

are serving so nobly in Iraq to bring freedom, democracy, and the rule of law to that country.

The resolution expressed the sentiment and views of the Senate in a clear, firm, and bipartisan manner. In particular, it made clear our expectation that the Senate be kept apprised of the ongoing investigations being conducted in the Department of Defense and of the actions being taken to ensure that these incidents never occur again.

The resolution also made clear that the appropriate committees of the Senate will be exercising their oversight responsibilities to ensure these ends. This is not just the right thing to do; this is the Senate's duty and our obligation to the American people—indeed, to the victims, to the families, and to the Iraqi people.

The Senate has already acted quickly and deliberately to address the heinous actions perpetrated by a few at the Abu Ghraib prison. Last week, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence held a closed-door session to hear from representatives of the intelligence community regarding the CIA's role. The Senate Armed Services Committee held a full hearing last Friday on this matter with the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and several other senior Defense Department officials appeared. Indeed, today, the Armed Services Committee is meeting again to receive testimony from Major General Taguba, who investigated and reported on the Abu Ghraib prison abuses.

We are also working in a bipartisan manner to address the issue of appropriate access to further evidence of the atrocities at Abu Ghraib. And at the leadership level on both sides of the aisle, we are working with the ranking member and chairman of the Armed Services Committee to establish a process whereby materials can be viewed. As well, it is likely that we will afford the Secretary of Defense another opportunity to answer questions from Senators in the near future.

I have also consulted with various committee chairmen about items that might be in their committee's jurisdiction as this investigation unfolds, so that the appropriate Senate tools are applied judiciously to buttress the work of the executive branch in getting to the bottom of this scandal, no matter where it leads.

In closing, I ensure my colleagues and the American people that the Senate will continue to hold hearings and briefings and take other steps, as necessary, to ensure that justice is served, that preventive action is taken, that those responsible are held accountable, and that all of this is done in a very fair, deliberate, and open manner.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

#### ADVANCING THE AGENDA

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, first, I express my support for the remarks just made by the majority leader with regard to the position of the Senate on a bipartisan basis regarding the tragedy involving prisoner abuse. I hope the limited debate that was devoted to the resolution last night will not be seen by anyone as minimizing our strong feelings and the unanimity with which we wanted to express those feelings through that resolution.

I appreciate the effort made by many of our colleagues who participated in the drafting of the resolution, and I am grateful for the strong show of support expressed through the resolution last night.

We condemn these acts. We apologize to the world community for the involvement of the United States in the humiliation and the extraordinary violation of human rights that we have witnessed with the photographs themselves. We also wanted to say again that we recognize this is the exception to U.S. military deportment, not the rule, and that the vast majority of military men and women have served admirably, served their country and the cause, have advanced the goal, and have deserved our commendation and thanks. I think it is critical that we keep that in balance. I hope that as we continue to conduct oversight properly, we maintain not only the interest in holding those at the lower ends of the military echelon accountable, but I would hope we would not allow anyone to use those directly involved, whose pictures are shown, as the scapegoats for everything else that happened. I still have yet to see the degree of accountability up and down the chain of command that I would think would go without question.

We will have a lot more to say about accountability, responsibility, and those in the higher echelons of Government and the military who themselves ought to be asked to account for their actions and their decisions. In that regard, I would hope we could continue to press for even more oversight as the Armed Services Committee is doing today. Someone proposed a select committee, a bipartisan, bicameral select committee to allow for a more thorough investigation in a collective way, rather than have the scores, I guess, of subcommittees and full committees on both sides of the Congress reviewing this material.

Perhaps one committee, which could be formed with the exclusive purpose of reviewing the facts and coming to some conclusion, may be of value. I am not proposing it today. I noted that others have made this suggestion, and I think it merits our consideration.

