

I thank the Chair. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, my colleague from Colorado talked about the economy. Although I want to talk about Iraq, I want to follow up the comments made by the very distinguished Senator from Massachusetts who talked about all the negative things that are happening to this economy.

I find it so stunning that folks can continue to be so negative. America has come such a long way from the attacks of 9/11 that took a trillion dollars out of this economy, and the corporate fraud generated from Enron and WorldCom, and from the recession President Bush inherited from the last administration. We cut taxes and we grew jobs, over 1.7 million in the last year.

We are not where we have to be. The President has said on many occasions that as long as one person is out of work, we have work to do, and we do that work and do it here, passing legislation such as class action reform, medical malpractice reform, the JOBS bill and the Energy bill, many of the legislation being filibustered, being blocked by my friends on the other side of the aisle.

One point that comes up again and again is that in spite of the steady stream of job numbers, now there is an argument made they are not quality jobs. I note that the facts belie that assertion. Three-quarters of the new jobs created, for instance, in May were in the industry categories that pay an hourly rate in excess of the overall average hourly rate in the private sector.

Inflation-adjusted hourly earnings increased 2.37 percent during the first 3½ years of the Bush administration, compared with only a 0.13-percent increase during the same period of time in the first Clinton administration. Per capita aftertax disposable income adjusted for inflation has increased 7.1 percent since President Bush took office, well above the 5.2-percent increase during the same period of the first Clinton administration.

I could go on and on. The fact is, this economy is moving forward. The fact is, housing home ownership is at an all-time high. The fact is, the tax cuts have made a difference, and yesterday there are still those who would like to somehow have the American public believe that all news is bad news.

I think the biggest challenge this economy faces is from the naysayers who keep saying again and again how bleak things are and you then undermine confidence and that, Mr. President, hurts the economy.

"60 MINUTES" DOCUMENTS

One other note. My friend, the Senator from Iowa, was on the floor, and I note that he and a number of others

had some very harsh words about the President based on something that was in a "60 Minutes" report which we now know was not true. Dan Rather came on last night and noted that he no longer has confidence in the documents that would allow us to continue vouching for them. These are documents related to the service of the President in the National Guard. He noted that "we did use the documents." He said, "We made a mistake in judgment, and for that I am sorry."

I hope my colleagues, who had such harsh words for the President based on those documents, will come forward and express the same sentiment that Mr. Rather expressed.

IRAQ

My colleagues also somehow would have us believe the world would be better today, would be a safer place if Saddam Hussein were still in power. I find that stunning. I find that striking.

My colleague from Colorado expressed a hope that I share: That the President go before the U.N. today and reiterate the inherent right of the United States of self-defense.

My colleague from Colorado challenged some of the statements of Secretary General Kofi Annan about the U.S. effort in Iraq. He noted and I note that the Secretary's comments were both factually wrong and ill advised. The fact is, Saddam Hussein violated 16 U.N. Security Council resolutions. Saddam Hussein is the one whose actions were illegal, reiterated again and again by the United Nations. The fact is, the United States took our case to the United Nations on more than one occasion, and the final example on November 8, 2002, the U.N. Security Council unanimously adopted Security Council Resolution 1441.

This resolution declared that Iraq was in material breach of its obligations to cooperate with inspectors who were looking into Saddam's efforts to develop chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

The resolution warned of serious consequences if Iraq ignored its last chance to comply, but Saddam did not comply. I repeat, Saddam Hussein is the one whose actions were illegal. The fact is, Saddam Hussein's list of other offenses is a long one and does not compare favorably with documents such as the U.N. charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a man who twice invaded his neighbors, used weapons of mass destruction against his own people and the people of Iran, who killed tens of thousands of political opponents, tortured thousands of political opponents and ordinary citizens. These were the illegal actions, and we should be glad they are all over once and for all.

The fact is, the U.N. did not have credibility with Saddam Hussein's regime. It never succeeded in enforcing its own resolutions or gaining unfettered access for weapons inspectors. Worse yet, it allowed a well-meaning humanitarian program to devolve into

a money-making operation for Saddam and his cronies throughout the world. The U.N. Oil for Food Program became a personal bank account for Saddam Hussein in which, by a GAO report estimate, he got at least \$10 billion—that is with a "B"—for his own personal use.

