

equipment, and thousands of infrastructure jobs. It will meet approximately 10 percent of our country's natural gas needs. Over 4 billion cubic feet per day will come from Alaska to decrease our dependence on foreign gas and imports of liquefied natural gas. It will generate over \$40 billion in revenue for the American Government, instead of sending that money overseas.

Chart 7 shows the 800,000 energy bill jobs. The renewable fuel standard provision of this new bill will create in and of itself 214,000 new jobs. It is estimated this provision will increase farm revenue by \$51 billion over the next 10 years. This reduces the overall farm payments currently expended by the Federal Government by \$5.9 billion.

In a time when the Federal budget deficit is increasing, it is incredibly important we find some cashflow to offset this spending.

I am still convinced unless Congress acts to ensure greater domestic production of our oil resources, our energy security is jeopardized.

Given the importance of Congress enacting a comprehensive energy policy this year, I urge the Senate to move swiftly to pass this Energy bill. I can think of not one thing the Senate can do to assist the American people more, that will restore American jobs, than acting quickly on the Energy bill that has just been reintroduced.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I agree with the Senator from Alaska. Having worked for several years on this Energy bill, it seems to me there is nothing more timely than to move forward. This is a policy. We think it is for tomorrow, but it is looking forward. It is a balanced policy that has alternative fuels. It has clean air. It has conservation and efficiency, as well as domestic production. We need to do this. I hope we move forward.

IRAQ

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, a year ago we started the Iraqi freedom activity. I will talk a little bit about what has been accomplished this past year, to recognize all those who have done so much to have a successful operation there. We are moving toward completion—hopefully not too long in the future, but we have accomplished a great deal. We recognize and thank those who have given so much to continue to fight for freedom, in this case in Iraq and, of course, around the world.

I am sorry this has become so much of a political issue. The fact is, we are talking about finishing a task we started. It is not something that ought to be constantly talked about as a political issue in a Presidential election. Certainly we ought to be talking about some of the successes that have occurred there.

I had the opportunity to visit Iraq and Afghanistan. I was impressed with the things that have been done and are

being done by our troops there, by other Americans there seeking to work for a secular government and freedom in that part of the world. I hope we can be more positive about it than we have been, particularly in the media.

I was especially interested to read an editorial in the newspaper "Wingspan" from Laramie County Community College in Cheyenne, WY. It was partially about a young man named Nathan Span, and written by Ashley Colgan, the co-editor of this college paper. Marine Corporal Nathan Span, at the age of 22, is a two-time war veteran and has only good things to say about the risks he has taken. He was in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and returned home in December of 2003. It was interesting what Ashley had to say.

On this one-year anniversary, I remind people that although the war may be somewhat political, it is not so to the men and women who fought and still fight in Iraq. Americans should remember that at one point we fought for our freedom from oppression, and we also had to seek help. All I ask for Americans to remember is what soldiers in Iraq represent: Freedom.

Ashley goes on to say:

I understand the fear, pain, and confusion but why get angry at what I feel is America's attempt to make the world a better place. Many Americans feel misled and lied to by the administration, but let's keep in mind the greater good for which the soldiers are fighting. Soldiers in Iraq feel they are setting an example of what America will not tolerate from a malicious dictator.

Corporal Span is a young man who just returned from spending part of his life in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the editorial, Span says, "For those who have fought for it, freedom has a taste that the protected will never know."

I will talk a little bit about where we are. Certainly, most recognize this action in Iraq was necessary for a number of reasons. Saddam Hussein's regime harbored and supported terrorists and was consistently an aggravating factor in the Middle East. He had attacked his neighbors and launched wars of aggression. Saddam had a history of possessing and using chemical and biological weapons, in violation of the terms of the cease-fire agreement in 1991 of the Gulf War, and numerous United Nations resolutions.

The best intelligence available at the time showed Saddam Hussein to be a growing threat to the United States. I am pleased the President acted swiftly and decisively before the threat became imminent. The mission in Iraq is critical to winning the global war on terrorism. The war on terrorism remains an aggressive effort to bring not only the perpetrators of September 11 to justice but also those who supported, aided terrorism. This has been policy from day one in Iraq and clearly fits this definition.

