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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by our guest Chaplain, Rev. Campbell Gillon, Georgetown Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Eternal God, we come before Thee in dangerous times. Many are anxious and fearful as the lives of our Nation's forces and their allies are in harm's way, opposing an evil and oppressive regime. We pray for swift victory and a safe return. We know that the one certainty of war is sacrifice. And yet there is the haunting thought that if nothing is worth fighting and dying for, then evil goes unchallenged, cruelty unthwarted, and oppression unchecked. What then is worth living for?

We pray for courage and inner strength for those young men and women, who, on their country's behalf, offer a forceful, yet vulnerable presence to compel a malevolent dictator's overthrow.

Lord, we live in a day when the foundations of truth and goodness have been despised and denigrated and lives are built on hedonism, cynicism, and relativism. Yet these are sand, and after life's quaking storms only the things which cannot be shaken remain.

O God, let good be brought out of evil as people realize that freedom is a luxury, denied for most of history to most of humanity. Thus, may our gratitude for our own freedom be shown by never taking it for granted or using it wantonly, forgetting its cost in sacrifice, past and present.

May these Senators, as guardians of this precious freedom, be its sharers with others, as blessed by Thee. And may they use their position of power for a lasting purpose that benefits this fair land and far beyond. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable TED STEVENS led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNETT). The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business throughout the afternoon. As announced by the majority leader, there will be no rollcall votes today. On Tuesday at 9:30 a.m., the Senate will begin a series of votes in relation to amendments to the budget resolution. Again, Senators are reminded to remain in or close to the Chamber throughout this period to avoid missing any of the scheduled rollcall votes. Under the previous agreement, the Senate will vote on final passage of the budget resolution at 4 p.m. on Wednesday. Tuesday and Wednesday will be busy voting days, and we ask for the cooperation of all Members.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished assistant minority leader.

Mr. REID. Senator CONRAD, with Senator DASCHLE, worked all weekend in narrowing down the amendments. Senator CONRAD is in the present position of giving 20 of the 40 amendments to Senator NICKLES within the next few minutes, and at 4 p.m. the other amendments will be submitted to Senator NICKLES.

We recognize tomorrow could be a very difficult, long day, starting at 9:30. This agreement we made is in the best interests of everyone, and I am hopeful we can work that out.

Following the statement of the Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS, I ask

consent that Senator KENNEDY be recognized to speak for up to 30 minutes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNETT). Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 5 p.m., with time to be equally divided between the leaders or their designees.

SUPPORT FOR OUR TROOPS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong and unconditional support for our troops in Iraq. As the war continues to progress, I have every confidence in their capabilities, their courage, and their commitment. The passage by unanimous vote last week of a resolution in support of our troops sent a message to all the world that Congress is united behind our men and women in the gulf.

I have also come to express my sincere condolences to the families of those brave individuals who have already made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our Nation. Last Friday, I learned that my State of Maine had suffered two losses early in the fighting, two marines with ties to the State of Maine: CPT Jay Aubin and CPL Brian Kennedy were among those killed when their helicopter crashed in the Kuwaiti desert. Captain Aubin grew up in Skowhegan, ME, and his parents, Thomas Aubin and Nancy Chamberlain, live in our State still. Corporal Kennedy's mother lives in Port Clyde, ME. No words can express fully my sorrow over their loss and my

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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thanks for the service of their sons. Their brave sacrifice will never be forgotten.

On many occasions in recent months, this institution has debated the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Individual Senators have had honest disagreements about the right course to take in confronting Saddam Hussein. Now that our troops are engaged in battle against the forces of Saddam Hussein, we must speak with one voice.

The outcome of this conflict is not in doubt. Our military is the best equipped with the best trained force in the world's history. As the representative from Maine on the Senate Armed Services Committee, it has been my privilege and honor to work side by side with our military leaders to ensure this is the case.

If there is any message we could continue to send to the Members of the Iraqi military, it would be to express the ultimate futility of their continued resistance. The President has made clear, we come not as conquerors but as liberators.

War is a harsh, painful, brutal reality even when the goals are noble, even when the goals are security and freedom. As we have already seen, there is very little certainty in combat. In the fog of war, there are innumerable factors that might affect the course of battle. We often receive conflicting reports, confusing media accounts, and distorted descriptions of the battlefield. But one thing should never be in doubt, one thing is unmistakable: Our troops will prevail, and they will receive whatever support they need to bring this conflict to a successful end as rapidly as possible.