Right now, the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which I chair, is looking into that \$10 billion theft, that \$10 billion fraud, that \$10 billion corruption, and checking to see where that money went, has it been used to fuel an insurgency, has it been used to impact the policies of some nation states that did not allow the Security Council to vigorously oversee and enforce that program the way it should have been done.

No, there is nothing wrong or illegal about liberating 25 million people from tyranny, and there is certainly nothing illegal about fighting for their freedom and liberty today.

Regardless of the U.N. Secretary General's comments, America will remain a supporter of the U.N. and many multilateral organizations. It is in our interest. More often than not, we can accomplish greatness when we work together. The U.N. can offer great promise or cooperation in peacekeeping and humanitarian work and shining a light in dark places, efforts that are often more effective when many are united rather than when countries go it alone. But we are not going it alone in Iraq. We have over 30 nations that are sacrificing with us. The failure of the United Nations to enforce its resolutions against Saddam, the failure of the United Nations to act vigorously to genocide that is going on in Darfur and the far region of Sudan, the failure of the United Nations to do nothing more than talk when brutality and oppression shows its ugly face around the world undermines confidence in the United Nations. That puts the United Nations in a position where many are comparing it now to the League of Nations, a place where people just talked but never acted. Sometimes real leadership means having the courage to do what is necessary and not just what is popular.

In his State of the Union Address, the President said there is a difference between leading a coalition of many nations and submitting to the objections of a few. America will never seek a permission slip to defend the security of our country. While the United States and its allies have carried the burden of freedom's work, we cannot ignore the fact that soldiers and might cannot do the job alone. I understand that diplomacy is crucial to world order. It should not descend into finger-pointing and gainsaying, especially at a time when so much is at stake and we ought to be joining together, not pointing fingers. It is the terrorists in Iraq who want to deprive the citizens of that country their basic human rights.

What Saddam Hussein could not take from them the terrorists are hoping to

steal. What Saddam Hussein did not do to terrorize the people of that country, what he did not finish, the terrorists will do and are doing. They are continuing that. Saddam killed, murdered, and tortured as many Iraqis he could who did not agree with him, and probably a few who did, and the terrorists hope to finish off the Iraqis he did not get to.

In spite of that, in spite of the insipid rhetoric of those who wish to be President who feel a gust of wind gives them the moral authority to change their stand on a war time and time again, America must hold its ground because on that ground stands the promise of a free and liberated Iraq.

Iraq is preparing to hold its first truly democratic election. Prime Minister Allawi, who will have a chance to address us in the coming days, is working to get control throughout the country. He is trying to counter a clear effort by terrorists to turn Iraq back into a nation of fear.

The Prime Minister is also trying to get out from under Iraq's heavy foreign debt and create an environment for jobs and for hope. Coalition members, together with Iraqi forces, are working daily to create a better future for the people of Iraq, and at the same time protect the safety of our soldiers and civilians serving in that country.

The world is a better place without Saddam in power. That is a reality. If one cannot grasp that concept, then they cannot grasp any concept. If anyone in this body, or anyone of this body, believes Saddam Hussein, dictator of Iraq, murderer of women and children, tormentor of his neighbors, plotter of destruction, mercenary of the world, is better for the world in office than out of office, they should heed the words of the junior Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KERRY, who had this to say during the Democratic primaries:

Those who doubted whether Iraq or the world would be better off without Saddam Hussein, and those who believe we are not safer with his capture, don't have the judgment to be the President or the credibility to be elected president.

The Senator from Massachusetts was right then. In spite of his changing positions, those words last year still ring true today.

Today, there are those who embolden terrorists in Iraq. They have pointed their fingers at us and said: You are to blame for the terrorism insurgency in Iraq.

The day after 9/11, there were those across the world who pointed their fingers at us and said: You are to blame for the destruction of your homeland.

