

101ST CONGRESS: 1989 WRAP-UP

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER BOB DOLE

MR. DOLE. MR. PRESIDENT, AS WE FINALLY WRAP UP OUR WORK FOR THE YEAR, I WANT TO TAKE A FEW MOMENTS TO REFLECT ON THE FIRST HALF OF THE 101ST CONGRESS. I KNOW REPORTERS AND PUNDITS ARE ALREADY POUNDING OUT THEIR YEAR-IN-REVIEW PIECES, SO BEFORE ALL THE SPIN MAKES ITS WAY INTO PRINT, LET ME SAY THAT WE HAVE HAD A SOLID, PRODUCTIVE SESSION. IT MAY HAVE LOOKED LIKE A ROLER COASTER AT TIMES -- WITH OUR BI-PARTISAN WAR ON DRUGS AT THE TOP, AND THE PARTISAN WAR ON JOHN TOWER AT THE BOTTOM -- BUT IN THE END WE HAVE DONE OUR BEST FOR AMERICA.

I REALIZE THE CYNICS ARE NEVER SATISFIED. THEY ALWAYS FIND SOME WAY TO KNOCK CONGRESS, TO SAY WE WERE "UNPRODUCTIVE", OR "LACKLUSTER". IN FACT, ONE LEADING NEWSPAPER RECENTLY PRINTED A LIST ENTITLED "WHAT CONGRESS HAS DONE". UNDER THAT DUBIOUS HEADLINE WERE 6 ITEMS -- SIX!

I DO NOT SHARE THAT LIMITED AND SHALLOW ASSESSMENT. OF COURSE, CRITICISM IS CHEAP. CONGRESS IS FAR FROM PERFECT, BUT LOOKING AT OUR HARD WORK DURING THE PAST ELEVEN MONTHS, THE SENATE HAS INDEED ACCOMPLISHED MUCH.

PRESIDENT EXTENDS HAND OF BI-PARTISANSHIP

PRESIDENT BUSH SOUNDED THE RIGHT TONE FOR THE YEAR IN HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS ON JANUARY 20TH. ON THE STEPS OF THIS HISTORIC BUILDING, OUR NEW PRESIDENT EXTENDED HIS HAND IN FRIENDSHIP TO OUR COLLEAGUES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE AISLE, SAYING "THE

AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT ACTION. THEY DIDN'T SEND US HERE TO BICKER. THEY ASK US TO RISE ABOVE THE MERELY PARTISAN."

WAR ON DRUGS

WORKING TOGETHER, REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS JOINED THE PRESIDENT TO BATTLE AMERICA'S GREATEST CHALLENGE -- THE DRUG CRISIS. PRESIDENT BUSH PROVIDED THE LEADERSHIP BY PRESENTING THE FIRST-EVER COORDINATED NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE WAR ON DRUGS.

COUPLED WITH A TOUGH ANTI-CRIME PACKAGE, THE PRESIDENT CALLED FOR A MASSIVE NEW PRISON CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM TO HELP PUT THE THUGS AND THE PUSHERS WHERE THEY BELONG -- BEHIND BARS. HE ALSO REQUESTED NEW FUNDING TO HELP LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS ON EVERY LEVEL IN THEIR DEADLY BATTLE WITH THE DRUG MENACE.

CONGRESS FULLY FUNDED THE PRESIDENT'S PACKAGE, AND THEN SOME. THE GOOD NEWS IS, WE DID IT WITHOUT RAISING TAXES, AS SOME INSISTED WE DO.

CONGRESS STILL NEEDS TO DO MORE ON THE CRIME FRONT, ESPECIALLY THROUGH IMPORTANT REFORMS IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM. WE NEED TO TOUGHEN UP THE SYSTEM SO THAT THE PUSHERS FEAR THE LAW AS MUCH AS WE FEAR THEM. IT IS THE KIND OF JUSTICE AMERICA IS DEMANDING, AND I CAN GUARANTEE REPUBLICANS WILL BE BACK NEXT YEAR PUSHING A TOUGH ANTI-CRIME AGENDA.