I express my gratitude to the families of the young men and women currently in harm's way who have been left behind. They truly carry a heavy burden, and they deserve the respect, the thanks, and the admiration of every American. As we have seen so painfully over the weekend, victory will not come without cost. While our military leaders will continue to do everything they can to minimize the danger that our troops will face, there is still much risk and much danger.

To the wives, the husbands, the parents, and the children of troops, thank you for your bravery, your strength, and your patriotism. Thank you for your love of country.

When I first came to the Senate over 6 years ago, I would not have imagined this moment. We lived in a different world then. But today, as our troops engage in battle, let us all show our unwavering support for our troops, thank them for their service, and express our heartfelt hope for their safe return.

FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR STATE AND LOCAL FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, just as we stand behind our troops in Iraq, so

must we also unite here at home behind our first responders as they protect our communities from the threat of a terrorist attack.

As the chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee, I have made helping first responders one of my top priorities. Now that we have confirmed Secretary Tom Ridge and helped to get the new Department of Homeland Security up and running, it is time to turn to strengthening the new Department's partnership with State and local governments and the first responders who protect our homeland.

On March 1, our home security structure began to come into place as Secretary Ridge incorporated nearly two dozen agencies into the new Department of Homeland Security. While this new framework will provide much needed focus to tackling the threat of a terrorist attack, we must also provide the resources to our communities and their police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel who stand ready to respond to a crisis.

Just as they stand by to protect our citizens, our first responders deserve a government that stands by them.

In a recent conversation with Secretary Ridge, we discussed the fact that if disaster does strike, if there is another terrorist attack, it is our first responders, not some official from Washington, who would be on the front lines. I plan on holding a series of hearings and introducing legislation streamlining and strengthening Federal support for State and local homeland security efforts.

We must continue to combat terrorism at every stage. The war on terrorism has already yielded some very significant victories. The fall of the Taliban has denied al-Qaida its most important sanctuary. The capture of several high-ranking al-Qaida operatives has also pushed us forward in our quest to end terrorist attacks. Working with foreign governments, we have disrupted much of the al-Qaida network.

But we know that terrorist cells continue to operate around the world, and the threat in the United States remains high. The threat remains very real as terrorists still plot to attack our Nation.

Just as we must continue to attack the threats at their sources, we must also strengthen our ability to detect, prevent, deter, and respond to a terrorist attack.

Recently, I met with some 40 officials from communities around the State of Maine. I have also spoken with police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical staff personnel. They have all expressed concerns about navigating the maze of Federal homeland security funding.

I met recently with Maine's Adjutant General, GEN Joe Tinkham, who talked to me about the tangled web of some 40 Federal Agencies and Departments that have a role in combating terrorism and in funding local home-

land security efforts. He told me that, while underfunded, in some ways the previous system worked better for the State of Maine because there was much more flexibility. Now he finds that certain money is set aside that can only be used for equipment purchases, when what is needed is joint training to learn to use that equipment effectively in some communities.

The new Department of Homeland Security will address many of these concerns by helping to streamline and coordinate programs formerly administered by a number of different agencies. But we must follow up on these efforts to help the new Department enhance its efforts to fund first responders.

I have received a lot of advice on this issue from Maine's firefighters, police officers, and State and local officials. They have suggested a new partnership with the Department of Homeland Security that gives them the flexibility they need to meet whatever is the need for homeland security at the local level.

Last year, we put a downpayment on the needs of our communities. The increased funding of programs, such as the FIRE Act, and those within the Office of Domestic Preparedness, are important steps forward in providing the necessary resources.

But we must build on this success and provide a stronger framework. First responders' needs are as diverse as the States and the communities they protect. Our grant programs and other assistance must be flexible enough to reflect this diversity. But, unfortunately, that is not the case under the current approach.

Maine's first responders and local governments have told me their needs range from communications equipment to personnel to more effective training. Mainers, and others beyond the beltway, do not just have needs; they also have tremendously creative and effective ideas that can be channeled into the new coordinated community-based homeland security strategy.

Over the coming weeks, I will be holding hearings in the Committee on Governmental Affairs to begin to build a consensus for legislation helping homeland security transition many of its important grant programs into their new directorates. I plan to call on States, communities, and, most importantly, our first responders who stand on the front lines to learn how we can better meet their needs.

Listening to the ideas and needs of our communities and first responders will be the most effective way of developing legislation to make sure our homeland security dollars go as far as possible. We want legislation that will help provide the right resources to the right people.

Our President and Secretary Ridge have shown tremendous leadership in focusing the new Department's efforts, not only in developing a national strategy but in focusing its efforts outside Washington.