These statements are absurd. Somebody tell me how the hundreds of horrified boys, girls, babies, mothers, and fathers in that Russian school were responsible for the terrorists who tormented and killed them. Somebody tell me how the Nepalese contractors, 12 of them, who were slaughtered as though they were nothing more than cattle

were responsible for their deaths. Somebody tell me how the American citizens who had their heads sawed off on a videotape while sick, evil men listened to their screams of horror were somehow responsible for their death.

There are those who say things are not going as well as they could be in Iraq. We know they are right, but let the first person come forward who will say that it will be going better in Iraq if we let Mohamed al Sadr or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi be in charge.

Now is not the time for those with the courage of the meek to come to the rescue of the strong. Now is the time for strong, determined leadership to work with our allies, those who agreed with our efforts, and those who did not, to bring this world together.

Our President, the leader who has liberated 50 million human beings and has stood resolute when even the strongest among us would look for a way out, goes to the U.N. today. He goes there not as an adversary of that august body but as an ally of the civilized world. He goes to stand with the world, those who have suffered from the terrorists, those who have fought them, and those who fear them.

He goes to the U.N. not preaching the gospel of global despair but of the obligation of a mighty nation to not only fight those with guns with guns, but to bring peace to so many others who simply hope and pray that their children will live to see a better day.

He will stand with those who stood with us in the liberation of Iraq, and with those who stood against us, because this President knows that as important as it is to sometimes lead even when others are not prepared to follow, it is important to walk together when many will agree to do so.

It is important for us to mind the words of China's U.N. Ambassador, who opposed the war, who said:

I think all of us have views on the Iraqi war. I think definitely the views are different among council members. What is important now is to help achieve peace and stability in that country.

There will be better days in Iraq, and there will be worse days. There will be better days in the war on terror and, God willing, there will be far fewer worse days. But whatever the future brings, we must stand with this President and with this nation and its soldiers and diplomats, and we must on bended knee pray that our efforts bear the fruit of a more prosperous and more peaceful world.

Let me finish with this. Yesterday, I missed my first major vote as a Member of this body. At home, before I left Minnesota for Washington, I attended the wake of the son of one of the folks who works in my office, one of my staff, Bart Cedergren. His son David died in Iraq.

While the cause of death remains unclear, let there be no doubt that he died in the cause of freedom and liberty for the people of Iraq and the people of America.

As I stood there contemplating the loss of the life of this young man and the loss of his life from those who loved him, as I stood there trying to comfort a father who did more to comfort me and those around him, I was once again reminded of the fact that freedom is never free.

Petty Officer 3rd class David A. Cedergren, 25, who was assigned to the Second Marine Division Marine Forces Atlantic, did not join the military to fight war or kill people. He joined it to bring peace and comfort to those afflicted and tormented. David was a medic. He was trained to be a licensed nurse, his heart was filled with compassion. Yesterday, as I watched those whom he loved and those who loved him and his Navy comrades who stood there side by side, all grieved in his passing, I saw in their grief great pride in this young man. He liked this Nation. He did not join this war on terror to fight a war of killer people. He didn't ask for this war to be fought. We joined it and we lead it to bring peace and comfort to the afflicted and the tormented. May God bless America and David Cedergren and that we prevail.

I yield the floor.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of the Republican time in this morning session.

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

Under the previous order, the next 60 minutes of morning business for debate only is under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee and the final 60 minutes under the control of the majority leader or his designee.

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, how much time have I been allotted under the agreement?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Twenty minutes.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask for an additional 10 minutes.

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

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I saw this morning in the Hill newspaper an attack by the Speaker in which he said, in response to a reporter's question, that "al-Qaida would operate better if KERRY were elected President."

Two weeks ago today, the Vice President said, "It is absolutely essential that eight weeks from today on November 2 we make the right choice because if we make the wrong choice

then the danger is that we will get hit again and we will be hit in a way that will be devastating from the standpoint of the United States."

Mr. President, this is dangerous talk. It is dangerous talk for either side to suggest we will be attacked if the other is elected. I remind my Republican friends that when we were attacked on September 11, we on the Democratic side did not say it was because Republicans were in control. That would have been wrong. We did not do that. Instead, we stood shoulder to shoulder, we stood united, we all agreed on an attack on Afghanistan, and we all supported an all-out attack on al-Qaida because it was al-Qaida that attacked the United States.

