what communication and financial records that we are examining in our attempts to thwart future terrorist attacks?

I think not. Nor do I think the American people would accept a system that inordinately tips our hand to our enemies.

At the end of the day, I think that the compromises made with respect to NSLs in this bill should be recognized as a good faith effort to strengthen the right of those who have legitimate challenges to the reasonableness of the governmental request for information.

In the spirit of compromise and in recognition that many citizens have expressed concerns about this bill and are just now focusing on the long-standing NSL procedures, I think it appropriate to make these accommodate so long as we do not unduly burden legitimate law enforcement needs and longstanding practices.

Let me summarize my position on the PATRIOT Act.

I support the Conference report revisions to the PATRIOT Act, although do not favor each and every particular change.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes on cloture and yes on final passage.

I commend my friend, Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner, for his leadership of this conference committee.

I commend my friend, Senator Specter, for his leadership in working over time to achieve a broad bipartisan consensus on this bill.

I want also commend all of my fellow conference, including all of those Democratic conference who did not sign the conference report.

These are important issues and I understand and respect that many in Congress and the American public comes to this debate from different perspectives. I do not question anyone’s patriotism; just because they are raising questions and concerns about this revised version of the PATRIOT Act. I might question their wisdom and judgment as pertaining to this particular bill but never the ism.

I hope that it comes time to vote that my colleagues will recognize that this is a good, compromise bill.

I understand that not everyone will agree with the text and tittle of this bill—I certainly do not.

On balance the PATRIOT Act has worked well and we have every reason to believe that these changes will make the PATRIOT Act work even better.

This bill is good for Americans and bad news for the terrorists.

That is the way it should be.

I strongly disagree with those who would filibuster the motion to proceed to this conference report.

Let this body have the same up and down vote that the House held on Wednesday.

A three-month extension just shows the American public that this body cannot even do one of those rare and unusual must-do pieces of legislation in a timely fashion.

As well, no doubt some political punters will likely interpret a 3-month punt on the PATRIOT Act as a short-term political defeat for the administration.

But this is a double edged sword: The American public will not be pleased if, after they have had the time and opportunity to reflect on the facts, they conclude that failure to accomplish a comprehensive renewal and strengthening of the PATRIOT Act before the end of this year is interpreted by our enemies as somehow inviting enabling further terrorist attacks on U.S. soil.

The Senate should vote to send this bill to President Bush’s desk.

I ask unanimous consent that a letter to the Senate and House of Representatives from the board of directors of the 9/11 Families for a Secure America be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

9/11 FAMILIES FOR A SECURE AMERICA,
Staten Island, NY December 14, 2005,
To the United States Senate and House of Representatives:

The members of 9/11 Families for a Secure America ask you to “yes” on the conference report to HR 3199, the Reauthorization of the Patriot Act.

Our families understand that an important reason the 9/11 mass murderers were able to “succeed” in their conspiracy was the existence of “the wall” that blocked information sharing between law enforcement and the intelligence community. The Patriot Act removed that “wall” temporarily and it is important to now remove it forever so that the next 9/11 killers are not aided by the laws of our own country.

The Conference Report addresses many of the objections expressed by some Members to HR 3199. In contrast, it is not an illusion that nineteen foreign terrorists took advantage of our government’s refusal to give its law enforcement and intelligence officers the logical and obvious tools needed to catch the conspirators prior to September 11, 2001. The result was the murder of American citizens and our friends. We are convinced that the reality of 9/11 outweighs the minor, hypothetical objections that have been raised.

Some may think the final version of HR 3199 not quite perfect, but defeat of the Patriot Reauthorization means freedom of opinion for terrorists and more needless deaths of innocent Americans. We think that concern for the safety of this country demands that these Members compromise and accept something a little less than what they view as perfection. Please vote “yes” on the conference report to HR 3199.

Sincerely,
The Board of Directors, 9/11 Families for a Secure America:

Bruce DeCell, Sergeant, NYPD (retired), father in law of Mark Petrocelli, age 29.
Bill Doyle, father of Joseph; age 24, WTC North Tower.
Lynn Faulkner, husband of Lynn, WTC South Tower.
Peter & Jan Gadiel, parents of James, age 21, WTC North Tower.
Grace Godshalk, mother of William R. Godshalk, age 35, WTC South Tower 89th floor.
Joan Molinaro, mother of Firefighter Carl Molinaro.
Will Seckzer, detective Sergeant (retired), NYPD, father of Jason Seckzer, age 31, WTC North Tower 105th floor.

Mr. HATCH. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The chair will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for a quorum be discharged.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

WAR IN IRAQ

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak briefly about the progress on the war in Iraq and, importantly, the well-being and morale of our troops in the field.

Last week, the State of South Dakota lost two of its sons in Iraq, SSG Daniel Cuka, 27, from Yankton, SD, and SFC Richard Shield, 40, from Tabor, SD. Both served in the 147th Field Artillery of the South Dakota National Guard and were killed by improvised explosive devices while riding in their humvees.

