UNFINISHED SENATE BUSINESS

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, we are getting close to wrapping up this session. We did a lot of good things this year and some things we didn’t get done. One thing we did not get done was passage of the stimulus package. That is unfortunate. It became too partisan where that need to be. Recession are not partisan. We have a lot of people out of work who need help. A lot of companies want to grow. We could have done that.

Senator DASYE working hard with the Bush administration. There was a lot of movement on this side of the aisle to help pass the stimulus package. It didn’t happen. I regret that very much. We could have helped the economy, and we could have helped a lot of unemployed people.

Senator BAUCUS mentioned earlier that he hopes when people come back they are less partisan and more intent on getting some positive results for the American people that need to be helped. I hope we do not hear: Well, we cannot bring something out unless it passes two-thirds on our side. That does not belong in the Senate. The Senate is a deliberative body, and we should have the chance to pass things, and pass them by majority vote. Try to get something done, try to make a positive contribution toward helping the economy, not a strictly Democratic or Republican package, but a package that helps the economy.

The Administration passed good legislation last night. Not perfect. Maybe we can improve upon it and help our economy and help the unemployed.

As we wind down, there are several nominations that are pending that should be confirmed. It is not fair to this administration. It is not fair to some of these individuals who have been languishing, waiting to be confirmed with no action. There are five district court nominees. We have confirmed 27. If we do 5 more, that will be 32. During President Clinton’s first year, we confirmed 27 of 47. President Bush nominated 60. We have confirmed 27, not quite half. We confirmed over half for President Clinton, and if you look at what we did for the first President Bush or what we did for Ronald Reagan, we confirmed 91 percent of Ronald Reagan’s judges and a much higher percentage for President Bush. We should confirm more than we have today. There are five on the calendar. There is no reason not to confirm these individuals. We all know they will be confirmed. Why not let them go ahead and assume their duties?

We have a judge from Alabama, a judge from Colorado, a judge from Nevada, a judge from Texas, a judge from Georgia. We have judges from Democratic States and Republican States. Let’s not hold these five individuals hostage. We can pass them tonight and I urge my colleagues to help do that.

We also have four U.S. attorneys, from Alabama, New York, Arkansas, and one from New Jersey. They need to be confirmed. They should be confirmed.

We have a couple of marshals who are pending. There is no reason why they should not be confirmed—actually just one marshal pending. The chairman of the Department of the Interior, the head of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. Let’s confirm these individuals. Let’s do it tonight. Somebody says: Why are you doing it tonight? We confirmed more judges, more U.S. attorneys—all those are always done by voice vote.

We have Janet Hale to be Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services. Secretary Thompson is entitled to have his Assistant Secretary for Health and Human Services be confirmed. So I urge my colleagues to vote on that nomination or to approve that nomination.

We also have a couple of other positions. We have James Lockhart III to be Deputy Commissioner of Social Security. That is an important position.

In the Department of Energy, we have Michael Smith, actually one of my constituents. He happens to be secretary of energy of the State of Oklahoma. He has been nominated to be Assistant Secretary for National Nuclear Security. That is an important position.

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