

long lines to buy gasoline, we realized that our dependence on oil from the Middle East was compromising our national security.

So we dedicated ourselves to building vehicles that were more fuel-efficient. And by 1990, the average American vehicle got 40 percent more miles per gallon than in 1973.

That is an American success story, a triumph of good old American ingenuity.

We need to redouble our efforts to conserve oil.

We also need the President to stop filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

It is more than 90 percent full. How much is enough?

There have been two major releases of oil from the SPR. Crude oil prices fell sharply each time.

The first SPR release occurred as the U.S. began bombing Iraq on January 16, 1991. The next day crude oil prices fell from \$32 to \$21 per barrel.

The second release occurred in September 2000. Crude oil prices immediately fell from \$37 to \$31 per barrel after this release was announced.

The President also needs to pressure OPEC to significantly increase its production quotas to lower the price of oil on world markets.

These are some immediate steps we can take to help middle class families.

But to meet our energy needs over the long term, we need an energy policy that looks to the future.

I have already talked about the need to conserve oil.

Conserving would protect consumers, and it would make our country stronger.

Thomas Friedman, who covers the Middle East for the New York Times, wrote last week that we must renew our efforts to free ourselves from our dependence on oil from that region.

He suggested an effort modeled after the Manhattan Project. That, of course, was our extraordinary race to develop a nuclear weapon during World War II.

The Manhattan Project was a success. It helped keep the world free.

And we can do it again.

We are going to be spending a lot of time this week talking about national defense, about ways to make our country stronger.

Well, we can make our country stronger by finding an efficient and environmentally sound way to produce hydrogen fuel.

We can find a way to produce hydrogen fuel by harnessing our abundant renewable energy sources—the power of the wind, the warmth of the sun, and the heat within the earth.

We need to break this bill apart and extract what is good.

Let's take elements of this energy legislation that enjoy broad, bipartisan support, and move them forward to the President's desk.

I was encouraged that the FSC/ETI bill passed by the Senate last week contains the Energy Tax Incentives.

I applaud Senators GRASSLEY, BAUCUS, and DOMENICI for the provision that expands and extends the production tax credit for wind, geothermal, solar, and biomass energy.

The FSC/ETI bill also guarantees a commodity floor price for the Alaskan Natural Gas Pipeline.

I strongly support a price floor and loan guarantees to build an Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline, but this supply won't enter the market for another 10 years.

Senator CANTWELL has introduced a standalone bipartisan bill to improve the reliability of our Nation's electric transmission system.

This bill is noncontroversial and can pass both Houses of Congress.

We can pass meaningful parts of this energy legislation, and begin to implement a strategy that looks toward the future.

We need to act now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, can the Chair advise where we are in the business of the Senate?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

MOVING AMERICA FORWARD

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I want to spend time talking about the Defense authorization bill. Before I do, I want to respond to this question, are we better off? I think it is a good question.

But the question has to be phrased: Are we better off today than we were after the impact of September 11? My colleagues across the aisle continually block out of their minds the impact of the devastating attack on American soil of September 11 and the challenges this country faced—both emotional, from the scars of the terrible loss of life, as well as the economic impact. That is the question.

Are we better off today with the Taliban not operating freely in Afghanistan? Are we better off today with Saddam Hussein no longer supporting Hamas and Hezbollah, no longer operating the torture and rape chambers?

Are we better off today fighting terrorism in Iraq rather than again back on our shores? Are we better off economically?

Mr. President, I have in front of me an article in today's Minneapolis Star Tribune, and I will refer to a couple sections. It says, in April, Minnesota broke all kinds of job records, led by the State's largest drop in unemployment, to 4.1 percent from 4.8 percent. Economists used words such as "spectacular" and "breathless" to describe the job gains they say were part of the national turnaround.

The U.S. economy added 625,000 jobs in March and April, a turnaround, I note, that was fueled by tax cuts, was fueled by bonus depreciation, was fueled by increasing expansion, fueled by lowering the top rate to give small

business a tax break. The article notes that the 0.7-percent drop in the unemployment rate was the biggest since the State started keeping records in the late 1970s.