They were assigned the mission of assisting in the training of Iraqi police. Three other members of their battery were also wounded. South Dakota is now in the process of grieving for and honoring these two brave men who answered the call of duty.

One week after this tragic loss, an historic event occurred today in Iraq that gives particular meaning and value to the lives and sacrifice of these two men. Today Iraq held a national election to fill parliamentary seats and it appears that there was a massive turnout of voters from each of the major ethnic and religious groups, including from the Sunni population that only a few months ago rejected any participation in the political process.

This election is only the latest in a series of milestones giving testimony to the great progress that has already been made in our effort to transform this country into a true democracy. Granted, it will be a long road to the kind of democracy we have in this country. But it was a long and bumpy road in our own journey. The fact that this Iraqi election occurred at all is amazing considering where the people of Iraq were 5 years ago, without freedom to determine their future and under the heel of Saddam Hussein’s tyranny.
Despite the naysayers in this country, optimism among Iraqis is becoming infectious. Of course, optimism and support for what we are doing has always been prevalent among our troops. Thanks to them and the sacrifices they are making, we are on the cusp of deliverance. This is very special to the hands of the Iraqi people—the ability to shape and control their own lives, lives free from the tyranny of dictators, free from radical Islamic intimidation, and free from hopelessness.

Let us dispel the fiction that America is not making progress in Iraq. Right here and right now. United States training and guidance, 97 Iraqi battalions are now conducting security operations throughout Iraq. In July of last year, there were only 5 Iraqi battalions equipped and trained to fight.

Currently, 33 battalions have assumed their own areas of operation. Last year at this time, the Iraqi security forces did not have control over any area in Iraq. Iraqi police are now manning 170 border compounds and 22 ports of entry. Over 75,000 Iraqi policemen are patrolling Iraqi cities. In the last election in January, 130,000 Iraqi security forces successfully protected polling sites all over the country and inspired a wave of pride throughout the country and a sharp increase in recruitment. We anticipate that in the election that occurred today, over 225,000 Iraqi security forces provided security to the polling places.

In the January election almost a year ago, 8.5 million Iraqis turned out to vote, defying terrorists threats. In the October referendum, 10 million voters turned out. We expect significantly greater numbers in this election, including from the Sunni population whose Mullahs are now encouraging their people to get out and vote after opposing their participation in previous elections. Progress is clearly being made. To say otherwise is simply inaccurate and demoralizing to the soldiers in Iraq who are risking their lives to achieve these great milestones.

I would like to read a portion of an email sent to me by the mother of a soldier stationed in Iraq. Dear Julie, I am a commissioner in Corson County, McIntosh, SD. I also, happen to be a mother of 2 children in the Army. My son is now in Iraq, stationed at Ar Ramadi—not a very safe place. My second son, this email is to ask you to pass on to Congress the fact that all their back stabbing and finger pointing is very devastating to the families and friends of each of the courageous soldiers our state has lost this month, specifically, Army Sgt. 1st Class Richard Schild and Army Staff Sgt. Daniel M. Cuka. On December 4th these two soldiers of the South Dakota National Guard were killed by roadside bombs in Iraq as they went about the dangerous and critically important mission of training the Iraqi Police Force in one of Baghdad’s police districts. They have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation, and we, as a nation will be forever in their debt.

The two fallen soldiers who are being honored today at a memorial service in South Dakota gave their lives for a cause greater than themselves. Their families members they left behind will never forget the sacrifice their loved ones made. The challenges faced by our soldiers in Iraq are far more complicated and delicate than the challenges of a traditional battlefield. While our soldiers make every possible effort to avoid civilian casualties, they face an enemy that hides among civilians, and an enemy that rejoices in maximizing civilian casualties. Sgt. Schild and Sgt. Cuka died while helping the vast majority of peaceful Iraqis who wish to protect themselves, build a democracy, and enforce the law. They were part of an effort to make the world a safer and freer place for us and for future generations of Americans.

When I think on the deaths of Sgt. Schild and Sgt. Cuka, and all of the deaths of our soldiers in the war on terror, I am reminded of a passage of Scripture that says “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” To the families of Sgt. Schild and Sgt. Cuka, please know that all South Dakotans are thinking of you, and that you are in our thoughts and prayers. If there is anything we can do for you, we will do it. I hope it may provide some small measure of comfort to you to know that Sgt. Schild and Sgt. Cuka have laid down their lives for their friends, and we are forever grateful.

Mr. THUNE. What they gave to the State of South Dakota, to this great country and to the people of Iraq should never be forgotten.

I yield the floor and 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. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today marks a proud and momentous day in Iraq’s history. Today, on December 15, 2005, Mr. Frist. Mr. President, today marks a proud and momentous day in Iraq’s history. Today, on December 15, 2005, 2005, S13645

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

IRAQI VOTE FOR FREEDOM

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, today marks a proud and momentous day in Iraq’s history. Today, on December 15,