

If the Senate could spend over 30 days debating extreme judges and devote days to the tragic affairs of the Schiavo family, Republicans should have been able to find a few days to help millions of Americans with health care, education, and, of course, the skyrocketing cost of gasoline, heating oil, and natural gas.

While some of the work we have done this year is important, more important is the work that we have missed. Consider the latest example: Katrina relief. Democrats introduced a comprehensive Katrina relief package. It was a good package. It was done hours after the storm had passed. The legislation, S. 1637, included proposals to ensure that displaced families received the health care, housing, and financial relief they needed. Republicans talked a good game about helping victims. Yet over 2 months later, you only have to pick up any newspaper to know that tens of thousands of Americans still need housing, health care, and financial help. Democrats have tried to act on these families' behalf, but every time Republicans have found something better to do.

Of course, this is a pattern all too familiar. When Democrats wanted to discuss health care and education, Republicans decided to debate changing Senate rules so they could pack the courts with some extreme nominees. When Democrats wanted to help families struggling with rising oil prices, Republicans gave billions in tax breaks to oil companies that are already making obscene profits. And when Democrats wanted to help the neediest among us, Republicans decided to make deep cuts to programs working families depend on so they could give tax breaks to special interests and the very elite of our country.

America can do better than these misplaced priorities. Whether it is supporting our troops or providing relief for rising health and energy costs, it is time for the Senate to get its priorities straight. The Democratic agenda is one that deals with health care, energy costs, and, in effect, getting our priorities straight.

When we return next session, we should not waste more time putting the needs of the special few ahead of the priorities of the American people. Let's pass fiscally responsible tax relief to help middle-class families being squeezed between declining wages and rising prices. The rich are getting richer; the poor are getting poorer. The middle class is getting squeezed. Let's move forward on issues like energy dependence, real security, and affordable health care. Let's build on the progress we made on Tuesday with our vote on Iraq.

On Tuesday, Democrats and Republicans voted overwhelmingly to express no confidence in the administration's Iraq policy. We must continue to push the President because it is clear that he has no interest in taking the Senate's advice.

Instead of changing course, as the Senate demanded, the White House has decided to reignite the Cheney-Rove smear machine and attack its critics instead. We saw it yesterday with Congressman JACK MURTHA. While I don't agree with the immediate withdrawal plan Congressman MURTHA proposed, this brave man's patriotism and his commitment to defend our country should never be questioned, especially by this White House, as it was.

Congressman MURTHA served valiantly in Vietnam. He is a highly decorated veteran, someone who knows what it is like to bleed in combat, literally. When he speaks, the White House should listen. They could learn something. Let's remember, Congressman MURTHA isn't the only combat veteran calling for a debate about Iraq. In the Senate, Republican Senator CHUCK HAGEL has also said it is our patriotic duty to question what is going on.

The deceiving, distorting, and divisive political attacks must end. We need an open, honest debate about what is happening in Iraq. Next year I hope Republicans will join with us in this debate. It is easy to attack those who don't agree with you. The hard part is leading and giving our troops the strategy for success.

The days and months ahead should be used to do the people's business. We can't change the past, but we can change the future.

Next year we need to focus on the priorities of American families. Together we can do better and give our citizens a government as good and honest as its people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TALENT). The Senator from Kentucky.

A SUCCESSFUL FIRST SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I listened carefully to my good friend, the Democratic leader, give his evaluation of the year that is coming to a conclusion. Let me just suggest that I, not surprisingly, see it somewhat differently. In my couple of decades here in the Senate, this has been quite possibly the most successful first session of a Congress in my time here.

We began the year by passing a much needed class action reform bill that was long overdue to deal with one of the areas of the litigation craze that is bad for American business and bad for our economy. We followed on with the Bankruptcy Reform Act, long in the making, way overdue, to deal with people who have increasingly decided not to accept their responsibilities and pay their debts.