Are we better off economically today than we were after the impact of 9/11? Absolutely. With the \$18,000 job decline and the number of unemployed people, also going back to the 1970s, that was 13 percent fewer than the 140,000 unemployed in March. The 4,500 new manufacturing jobs is the biggest monthly increase since the State started tracking the statistic in 1992.

Are we better off today, post-9/11, than we were right after that attack? Absolutely. Completing Tuesday's figures, success in more hiring suggests fewer firings. New unemployment claims dropped 14.1 percent in April. They talk about in this article the manufacturing sector.

We would be better off if we didn't have the other side filibustering an energy bill. We would grow more jobs. We would be better off if my colleagues on the other side were not blocking asbestos reform, if my colleagues were not blocking class action reform, so that we could grow more jobs. We would be better off if my colleagues on the other side were not blocking the appointing of conferees to the highway bill. That is a jobs bill. Have we moved forward? Absolutely. Have we recovered from 9/11? Absolutely. But rather than criticize, my colleagues should come together and stop the obstruction and blocking and let's move America forward.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, we spend a fair amount of time on this floor discussing priorities for our people and our Government. As far as I am concerned, all that talk is about what comes in second to the subject we are on today: national security.

Our first obligation is to defend the American people and our interests abroad. If we don't do that with thoroughness and excellence, nothing else is going to matter for long.

September 11 was a tragic day. It was also the end of a period of denial. For generations, we believed that we could sit here safely, protected by our oceans. But 2 world wars in the last century and the coming of the nuclear age changed that. But when the Berlin Wall fell down and the Soviet Union collapsed, perhaps some lapsed into a false sense of security. September 11th changed that forever.

This bill—the Defense authorization bill—is an attempt to respond to the defense of American interests in the world as it is, now and for the foreseeable future. Failure to be prepared invites the threats we fear. Peace through strength must remain the governing doctrine of American national security.

I support the work of the Chairman, Senator WARNER, on this bill. What a

tremendous asset it is to the Senate and Nation to have his expertise and experience. The fact that he served at the Pentagon, and has participated in this bill through numerous administrations gives us confidence in this work product.

It has been said that the key to leadership is maintaining order in the midst of change, and change in the midst of order. With the distinguished Chairman, we have that balance.

Mr. President, for a moment, I want to discuss recent developments in Iraq.

You would never try to time a foot race with a sun dial. Likewise, it makes no sense to judge the progress of the war in Iraq by the top of the hour news.

We are at war. That is a sentence fraught with meaning. War is by definition unpredictable. It involves a struggle against a dedicated foe, and constantly shifting conditions. Depending on your point of view, a single event for one part will be an "ebb", while for another it is a "flow." With a short term perspective, you never know whether something is a trend or an isolated, irrelevant occurrence.

One of the lessons we learned from the Vietnam era is that when the United States of America commits troops to battle, we should only do so if we are committed and confident of victory. The angst of so many Vietnam veterans is not the sacrifice they were called to make, but the betrayal of their cause and the anger of the American people at them for doing what their country asked them to do.

The decision to go to war in Iraq was not a snap judgment. It was thoroughly debated here on this floor. The vote to authorize the use of force was not unanimous, but it was bipartisan. We crossed a threshold when we made that decision, and when combat began.

A decision to go to war is not a stock you buy or sell depending on how it is doing. We are in this war until we finish it successfully.

Is there room for debate on how the war is to be conducted? Certainly. But only to a point. We don't need 535 commanders in chief.

In a world of instantaneous global communication, we need to be very sensitive to what we say on the public record, and how our words can be interpreted by those who wish to destroy us. War is a matter of armaments and troops and battle plans. But is also a matter of psychology and spirit. We should be very careful not to encourage our enemies. When Congressman MURTHA made his comments last week, I vehemently disagreed with them. This war is certainly "winnable" but if insurgents heard his words, it was harder to win than before he spoke.

I reiterate that it would be foolish to try to run this war based on public opinion. We have no General Gallup Poll. The circumstances we have learned about Abu Ghraib are very disturbing to us all. Looking at the polls, it had a short term effect on support

for the war effort. But we must maintain the perspective that these are actions we are ashamed of and are working to prevent from ever re-occurring. Compare that to the villains who beheaded Mr. Berg. They reveled in the act of his murder. It was a picture of what we are there to fight against.