The President of the United States, when he was running for office, said he would be a uniter and not a divider. But now this President and this administration are dividing us in the most fundamental way. I believe that is a dangerous tact. It is a mistake.

Only the President of the United States can stop this kind of talk. I urge him to do so, to rein in the Vice President, to rein in the Speaker, because when this election is over, we need to stand united.

The debate we need to have is how best to defend our Nation from terrorist attack. It is important for us to recall what happened on September 11. When we saw these images of the attack on the World Trade Center, when we saw the smoke rising from the Pentagon, we were under attack. But it is important for us to remember who attacked us. It was not Iraq. The attackers were al-Qaida led by Osama bin Laden, not Iraq led by Saddam Hussein. As evil as Saddam Hussein was and is, he was not part of the September 11 attack. Here is the man who should be the target, the primary target of the United States. This is Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaida. Al-Qaida are the ones who attacked the United States. Al-Qaida are the ones we have a responsibility to bring to account.

President Bush said in convening his Cabinet at Camp David just a few days after the 9/11 attacks, "There is no question about it, this act will not stand. We will find those who did it. We will smoke them out of their holes. We will get them running and we will bring them to justice." That is what President Bush said just days after the 9/11 attack. It is now 1106 days after that attack—1106 days after the attack on the country, and we have still not gotten Osama bin Laden. We still have not kept the primary focus on al-Qaida. Instead, the President diverted our attention and launched an attack on Iraq.

This is from the March 29 edition of USA Today. It says this:

In 2002 troops from the 5th Special Forces group who specialized in the Middle East were pulled out of the hunt for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to prepare for their next assignment: Iraq. Their replacements

were troops with expertise in Spanish cultures.

Mr. President, let's get this straight. It was not Iraq that attacked us. It was al-Qaida. Al-Qaida is led by Osama bin Laden, not Saddam Hussein. And yet this administration shifted the focus from going after Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida and instead shifted special forces to the hunt for Saddam Hussein. He replaced those special forces in Afghanistan with units that were experts in Spanish culture.

The article goes on to say:

The CIA meanwhile was stretched badly in its capacity to collect, translate and analyze information coming from Afghanistan. When the White House raised a new priority, it took specialists away from Afghanistan to ensure Iraq was covered.

The former Secretary of Navy in the Reagan administration says this was one of the biggest blunders, strategic blunders in modern memory. We attacked the wrong target. That is his conclusion. That is the Secretary of Navy in the Reagan administration saying we attacked the wrong target. We have to have a debate in this country about how best to defend America. The first thing we have to get straight is who attacked us and who is preparing to attack us again. It was al-Qaida, not Iraq.

There were no Iraqis on board the planes that attacked on September 11—not one. There is no evidence that Iraq was behind the attack on September 11. It was al-Qaida led by Osama bin Laden.

This administration has diverted its attention from finishing business with Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida and diverted our resources, diverted our attention to Iraq and Saddam Hussein. I believe that was a mistake.

I voted against authorizing this administration to launch this attack because, as I said on the night of our vote, I did not believe it was in the national security interest of the United States to attack Iraq and open up a second front before we finished with the first. The first had to be with the people who attacked us; that was al-Qaida led by Osama bin Laden, not Iraq led by Saddam Hussein.

This is an article that appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer last year. It says:

Some senior officials concede that the Iraq war also diverted resources from two problems that could prove to be even more pressing than Iraq was: Rooting out the remnants of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorism network and confronting Iran. A senior intelligence official who spoke on condition of anonymity said that the CIA reassigned to Iraq more than half of the operatives tracking al-Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a result, U.S. forces were not able to pursue bin Laden and other al-Qaida leaders as aggressively.

I believe this is a strategic mistake of significant proportion. Again, our primary target has to be al-Qaida led by Osama bin Laden. Instead, the President shifted resources from the hunt for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida to a hunt for Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Again, as bad and as evil as Saddam Hussein was and is, he should not have been the primary target of the American military. Instead, we should have focused, I believe, like a laser on the people who attacked us and who are planning to attack us again; that is, al-Qaida led by Osama bin Laden.