We passed a budget, which is never easy around here, tax cuts, a Central American free-trade agreement, an energy bill, and a highway bill. We confirmed a new Justice to the Supreme Court. We passed a terrorism reinsurance measure and a pension reform bill.

It has been an extraordinarily successful first session of a Congress, and

we have much to be proud of as we go toward the Thanksgiving holiday.

Even though my assessment of our accomplishments here differs dramatically from that of the Democratic leader, let me say to all our colleagues, Democrats and Republicans alike, we have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. We hope everyone will enjoy the holiday, come back refreshed for what we anticipate will be a very brief session the week of December 12.

I also want to say a word about Iraq. It is much in the news these days. The Senate spoke clearly this week that it is not in favor of cutting and running. On a bipartisan basis, the Senate said we will not cut and run in Iraq. That is the message of the votes that we had earlier this week. We intend to stay the course. We are winning in Iraq, and the policy is to win.

How do you measure success in Iraq? You measure it by the election last January which brought into office a temporary democratic government. Everyone remembers the ink-stained index fingers that were held up proudly by the Iraqis as they, at risk to their own lives, went to the polls and elected an interim government.

Last month on October 15—by the way, back in January, there was a 60-percent turnout, the same as our turnout last November and ours was 60 percent, higher than the turnout of 50 percent before that. The Iraqis turned out the same percentages last January as we did here, and I don't think any Americans were afraid they were going to be shot or blown up by a bomb if they went out to vote.

If that were not good enough, in the constitutional election on October 15, 63 percent of Iraqis turned out, and large numbers of Sunnis who had boycotted the election earlier began to participate.

Clearly, Iraq is heading in the right direction. Surveys taken in September indicate Iraqis are far more optimistic about their future than we are about ours in the United States. They are more optimistic about their future than we are ours here. So the Iraqis feel they are on the right path. They are going to finish the job on December 15 when they elect the first permanent democratic government in Iraqi history, a fairly unusual thing in that part of the world, I think we will all agree.

Next year, that permanent democratic government will increasingly be responsible for its own future and the fate of its own citizens as the Iraqi military improves month after month.

So we do, indeed, have much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. Most of all, we are grateful for our wonderful troops who have done an astonishing job in Iraq. They are proud of their work. They are somewhat perplexed about the perception that they are failing when they all know they are succeeding dramatically. Hopefully, in the new year, we will be able to do a better job of getting out the entire story in

Iraq, which is that dramatic progress is being made. After all, when this democratic government is elected on December 15, it will be less than 3 years from the time Saddam Hussein was toppled to the election of a permanent democratic government in Iraq. It took us 11 years in this country to get from the Declaration of Independence to the writing of the Constitution in our first democratic election.

We are very impatient for immediate success. In fact, the Iraqis have come a long way in a short period of time under very difficult circumstances. We are proud of them and, most of all, we are proud of our troops who made it possible for that to happen.

With that, Mr. President, I think it is time to begin to wrap up in the Senate.

First, I congratulate the House of Representatives and the Senate. We will shortly be passing a bill to honor a great American, Rosa Parks, by placing a statue of her in the Capitol. I am very gratified by the swift action of the House, followed on by the Senate tonight. We have assured that Americans who visit this place 100 years from now will see her statue and reflect on how one woman's courage altered a nation.

I am also pleased and grateful to my colleagues, particularly Senator DODD in the Senate and Representative JESSE JACKSON, Jr., in the House, who took the lead over there for moving quickly to accord Ms. Parks the honor she so richly deserves. I look forward to the day when her statue is unveiled and placed in this historic building alongside other American heroes.

Ms. Parks' passing on October 24, just a few weeks ago, left us with sadness, but also with deep gratitude to the gift she left all of us.

I am reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King's conviction that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts of men. Today this Congress has taken steps to ensure Parks' achievements will never be forgotten.