Progress is being made. The influential Shia cleric Al-Sistani has called for people like Al Sadr to lay down their arms.

The President has made it clear what to expect as the June 30 deadline approaches. Terrorists like Al Zarqawi know what the prospect of a free Iraq means, and they will do anything to stop it. We cannot let them succeed. We need to be more committed to our noble ideals than the terrorists are to their evil plans. Despite all the attempts to distract us or deter us, we need to stay focused on the transition to Iraqi sovereignty. If we fail, the fall out will be far worse than that from an artillery shell filled with sarin gas.

Mr. President, our history tells us that war is hell. But it also tells us that there are some things worth fighting for.

The battle is engaged. The war on terrorism is being fought in Baghdad, in the Sunni Triangle, not here. Better to fight the battle there than here. Have no doubt, if we were not fighting it there, it would be fought right here. Its poison and death would spew forth upon us.

Removing Saddam Hussein from the world stage was worth fighting for. Freeing the people of Iraq from tyranny and deprivation is worth fighting for. Planting an Arab democracy in the Middle East is an historic opportunity for freedom in this world.

We are committed, Mr. President. Our only option is to persevere to victory. With all people, I hope and pray it will be soon.

I thank the committee for the bill they have brought here to the Senate floor to give the President the tools he needs to protect our security. I look forward to our consideration and passage of it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

THE COMMANDER'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROGRAM

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I come to the floor of the Senate today to share with my colleagues and the American people a genuine success story coming out of Iraq. It is a story that demonstrates how American ingenuity, coupled with common sense and commitment, is leading to immediate, visible and valuable improvements in the lives of the Iraqi people.

I am speaking of the Commander's Emergency Response Program. This is a program that allows our troops on the ground to fund low-cost, high-impact humanitarian and small reconstruction projects that benefit the quality of life of the Iraqi people and

contribute to our country's stabilization efforts in Iraq.

The Commander's Emergency Response Program, or CERP, is a program that has generated significant success and one that deserves to be told and told and told.

With the wave of bad news coming out of Iraq in recent weeks, it is easy to lose sight of the progress we have made in that country and of the many accomplishments our Armed Forces have already reached.

Our men and women in uniform have performed magnificently, and the Commander's Emergency Response Program gives them a tool to fund small-scale projects that have an immediate, visible, and high-value impact on the lives of the Iraqi people. We are literally talking about repairing homes, painting schools, restocking hospitals, and restoring freshwater supplies to villages. No project is too small; no task is too trivial.

To date, our commanders on the ground have spent over \$250 million through the Commander's Emergency Response Program, funding over 21,000 projects at an average cost of less than \$7,000. That is right, \$7,000.

Our local commanders have used the CERP to reopen hospitals and clinics all across Iraq to administer over 22 million vaccinations. They have distributed new textbooks to 5.9 million students who are attending school, some for the first time. Our commanders have funded over 1,000 water and sewer projects, bringing clean water to farmers and to villages.

In Rutba, CERP funds were used for electrical and plumbing repairs to the local youth center. The repairs, which cost less than \$9,000, were completed within 10 days.

In Baghdad, the 30th Medical Brigade used the CERP funds to purchase inspection equipment for seven slaughterhouses.

The list of small, yet meaningful, projects could go on and on. Most importantly, the CERP lets our troops act quickly without becoming entangled in redtape or bureaucracy.

Individually, these small-scale projects contribute to the improvement in the daily lives of Iraqi citizens step by step. Collectively, these thousands of projects become something larger, like pieces of a puzzle that join together to reveal a larger picture—a good picture.

Collectively, these projects illustrate the concern of the U.S. military for the Iraqi people, the commitment that our men and women in uniform bring to improving the lives of Iraqis every single day, and the creativity in our approach to ensuring security and stability in Iraq.

We do not read much about these kinds of activities, but collectively these projects give our troops on the ground an opportunity to reach out to Iraqi citizens and to build a bond of mutual trust and good will.

BG David Blackledge, the commander of the 352nd Civil Affairs Command in Iraq, said one of the reasons