The conclusion that Saddam Hussein was hiding chemical and biological weapons while conspiring to rebuild the nuclear program was also reached in the Clinton administration, the

United Nations, and a number of other western governments, including several that actively opposed the war. In fact, regime change in Iraq has been a U.S. policy since 1998. It is clear that some of the prewar intelligence on which decisions may have been made were not complete, perhaps were flawed, but the fact remains the President acted in good faith based on the best intelligence available at the time.

But cynical political efforts, of course, have portrayed the President as deliberately misleading the public and remaining dishonest. Rather than playing the election year politics with this issue, we need to focus on correcting the existing programs, focus on the future and where we are going, and how to complete the task to ensure that our leaders have accurate and reliable information on which to implement policy in the future.

I hope the mission of the September 11 Commission that we hear so much about, the talk about it, what should have been done and was not done—what we ought to do is keep this from happening in the future. That is really the issue. This idea of seeking to assess blame in the past is immaterial. The point is, What can we do differently to avoid something of this kind happening in the future? We all know what is going on with respect to those issues.

Where are we today? Two weeks ago, the Iraqi Governing Council unanimously signed an interim constitution toward a secular government, an amazing change in that part of the world. It guarantees freedom of religion and expression, the right to assemble, to organize political parties, the right to vote, the right to a fair and speedy and open trial. It prohibits discrimination on gender, nationality, religion, and arbitrary arrests and detention.

Of course, what the terrorist enemy fears most is a free and democratic Iraq. Freedom, liberty, and democracy are threats to all that oppose it. They will not see this happen without a fight.

Our challenge is to stay there until we have completed our goals. The situation remains dangerous and volatile. The cost of freedom is high. Thanks to the selfless devotion and hard work of our men and women in uniform, we continue to make definite and visible progress toward a goal of returning a free and stable country to the Iraqi people.

Iraqis are much better off today than they were under Saddam Hussein. The Middle East is more stable and the United States is safer with Saddam out of power. Operation Iraqi Freedom is the right action. We are winning the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism.

I thank those who have participated, those service men and women who have given so much for this kind of freedom to be achieved.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there is a unanimous consent agreement that has been made, an order dividing the time on the Democratic side. Senator CARPER is not going to come, so that being the case, I ask unanimous consent that Senator SCHUMER be given 10 minutes, Senator WYDEN be given 10 minutes, and Senator DORGAN be given 10 minutes—in that order, changing the order now in effect.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. Senator SCHUMER is on his way.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for 10 minutes of our side's morning business time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from New York.

THE 9/11 COMMISSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I would like to talk a little bit about the 9/11 Commission which, of course, is right now beginning to interview some of the most high-level people in our Government. The Commission has an important and, I would say, sacred mission, and that mission is to find out what happened and why so many people were killed in the tragedy of 9/11. Of course, many of those people were from my city and State—the vast majority. Some of those people I knew: someone I played basketball with in high school, someone who was a businessman who befriended me on the way up, someone who was a brave firefighter from the Marine Park neighborhood from where I come. And the families mirror—of course with greater intensity—the determination of the American people to get to the bottom of this.

The unfortunate situation is the 9/11 Commission—which is bipartisan and has an important mission that transcends any politics, any one administration, any one Secretary of Defense or Secretary of State or President—is being thwarted as it tries to do its work. They have not been given documents. They have been delayed. Even to this day, Condoleezza Rice has said she will not testify to the Commission in public, even though she was in probably the most sensitive staff position there could be in regard to figuring out the signals before 9/11 and what should be done as a result of 9/11.

I think this is regretful. I think this shows, unfortunately, a pattern in this administration of not wanting facts, of

sort of making up your mind first and then trying to get the facts to fit that.

It is no secret I have been sympathetic to the President on the war in Iraq. I disagree with certain things he did, but I voted for the war. I voted for the \$87 billion. I think we have to fight terrorism. And I do think it is easy to second-guess. I also believe we could get so hamstrung and do nothing that the terrorists would gain more than they have.