This article concludes saying:

Al-Qaida's continuing threat has shown that the Department of Homeland Security raised its terrorism alert level Tuesday after bombings in Saudi Arabia and Morocco.

It is not just these articles. It is not just intelligence officials. We look to the Bush administration's own Web site, the State Department Web site. This is very interesting. Thirty days after the September 11 attack, the State Department had this on their Web site:

Countries where al-Qaida has operated—

This is 30 days after the attack on the United States. This is on the State Department's Web site. Here are the countries they list where al-Qaida was active. They list Albania, Algeria, Bahrain, Belgium, Bosnia, India, and Iran. There is no Iraq. There is no Iraq. There is no Iraq. This is a report signed by the President. This is after the attack. There is no mention of Iraq being a locale for al-Qaida.

But it is not just the State Department. The President himself tried to correct the record last year after the Vice President was asserting and I think fundamentally confusing people suggesting that Iraq and al-Qaida were involved in the September 11 attacks.

The President seeking to correct "reports no evidence of Hussein tie to 9/11."

In the article, it says:

President Bush said today that he had seen no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved in the September 11 terrorist attacks, as the White House tried to correct an assertion that Vice President Cheney left extremely murky on Sunday. Mr. Cheney on Meet the Press was asked about polls that showed a majority of Americans believe that Mr. Hussein had been involved in the attack.

This is what Mr. CHENEY said: "I think it is not surprising that people make that connection."

Asked whether the connection existed, Mr. CHENEY said: "We don't know. He described Mr. Hussein's reported connections to al-Qaida, connections that American intelligence analysts say were not very deep. Mr. Bush, asked by a reporter today about that statement, said: "No. We have had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved in September 11, a far more definitive statement than the Vice President's."

That doesn't end the evidence. The evidence is powerful with respect to the question of who is behind September 11. It was al-Qaida led by Osama bin Laden, not Iraq led by Saddam Hussein. The 9/11 bipartisan commission said this:

The intelligence reports describe friendly contact and indicate some common themes on both sides, "hatred of the United States." But to date we have seen no evidence that these or the earlier contacts ever developed into a collaborative operational relationship,

nor have we seen evidence indicating that Iraq cooperated with al-Qaida in developing or carrying out attacks against the United States.

That is the report of the 9/11 Commission.

It doesn't end there. The Secretary of State was just recently on "Meet the Press." This was in the early days of this month. He said he "had seen nothing that makes a direct connection between Saddam Hussein and that awful regime and what happened on 9/11."

We have all kinds of evidence that al-Qaida was not linked to Iraq in the September 11 attacks or that Iraq was not a link to al-Qaida in the September 11 attacks. The evidence is overwhelming that al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden, led those attacks.

I believe deeply that our strategy must be to focus like a laser on those who attacked us. We ought not to allow ourselves to get diverted into this attack on Iraq. We have 10 times America's resources in Iraq as we have in Afghanistan.

We are 1106 days after the attacks on this country and the President has failed to do what he said he would do in holding al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden to account. Osama bin Laden is still at large. His top adviser, al-Zawahiri, is at large. This murderous ally of theirs beheaded an American yesterday, and we have diverted resources from the hunt from those monsters to go after Saddam Hussein in Iraq when the evidence is overwhelming that Iraq was not involved in the September 11 attack.

What doesn't add up here? What doesn't make sense? The Secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration says we attacked the wrong target. I believe that is correct. We should have kept our focus on Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida and not have been diverted to Saddam Hussein and Iraq.

Let me say to my colleagues that there is additional evidence as well. Our own Intelligence Committee has made findings. For example, Conclusion 96 of the Senate Intelligence Committee says:

The Central Intelligence Agency's assessment that to date there was no evidence proving Iraqi complicity or assistance in an al-Qaida attack was reasonable and objective.

That is our Intelligence Committee led by Republicans on a bipartisan basis concluding there wasn't complicity by al-Qaida and Iraq, that there was not Iraqi complicity or assistance in an al-Qaida attack. Our Intelligence Committee concluded that was reasonable and objective.

