to come together on what I believe was a clear and acceptable amendment to all sides, but because of the bizarre process we found ourselves in yesterday, this bill was basically a casualty of that process, as I say.

So what I am hoping to do is take a bill we worked on that is very important in order to protect one of the most important civil rights of our men and women in uniform—the right to vote—and hopefully, by unanimous consent today, we can pass this bill and get it on its way to the President for signature in due course. I don't see any reason, since we did work together on this on a bipartisan basis and it has been cleared by both sides, there would be any objection.

**UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—
S. 3073**

Mr. CORNYN. So let me ask unanimous consent at this time that the Rules Committee be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 3073, the Military Voting Act.

I ask unanimous consent that the amendment at the desk be agreed to—by the way, that is the amendment we worked on with Senator BENNETT, the ranking member, and Senator FEIN-

STEIN, the chairman of the Rules Committee, together with Senator LEVIN and Senator WARNER. I ask unanimous consent that the bill, as amended, 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 at this point in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I object on behalf of the leadership, as the Rules Committee needs time to look at this and digest this and figure this out to try to work something out. So I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am disappointed that the other side would object. This is the same amendment that was already cleared by the Rules Committee, so I don't understand what the process is that the Senator is referring to. I hope this isn't just another delay tactic. It is something that really cries out for us to address.

I have to say, when I travel back to my State and talk to my constituents, they absolutely believe this Congress is dysfunctional. If we can't find some way to come together on a bipartisan basis to pass noncontroversial voting rights protection for our military such as this, I guess there is not a lot of hope for doing other, perhaps more complicated, more involved things.

This is very straightforward. To have an objection to this bill which has already been worked on and cleared through the process and which was a casualty of the bizarre process by which we adopted the Defense authorization bill, without any right, really, to offer any amendments such as this, is, frankly, beyond me.

In the remaining few days this Congress is in session, I hope whatever concerns the Senator was referring to which have not been made known to me will be addressed. I will come back here every day, if necessary, and offer a similar unanimous consent request. I would ask those on the other side who object to the passage of this bill to offer me some explanation for what the specific concern is. If there is a problem we can eliminate by working with them, we would be glad to do it. But to just stonewall this important amendment to protect one of the most basic civil rights for our men and women in uniform—the right to vote—is, frankly, beyond me.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ENERGY

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to express my strong support for the so-called extenders package, which includes the Energy Improvement and Extension Act and will come before the Senate, as I understand it, as early as this afternoon.

Passage of this bill is very important for the country and will have wide-reaching impacts. It will reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil, curb greenhouse gas emissions, create hundreds of thousands of American jobs, promote R&D in our innovative industries, ease fiscal burdens on rural counties, and reduce the tax burden on middle-class families.

The bill demonstrates the critical role that tax incentives can play in addressing our country's most pressing challenges.

Let me focus today on the very robust package of tax incentives for clean, renewable energy, and energy efficiency. Those are incentives I and many of my colleagues have worked on since the beginning of this Congress. We have already taken eight votes this Congress on various versions of this energy tax package. Unfortunately, as the "green" energy sector has sat by and production has slowed in that sector, and as skyrocketing gas prices have made our dependence on foreign oil more apparent than ever, our energy tax incentives have been hostage to a broader dispute between the parties concerning whether, and how, to offset the costs of extending various tax provisions. I am very pleased that after a number of false starts, we appear, finally, to have reached a compromise.

The compromise will enable us to become a more energy-efficient nation. It will wean us off of our dependence on fossil fuels. It extends the production tax credit by 1 year for wind energy and by 2 years for other qualified renewable sources. I had hoped we could achieve a longer term extension of the production tax credit, but this is all that could be afforded within the package's cost constraints. Undoubtedly, this bill's extension of the production tax credit will enable our renewable industries to stay afloat. Today, I want to state my commitment again to work for a long-term extension of the production tax credit, which is very much needed, which I hope we can achieve in the next Congress.

This package, however, includes long-term extensions for tax credits that make distributed green energy technologies affordable for American businesses and families. The investment tax credit, which gives businesses a 30-percent tax credit for investing in solar, wind, geothermal, and ocean energy equipment, is extended for a full 8 years. So, too, is the residential energy efficiency property credit, which gives families a 30-percent tax credit for the cost of installing solar equipment at