Having said that, if there is one thing we thrive on, if there is a thing that is a hallmark not only of winning a successful war on terrorism but of defending the very democracy the terrorists hate and fight, it is that all information come out so we can make an accurate assessment.

I have to tell you, as you look at it, it seems this administration does not want all the facts to come out and, in fact, oftentimes thwarts facts coming out; and then, when they hear facts they do not like that come out not because of administration auspices, they start kneecapping the bringer of bad news.

This has not just happened in one instance; this has happened in instance after instance after instance. Today there is a whole machine discrediting Richard Clarke—certainly disagree with his arguments, certainly disagree with his interpretations of what happened in the White House.

There are two sides to every argument. But to say Mr. Clarke—who, until 2000, according to the newspapers, was a registered Republican, whom I know well, whose sole mission was to defend us against terrorism—to call him names and say he is motivated by partisan politics and he has one friend in the John Kerry campaign, that does a disservice to America; to do the same thing to Mr. Foster, who had numbers on how much the prescription drug bill would cost; to do the same thing to Ambassador Wilson; to do the same thing to Chief of Staff General Shinseki, this is a pattern that does not do the President, the White House, or the administration proud. In fact, it has an antidemocratic tinge to it that should make all of us worry, that should make all of us troubled by what has happened.

Probably the last analogy to 9/11 was Pearl Harbor. And what did this country do? What did Franklin D. Roosevelt and the leaders of this country do? They said: We need to find the facts as to why we were so unprepared. Might those facts have damaged people in office? Surely. But, nonetheless, pursue the facts we did, and a comprehensive report on why America slept was issued.

This 9/11 Commission is in that tradition. Yet this 9/11 Commission has been thwarted every step of the way. Governor Kean is a Republican, greatly respected, not a partisan man. The vice chairman is Lee Hamilton, whom I served with in the House—the same way, a Democrat, but not regarded as

partisan. In fact, sometimes the Democratic leadership in the House would tear their hair out at Lee Hamilton's bipartisan nature.

Yet there is almost a fear of facts coming out. What does this say to the American people? Do we believe our country is right? I do. Do we believe, unlike other countries, that we search for the truth, even though that truth sometimes creates bad currents, dissonance, whatever, but that truth is the hallmark of our democracy? I do. I think the vast majority of Americans do. I think if you ask President Bush, he would say he does.

But yet, over and over again, with the 9/11 Commission, with Richard Clarke, with Mr. Foster, with Ambassador Wilson, there has been not only an aversion to facts coming out but a kind of "McCarthyism" in sort of calling names at the person who had a different interpretation instead of debating whether their interpretation was right or wrong.

This is bad for our democracy. This does not bring credit to this President or the Presidency. This has to stop. I hope today, as the 9/11 Commission begins to interview a series of very important witnesses—two Presidents, two Vice Presidents, many of their leaders—maybe we can turn over a new leaf; that maybe, instead of stonewalling and name-calling and hiding from the truth, this administration will say, look, when you are President you have the powers of the incumbency, but it is also a tough country to govern and sometimes you have to take one for the truth, you have to take one because the facts do not quite square how you thought they did, and explain that to the American people.

I see my colleague from Oregon in the Chamber, and I know he is going to speak on the same subject.

But, again, this 9/11 Commission is extremely important. As Santayana said: Those of us who don't learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. As a New Yorker, I believe that particularly in regard to 9/11. If we cannot get a full, unvarnished, non-partisan reading of the facts—an analysis of why we were caught so unprepared on that awful day, 9/11—it will hurt us in fighting this war on terrorism, which I believe will be with us for a generation.

If we start off in a way that we are afraid of the facts, if we start off seeming to believe only one side is right and the motivation of anyone who disagrees is suspect, I fear we will not win the war on terror because we will not learn what has happened and we will not be able to correct the mistakes that have been made by many different people of both political parties in the past.

My final plea to our President at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is, don't hide the facts. Don't be afraid of the facts. Don't try to undermine those who will present the facts. Our country will be better and stronger for it if you can stick to those rules.