

## 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 way too partisan. It did not need to be. Recessions 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 GRASSLEY worked 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 needs to happen. 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 a chance to try 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 Democrat or Republican package, but a package that helps the economy.

The House 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, Federal judges. 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 Democrat 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 and one to be Chairman 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 votes.

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 of Energy dealing with fossil fuels. Secretary Abraham is completing his first year and he doesn't have his Assistant Secretary dealing with fossil fuels. We are now importing about 58 percent of our energy needs and he doesn't even have an Assistant Secretary dealing with fossil fuels.

One of the first bills we are going to be wrestling with next year is an energy bill. We have a commitment from the majority leader that we are going to take up energy early next year. That is great. You would think the administration would be entitled to have their Assistant Secretary to help the negotiations, to help prod Congress along. So I urge my colleagues to approve his nomination. He was reported out of the Energy Committee unanimously, as I believe Beverly Cook was, from Idaho, to be Assistant Secretary of Energy dealing with environment, safety, and health.

Also Margaret S.Y. Chu, of New Mexico, to be Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, Department of Energy.

There is no reason why we cannot do most of these nominees. Most of these nominees passed by unanimous votes in the committees. Why can't we confirm these individuals?

I urge Senator DASCHLE and Senator REID and others to help.

There are a couple of others who are very important. The Department of State, John Hanford. John Hanford is an individual with whom many of us worked in the Senate for years. He worked for Senator LUGAR. He helped myself and others when we ended up passing the International Religious Freedom Act. Senator LIEBERMAN was a principal sponsor of that, and Senator SPECTER. The administration

nominated John Hanford III, of Virginia, to be Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. When you think of the battles we have going on all across the world with religious freedom, and some of it is in Afghanistan and some in Pakistan and some in Sudan where you have individuals who are held captive, imprisoned, enslaved because of their religion, wouldn't it make sense for us to get our Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom confirmed so he can go to work and help protect and promote religious harmony and freedom throughout the world? Hopefully, his nomination will be confirmed tonight.

We have several other people in the Department of State who were confirmed by the Foreign Relations Committee unanimously who should be confirmed tonight. Many of these were just reported by the committee, by Senator BIDEN. I thank him for doing that. I am looking at John Ong, who is to be Ambassador to Norway and John Price to be Ambassador Extraordinary to the Republic of Mauritius; Arthur Dewey, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration.

Some of these, again, were just reported out. I thank my colleagues. We should be able to get those through as well, not to mention Gaddi Vasquez, of California, to be Director of the Peace Corps.

I mention these. These are not all. I did not mention Gene Scalia. I would really urge my colleagues—Gene Scalia has been on the calendar. He was nominated in, I believe, April, one of the earliest nominees of this administration, to be Solicitor of the Department of Labor. Secretary Chao is entitled to have a Solicitor. One of the most important positions in the Department of Labor is Solicitor. He has to make all kinds of rulings. It is very important that she have her Solicitor. I urge my colleagues, let's have a vote. If we cannot have it today, let's have it in January; let's vote up or down.

Somebody said we may have to file cloture. I can think of several people, including the previous Solicitor of Labor, to whom many on this side might have had a philosophical objection, but we did not require cloture. You should not require cloture on most nominees. You should not require cloture hardly ever on nominees unless they are really out of the Main Street. We had a vote on Joycelyn Elders and I opposed that nomination very significantly, but it was an up-or-down vote.

I think people are entitled to have a difference of opinion and have a debate. If we have a difference of opinion, let's discuss it. This is the Senate. But to not allow somebody to have a vote and hold their careers in limbo for an unlimited period of time, it is not fair to them, and I don't think it makes the Senate look very good.

Again, I urge our colleagues to move forward on Gene Scalia, to move forward on some of these other nominees,