MINIMUM WAGE

PRESIDENT BUSH RECENTLY SIGNED INTO LAW THE FIRST INCREASE IN THE NATION'S MINIMUM WAGE IN 8 YEARS. IT WAS A FULFILLMENT OF A BUSH CAMPAIGN PLEDGE, SOMETHING SOME OF HIS CRITICS CONVENIENTLY FORGET. THE ISSUE HAD FULL DEBATE IN THE SENATE AND WE WERE ABLE TO WORK OUT A GOOD COMPROMISE WITH OUR DEMOCRATIC COLLEAGUES THAT

NOT ONLY RAISED THE MINIMUM WAGE BUT ALSO INSTITUTED AN IMPORTANT TRAINING WAGE FOR FIRST-TIME WORKERS, WHICH WILL HELP BOOST BEGINNERS ONTO THE FIRST RUNG OF THE LABOR LADDER.

DROUGHT RELIEF

AMERICAN FARMERS GOT ANOTHER JOLT THIS YEAR THANKS TO A NEW DROUGHT, THIS ONE BEGINNING IN THE WINTER OF 1988 AND CARRYING THROUGH THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF '89. THE RESULT WAS MASSIVE CROP DEVASTATION, ESPECIALLY IN THE WINTER WHEAT BELT. ALONG WITH THE DROUGHT, SEVERE WEATHER ALSO TOOK ITS TOLL ON COTTON, SOYBEANS AND MANY OTHER CROPS. CONGRESS RESPONDED WITH ALMOST A BILLION DOLLARS IN DISASTER ASSISTANCE, BUT ONLY AFTER SOME OF US INSISTED THAT PROGRAM CROPS BE AT THE FRONT OF THE LINE WHEN IT CAME TIME TO RECEIVE FEDERAL RELIEF. WE WERE ABLE TO TARGET THE ASSISTANCE, THUS HOLDING THE LINE ON MASSIVE, UNCHECKED TAXPAYER BAIL-OUTS FOR NON-PROGRAM CROPS. THIS BOTTOMLINE APPROACH PAID OFF FOR THE AMERICAN FARMER WHEN THE PRESIDENT AGREED WITH OUR RESPONSIBLE APPROACH AND SIGNED THE BILL INTO LAW.

IT IS MY HOPE THAT THIS RELIEF PACKAGE REPRESENTS THE FINAL AD HOC CONGRESSIONAL DISASTER BILL. THE FEDERAL CROP INSURANCE PROGRAM SHOULD BE DOING THE JOB, AND IT MIGHT BE ABLE TO IF WE CAN CLEAN-UP THE WASTE AND FRAUD THAT HAS PLAGUED THE PROGRAM.

RURAL HOSPITALS

ON ANOTHER CRITICAL RURAL ISSUE, I AM PLEASED THE SENATE APPROVED MY RURAL HEALTH CARE PACKAGE. FOR TOO MANY YEARS, RURAL AMERICA HAS GOTTEN THE SHORT END OF THE HEALTH CARE STICK. WE HAVE WATCHED HOSPITAL AFTER HOSPITAL CLOSE DOWN IN OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES, LEAVING VAST AREAS OF AMERICA WITHOUT ADEQUATE OR ACCESSIBLE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE.

WE NEED TO PROPERLY FUND OUR URBAN HOSPITALS, BUT THERE IS NO REASON RURAL HOSPITALS SHOULD GET SECOND CLASS TREATMENT.

POLAND/HUNGARY AID

THE DRAMATIC CHANGES UNFOLDING IN EASTERN EUROPE WERE
SPEAHEADED BY UNIMAGINED DEMOCRATIC BREAKTHROUGHS IN POLAND AND

HUNGARY. GEORGE BUSH'S FIRST OVERSEAS VISIT AS PRESIDENT BROUGHT
HIM TO POLAND WHERE HE UNDERSCORED AMERICA'S COMMITMENT TO

FREEDOM BY PLEDGING A QUARTER OF A BILLION DOLLARS IN U.S. AID. WORKING WITH THE WHITE HOUSE AND OUR DEMOCRATIC COLLEAGUES, WE WERE ABLE TO FASHION A FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE AID PACKAGE FOR POLAND AND HUNGARY.