I know the majority leader also talked about nominations. Last week, we confirmed I believe it was 19 ambassadorial nominations and a number of other executive appointments. We will continue to work with our Republican colleagues, but as many have heard me

say on countless occasions, this has to be reciprocal. We cannot be confirming nominations and dealing with the judicial appointments and all of the other things expected of us if the Democratic nominees continue to languish on the calendar and in the administration itself. We have over a dozen Democratic nominees who have not yet been given even vetting, much less the actual official nomination.

We will continue to work with our Republican colleagues and with the administration, but we have to be given the confidence that there will be reciprocity and some degree of appreciation for the need to move all nominees, regardless of political affiliation or of position.

There are two other issues I wish to talk about briefly. First of all, I wish to thank Judge Becker, who has been involved now for many months in helping the Senate find a resolution to the complicated, controversial, and complex array of challenges we face with regard to asbestos.

After the vote on asbestos a few weeks ago, Senator FRIST and I asked Judge Becker if he would be willing to engage in mediation to see if we can move forward on a number of the outstanding questions.

Judge Becker worked tirelessly for the last couple of weeks and met with Senator FRIST and me almost on a daily basis to provide us with his progress reports. We focused on claims values, projections, and the overall amount of the fund. Unfortunately, we were not able to move nearly as far as many of us would have hoped on the issue of claims values. Some movement I think was made but little on projections. Perhaps the greatest movement was made on the overall amount. Business came up a little bit, from 114, with a \$10 billion contingency, to 116, with a \$12 billion contingency. Labor came down from 154 to 134, with a \$15 billion contingency.

I am deeply troubled by the insurance industry. The insurance industry again issued a statement in the form of a letter that said they will not support a legislative response to asbestos. Their intransigence was a major problem in bringing any kind of resolution to this matter.

I am not giving up. I am pleased that Senator FRIST has agreed to meet again this week to ensure that our discussions and perhaps our negotiations can continue as well. This is too important an issue simply to say we failed. We need to keep the pressure on. We need to find a way with which to resolve these three outstanding issues in particular: the overall funding level, the issue of claims values and appropriating the necessary values to circumstances, and then certainly our projections, how many people will definitely be affected, and how can we then come to some conclusion about the other outstanding questions involving existing cases as well as what happens if the fund runs out and is sunset.

Finally, let me just say later on today we will have a vote in relation to the FSC bill. It is a cloture vote. I urge my colleagues to support cloture today. This has been a long and unnecessarily complicated struggle. All we have wanted from the beginning was an opportunity to vote on a number of key amendments. We have had the vote now on overtime. We have had the vote on outsourcing. We intend to have a vote today on unemployment compensation and a number of other issues we felt were very important in the overall context of the creation of good jobs.

We are not finished. There will be other amendments offered to other vehicles, but, in large measure, because we held our position on cloture, we are now at a point where we have been able to protect our Members and offer the amendments we thought were most important. We will certainly work with our Republican friends to bring the debate to a close, deal with a number of still germane amendments that have to be addressed on FSC before we move on to other important legislative matters, including IDEA.

We hope to complete our work on FSC today; if not today, certainly tomorrow. We will then move on to other matters.

I yield the floor.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 60 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee, and the second half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield myself 15 minutes from the time allotted to the Democratic side of the aisle.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized for 15 minutes.

#### COVER THE UNINSURED WEEK

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, the preamble to our Constitution makes it clear what our responsibilities shall be and puts in order that first we provide for common defense and then promote the general welfare. A lot has been said on the floor of the Senate about our common defense, what is happening in Iraq and Afghanistan in our war on terrorism. It is an issue front and center for the American people, as it should be.

Considering that issue alone is to ignore our obvious requirement under the Constitution to also promote the general welfare. We need to look beyond the defense issue to the welfare of American citizens and look to specific items that concern them. This I can tell you with some degree of certainty.

Pick any State in this Union. Allow me or anyone to visit that State and

meet with businesses large and small, and families, and ask them what they are worried about, what do they sit and talk about, what are the issues that give them caution about the future.