RECOGNIZING 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ROSA LOUISE PARKS' REFUSAL TO GIVE UP HER SEAT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of H. Con. Res. 208, and that the Senate then proceed to its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 208) recognizing the 50th anniversary of Rosa Louise Parks' refusal to give up her seat on the bus and the subsequent desegregation of American society.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the concurrent resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reso-

lution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statement relating to the concurrent resolution be printed in the RECORD, without further intervening action or debate.

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

The concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 208) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

AUTHORIZING EXTENSION OF UNCONDITIONAL AND PERMANENT NONDISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Finance be discharged from further consideration of S. 632, and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 632) to authorize the extension of unconditional and permanent nondiscriminatory treatment (permanent normal trade relations treatment) to the products of Ukraine, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

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

The bill (S. 632) was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 632

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FINDINGS.

Congress finds that Ukraine—

(1) allows its citizens the right and opportunity to emigrate, free of any heavy tax on emigration or on the visas or other documents required for emigration and free of any tax, levy, fine, fee, or other charge on any citizens as a consequence of the desire of such citizens to emigrate to the country of their choice;

(2) has received normal trade relations treatment since concluding a bilateral trade agreement with the United States that entered into force on June 23, 1992, which remains in force and provides the United States with important rights;

(3) has been found to be in full compliance with the freedom of emigration requirements under title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 since 1997;

(4) has committed itself to ensuring freedom of religion and preventing intolerance;

(5) has committed itself to continuing its efforts to return religious property to religious organizations in accordance with existing law;

(6) has taken significant steps demonstrating its intentions to build a friendly and cooperative relationship with the United States including participating in peace-keeping efforts in Europe; and

(7) has made progress toward meeting international commitments and standards in

the most recent Presidential runoff elections, including in the implementation of Ukraine's new elections laws.

SEC. 2. TERMINATION OF APPLICATION OF TITLE IV OF THE TRADE ACT OF 1974 TO UKRAINE.

(a) PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATIONS AND EXTENSION OF UNCONDITIONAL AND PERMANENT NONDISCRIMINATORY TREATMENT.—Notwithstanding any provision of title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2431 et seq.), the President may—

(1) determine that such title should no longer apply to Ukraine; and

(2) after making a determination under paragraph (1) with respect to Ukraine, proclaim the extension of unconditional and permanent nondiscriminatory treatment (permanent normal trade relations treatment) to the products of that country.

(b) TERMINATION OF APPLICATION OF TITLE IV.—On and after the effective date of the extension under subsection (a)(2) of nondiscriminatory treatment to the products of Ukraine, chapter 1 of title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 shall cease to apply to that country.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I further ask that the bill be held at the desk.

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

DIRECTING THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE LIBRARY TO OBTAIN A STATUE OF ROSA PARKS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to immediate consideration of H. R. 4145, which was received from the House and is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H. R. 4145) to direct the Joint Committee on the Library to obtain a statue of Rosa Parks and to place the statue in the United States Capitol in National Statuary Hall, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, last night, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 4145, a bill to direct the Architect of the Capitol to obtain a statue of Rosa Parks and to place the statue in the United States Capitol in National Statuary Hall. Today, the Senate unanimously passed this legislation, and I rise to thank my colleagues in this body and in the House of Representatives for their leadership and support for this important legislation, which sends a message of hope and freedom to the American people.

Earlier this week a resolution sponsored by Senator MCCONNELL and Senator DODD passed this body to honor Mrs. Parks. I thank Senators MCCONNELL and DODD for their leadership on this issue and considering my concerns. I supported Mr. MCCONNELL's and Mr. DODD's measure because I believe it is paramount that we honor Rosa Parks in our Capitol. However, I wanted to be clear that her statue should be in Statuary Hall, and I was glad to join Representative JESSE JACKSON Jr. of Illinois in his effort to make that happen.

Largely regarded as the mother of the modern day Civil Rights movement, Mrs. Parks' act of courage on