LEBANON

LET ME BRIEFLY ADD THAT THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER AND I HAVE WORKED TOGETHER ON A FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE THAT IS A PRIORITY CONCERN FOR US, AND THAT IS THE ONGOING TRAGEDY IN LEBANON. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME SIGNS LATELY -- MOST NOTABLY THE ARAB LEAGUE'S PEACE INITIATIVE -- THAT TELL BOTH OF US THINGS ARE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. THERE IS STILL A LONG, LONG WAY TO GO, AND WE WILL BE WATCHING FOR REAL PROGRESS IN THAT MIDDLE EAST NIGHTMARE.

AID TO DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION IN NICARAGUA

CONGRESS ALSO MADE ANOTHER COMMITMENT TO FREEDOM BY ENDORSING THE ADMINISTRATION'S AID PLAN FOR THE DEMOCRATIC OPPOSITION IN NICARAGUA. CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS TO WEAKEN OR WATER IT DOWN FAILED, WHICH IS GOOD NEWS FOR VIOLETTA CHAMORRO, OUR BEST HOPE FOR OUSTING COMMUNIST DICTATOR DANIEL ORTEGA WHO IS DOING ALL HE CAN TO STEAL NEXT YEAR'S ELECTION.

ARMENIAN EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

THE SENATE ALSO DID THE RIGHT THING THIS YEAR BY VOTING \$5 MILLION IN NEW ASSISTANCE TO EARTHQUAKE-RAVAGED ARMENIA. I WAS THERE THIS SUMMER AND I CAN ATTEST TO THE TREMENDOUS NEEDS OF THE COURAGEOUS ARMENIAN PEOPLE: 500,000 HAVE BEEN LEFT HOMELESS BY THE KILLER QUAKE, WHILE MEDICAL AID, RECONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION EFFORTS HAVE BEEN OVERWHELMED BY THE SCOPE OF THE TRAGEDY.

JOHN TOWER

THE SENATE MADE HISTORY THIS YEAR WITH THE REJECTION OF JOHN TOWER'S NOMINATION TO HEAD THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT. BUT IT WAS THE KIND OF HISTORY WE SHOULDN'T BE PROUD OF -- WHAT WE WITNESSED, AND WHAT JOHN TOWER AND HIS FAMILY ENDURED, WAS REGRETTABLE.

I DO NOT REVISIT THIS ISSUE SIMPLY TO PICK AT OLD WOUNDS, BUT TO REMIND THIS BODY THAT THE TOWER NOMINATION IS ONE PRECEDENT THE SENATE SHOULD IGNORE.

CHILD CARE & OTHER MANDATES

WE ADDRESSED A NUMBER OF SOCIAL ISSUES, INCLUDING CHILD CARE, BUT IN MY VIEW THIS BODY WENT THE WRONG WAY ON THAT ONE. IT IS AN ISSUE WE WILL REVISIT NEXT YEAR AND I WILL DO ALL I CAN TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT ANY KIND OF CHILD CARE WILL BE FREE OF BIG FEDERAL MANDATES AND GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN FAMILY AND CHURCH DECISIONS.

1989 WAS A GOOD YEAR IF ONLY FOR THE FACT THAT WE HELD THE LINE ON THE 'MANDATE AGENDA'. SO FAR, CONGRESS HAS BEEN ABLE TO LIMIT LIBERAL ATTEMPTS TO MANDATE CHILD CARE; TO MANDATE GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN LABOR DISPUTES; AND TO MANDATE ALL OTHER KINDS OF BIG GOVERNMENT MISCHIEF.