What I have found in Illinois, which is a fairly typical State, being rural and urban south and north and midwestern, as well as showing signs of big city with our city of Chicago, when I have visited with these businesses for the is that last several years—small and large businesses alike—their concern is the cost of health insurance. Over and over they say to me: Senator, we are glad you are out there. We are glad you are serving in the Senate. When are you going to start talking about issues that really count for us when it comes to our business and its costs?

This year we are going to make certain that we at least raise this issue in debate on the Senate floor, even if we will not raise a single bill to be considered in the Senate to deal with this issue and grapple with it.

This is "Cover the Uninsured Week" across the United States. An impressive coalition of individuals and groups have come forward. Former President Jimmy Carter, former President Gerald Ford, the AFL-CIO, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, AARP, United Way, the Catholic Health Association, and the American Medical Association have all come forward this week and said: Do not overlook the obvious. Too many people in America do not have health insurance.

Mr. President, 44 million people in our country, 15.2 percent of our population, were uninsured in the year 2000—that was up from 14.6 percent the year before—the largest single-year increase in both number and rate of uninsured people in a decade.

When one wants to measure the strength of the economy and whether we are recovering, it is not enough to say a person has a job. Clearly the obvious question has to be asked: Does the job pay a decent wage? Is there any health insurance coverage involved in it?

We are finding the raw statistics of employment do not tell the whole story. Keep this in mind: More than 20 million working adults lacked health insurance in the year 2002 and the number is growing. These are not lazy people, stretched out on the couch watching soap operas and eating chocolate-covered cherries. These are people getting up every morning, getting the kids off to school, getting a little bit of lunch together, heading off to work, knowing full well if they start feeling bad, if they need to go to a doctor or a hospital, they have to pay for the whole thing out of their own pocket.

There are 20 million Americans without health insurance. Part of the reason is, of course, the cost of health insurance is outpacing inflation and workers' earnings. So if one is earning more money, it is not enough because the cost of health insurance is going up

dramatically. Look at these charts, which show from 1996 a 14-percent increase in the cost of health insurance. I think that shows what we are faced with. Look on this chart at wages, which linger around 2 or 3 percent.

The cost of health insurance goes up dramatically. Premiums have outpaced inflation by 4½ times. For the last 6 years, health insurance premiums have increased more than wages. If we go to virtually any city in America and ask why workers are on strike, why they are involved in a long contract dispute, we will find the underlying cause is the cost of health insurance.

Over and over again, I cannot tell my colleagues how many times not only business owners but members of labor unions have said to me: It is breaking our back. We have a dollar more an hour for the next year and every darn penny of it is going to health insurance and we have less coverage.

This is the reality of what businesses and workers face across America, but it is not the reality of what we debate on the Senate floor.

I have had the honor to serve in this Chamber for almost 8 years and in that period of time there has been no—underline no—serious discussion of this issue. In that period of time since 1996, up go the costs of health insurance premiums, down goes the conversation on the Senate floor and in Congress about what we can do about it as a nation.

Since President Bush took office, the number of uninsured Americans has risen by almost 4 million people from 39.8 million in the year 2000 to 43.6 million in 2002, almost a 10-percent increase. Look at the average premiums, from \$2,426 on an annual basis to \$3,060 in the year 2002; a 26-percent increase in the health insurance premiums, and almost 10-percent increase in the number of people.

In his State of the Union Address, President Bush called for high quality, affordable health care for all Americans and argued we must work toward a system in which all Americans have a good insurance policy. Take a look at his budget. Rhetoric in a State of the Union Address is almost meaningless if the President's budget does not address it. Frankly, this budget does not. The President calls for a tax credit proposal but says before we can enact it we have to offset it with cuts in other areas.

I will tell my colleagues how impossible that is. As our defense budget goes up dramatically at historically high levels, as spending for homeland security goes up in our war on terror, as the national increase in costs for Social Security and Medicare goes up, the amount of money left over for everything else in our Government, education, health care, infrastructure, corrections, all of those things have been shrinking.

We face the largest deficit in the history of the United States of America under this administration, which has