Similarly, conclusion 93 says:

The Central Intelligence Agency reasonably assessed that there were likely several instances of contacts between Iraq and al-Qaida throughout the 1990s, but that these contacts did not add up to an established, formal relationship.

If we are going to be effective in this war on terror, we have to get the facts right. The facts are, al-Qaida attacked America, not Iraq. The facts are, we

are 1106 days after that attack, and Osama bin Laden and his chief lieutenants are still out there threatening America and Americans. This President diverted our attention and our resources from running down al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden to an attack on Iraq and Saddam Hussein. That was a mistake, and the sooner we admit to it and the sooner we get about the business of tracking down those who attacked us, the better off our country will be and the safer we will be. That is my strong, deep belief. Whoever wins this election, I believe we have to reorient the resources of America into going after those who attacked us. It was al-Qaida, not Iraq. It was al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden, not Iraq, led by Saddam Hussein. That is what our 9/11 Commission tells us. That is what the Secretary of State is saying. That is what the intelligence agencies are telling us. Yet this administration—this administration—made a series of decisions, profound decisions, decisions of enormous consequence, and diverted resources and attention from going after Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida to going after Saddam Hussein and Iraq.

I know many people believe, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that somehow Iraq was deeply involved in the September 11 attack. There is just no evidence to support that. My own conclusion was, and is, this was the wrong war at the wrong time. And the overriding obligation of those of us who are in a position to affect U.S. decisionmaking—the overriding obligation and responsibility that we have—is to defend this country and to do so effectively.

We know al-Qaida is plotting, right now, to again attack our country. We ought to focus like a laser on stopping them. We ought to focus like a laser on holding al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden to account. We should never have shifted our resources from the hunt for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida leaders to the hunt for Saddam Hussein in Iraq. It was a mistake, and we have to be big enough to say it was a mistake and move on and remember who it was that attacked us and use the awesome resources of this country to go after those who are plotting to attack us again.

We have to get these facts right. We have to reduce the confusion out here, when a majority of the American people thinks Iraq was behind the attacks of September 11 and we know full well that is not the case.

The President and Vice President of the United States have a heavy responsibility. They are the leaders of this country. They are the leaders of the free world. They have an obligation, a solemn obligation, to make certain that the United States focuses on those who attacked us—not to confuse the issue, not to distract us from those who are responsible for the loss of nearly 3,000 American lives.

Mr. President, it is hard to talk about these things when you are just

weeks before an election and not have a political component to the debate and the discussion. But we, I believe, as a nation, need to have a full and vigorous debate on how we best defend this Nation. My strong belief is that we need to keep the focus on the people who attacked America on September 11, and it was al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden, not Iraq, led by Saddam Hussein. The evidence is overwhelming.

We need to refocus the efforts of the awesome American military on hunting down Osama bin Laden, on hunting down his chief allies and holding them to account. That is the best way to send a signal of American resolve and determination and American unwillingness to accept the vicious attack on our country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

There are time allocations that have been assigned for the remaining 27 minutes.

Ms. STABENOW. I ask unanimous consent for 15 minutes if there is time available. If not, I would appreciate it if the Chair could indicate who has been designated the time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota has 10 minutes, and the Senator from Arkansas has 15 minutes of the time. There is 26 minutes remaining, but of those, 25 has been allocated.

Ms. STABENOW. It is my understanding, through staff, that Senator LINCOLN will not be coming to the floor at this time. So if there is no objection, I ask unanimous consent to use the time of the Senator from Arkansas. And if she comes to the floor, I will certainly yield to her.

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

MEDICARE PREMIUM INCREASE

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the announcement of a dramatic increase in the Medicare Part B premium for seniors and the concern the people of Michigan have about trying to pay a 17.5-percent premium increase for next year. Just a day after President Bush touted his efforts to help our seniors and the disabled cope with increased medical expenses, his administration announced the largest premium increase in Medicare's history, dating back to 1965.

Unfortunately, nothing has been done about record increases in the cost of health care over the last 4 years. Now we see the largest premium increase, a 17.5-percent increase. We have