DISABILITY

AMERICA'S DISABLED WILL LOOK AT THE 101ST CONGRESS AND SEE A LANDMARK VICTORY WITH SENATE PASSAGE OF THE SO-CALLED BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THE DISABLED. THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT IS A SWEEPING REFORM MEASURE THAT GUARANTEES LONG OVERDUE RIGHTS OF THE DISABLED IN THE WORKPLACE, AND IN ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS.

DISAPPOINTMENTS

NO SESSION WILL EVER GO THE WAY YOU WANT IT -- THE LEADERS KNOW THIS FOR A FACT. THIS YEAR HAS HAD SOME REAL DISAPPOINTMENTS, WITH THE TOWER NOMINATION TOPPING THE LIST. BUT THE SENATE ALSO MISFIRED IN ITS PROCEDURAL ROADBLOCK TO ENACTING A CUT IN THE CAPITAL GAINS TAX. LET THE RECORD SHOW THAT A MAJORITY OF SENATORS -- 51 SENATORS -- VOTED FOR THE TAX CUT. THE CUT WAS BLOCKED THIS YEAR, A MISTAKE THAT HAS PUT OFF FOR ANOTHER YEAR A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO REVITALIZE THE ECONOMY.

THE SENATE ALSO SENT THE WRONG SIGNAL TO AMERICA WITH ITS DEFEAT OF A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO PROTECT THE FLAG. AMERICANS WERE OUTRAGED BY THE SUPREME COURT'S RED, WHITE AND BLUE BLUNDER ON FLAG BURNING, BUT THE SENATE RESPONDED WITH A MISGUIDED FEDERAL STATUTE THAT FLUNKS THE CONSTITUTIONAL TEST. I'LL PREDICT AGAIN THAT WE HAVEN'T SEEN THE LAST OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL FIX FOR OLD GLORY.

IN ANY EVENT, BANK ON THIS -- CAPITAL GAINS WILL BE BACK NEXT YEAR.

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER MITCHELL

MR. PRESIDENT, NO RECAP OF THIS YEAR'S SESSION WOULD BE COMPLETE WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING THE GOOD WORK OF THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER. I WANT TO THANK SENATOR MITCHELL FOR ALL OF HIS COURTESIES, COOPERATION AND, ABOVE ALL, HIS FRIENDSHIP. WE HAVE WORKED WELL TOGETHER EVEN AS WE CARRIED OUT TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITIES OUR PARTY LEADERSHIP ROLES.

THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER AND I MAY DISAGREE ON ISSUES -- AND WE HAVE ON MANY -- BUT WE ALWAYS AGREE THAT THE SENATE HAS TO WORK. WITHOUT THAT KIND OF UNDERSTANDING, WITHOUT THAT KIND OF COMMITMENT TO THE INSTITUTION, AND WITHOUT EACH OTHER'S TRUST, THE UNITED STATES SENATE WOULD COME TO A CRASHING HALT. AND THAT WOULD BE BAD NEWS FOR AMERICA.

THE GOOD NEWS IS, THE DISTINGUISHED MAJORITY LEADER IS A MAN OF HIS WORD; HIS WORD IS GOLD. THERE HAVE BEEN NO SURPRISES. AND DESPITE THE HIGH HURDLES OF DAY-TO-DAY POLITICS, TODAY WE HAVE REACHED THE FINISH LINE TOGETHER.

IT IS A TRIBUTE TO HIS LEADERSHIP AND I THANK HIM FOR IT.

KANSAS CONCLUSION

ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT WARRANT NATIONAL HEADLINES, THERE WAS GOOD NEWS FOR KANSAS -- ON DROUGHT RELIEF, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, RURAL HOSPITAL CARE, WATER PROJECTS, IMPORTANT ADDITIONS TO OUR STATE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, DEFENSE PROJECTS AND MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS AT McCONNELL AIR FORCE BASE, FORT RILEY AND FORT LEAVENWORTH AND MUCH-NEEDED HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS.

ALL OF THAT MAY NOT RATE WITH THE "INSIDE THE BELTWAY CROWD", BUT THE LAST TIME I CHECKED THAT'S WHY I WAS SENT HERE -- TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR KANSAS.