

companies have filed for bankruptcy. The list goes on, as the Senator from West Virginia knows.

The whole challenge is for many manufacturers, the hundreds of thousands of workers in companies such as Bethlehem Steel, LTV, many of the coal and other companies where workers have paid the price and lost their pensions. We should not be waiting more time for the brink of failure before we act. This legislation helps nearly millions of workers and retirees. We should not at this time turn them down.

In the pension bill we also included the key reforms to respond to the Enron, the WorldComs, and other corporate scandals where employees were forced to invest in company stock at a huge risk and then lost it all while the employers walked away with huge pension security packages.

Finally, we address the women's retirement security with provisions from the Women's Pension Protection Act, which was bipartisan. The Senator from Maine, Senator SNOWE, myself, and many others, recognized the particular challenges women have in terms of the pension issue.

American workers and their families expect Congress to protect their hard-earned pensions. Americans expect Congress to help them send their children to college, not make it more expensive at a time when workers need more and more skills. Americans expect Congress to increase, not cut, education and job training. Americans expect Congress to help secure health care, not cut health care assistance. Americans expect more from us. Americans deserve better, especially at this Christmastime.

Mr. BYRD. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. KENNEDY. I am happy to yield.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for the speech he made. I am glad I stayed and listened to his speech. It is one of his finest speeches. It is a speech made in the true spirit of Christmas, too. The Senator, once again, stands for the poor, the down-trodden, those who cannot be here to speak for themselves.

I thank the Senator for this speech. He is truly in my book one of the great Senators for all time. We have not always agreed. We have not even liked each other in long ages ago, times past. But that is in the past. I think so highly of this Senator. I am glad I stayed here to hear this speech. It was certainly thoughtful. It was needed at this time. I congratulate the Senator. Tomorrow, I may speak a little bit on the same subject—not as eloquently as he has but certainly along the same line.

I hope I can do that.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Senator for his kind words and for his typical graciousness. I am so glad we had an opportunity to have a brief celebration at your recent birthday. It is good to see the Senator up, as always, in fighting trim and fighting form.

I am grateful for the Senator's comments.

Mr. BYRD. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

ACCENTING THE POSITIVE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I have a few issues to discuss in morning business. First, I desire to be more positive than what we have been hearing. It makes one depressed to hear the negative discussions. There are quite a number of positive things happening in this country. Perhaps we ought to talk about them.

We have had the extraordinary growth in gross domestic production, growth in the economy over the last number of months, particularly in the last month, 3.5 percent growth. We have had more jobs than we have had for a very long time. We have more people working than we have had for a very long time. Certainly there are always issues we can talk about. The fact is we are moving forward on these issues. We are doing the things that need to be done. Indeed, we should.

I am sometimes a little distressed that we seem to think the Federal Government is in charge of everything that affects our lives. That probably is not the case. We are also dealing with a great deficit. Yet we want to talk constantly about how we need more money for this and more money for that, more money for all these things. We are in a country where we have several levels of government. There ought to be some division of responsibility. That is our system. We should have somewhat of a limited Federal Government, we are not into every issue. It is disappointing to hear that everything occurring to everyone is a responsibility of the Federal Government.

We also ought to understand when we have some sort of effort to reduce taxes, that helps increase the economy. We have seen more revenues when we have less taxes. The economy grows. There is more investment and we create jobs. Those are good things. Occasionally we ought to talk about that.

I understand a person opposed to the administration wants to talk about the bad stuff. I will primarily talk a little bit more about Iraq and the situation we are in there. It has been an issue for all of us, and tends to be something we are all very much concerned about. However, the discussions lately have changed somewhat. That is a good thing.

Almost no one is suggesting that U.S. troops ought to remain in Iraq forever. We hear all the views, people talking about this point of view, that point of view. But since the beginning, there was the notion that we have a job to do, and as soon as that job is finished we need to get out. That is not a new topic.

I have to admit completing the job can be defined differently by different people. However, the fact is almost everyone at the same time suggests that the troops need to remain in their cur-

rent numbers until the insurgency is suppressed. Most everyone agrees with that.

In the beginning, some of the folks in the House of Representatives were making the point to get them out of there now, get them out in 6 months, but they have moderated that and are saying, yes, we need to change what we are doing; we need to complete our job. We see more and more people wanting to do that. The administration has been talking for some time, of course, about reducing the number of troops in the process of doing that but not setting a date.

My point is it is interesting, and the media has something to do with this, to try to show the differences, but the fact is there is quite a bit of similarity among the things that people are saying with regard to Iraq.

Few people agree with the idea of increasing the number of troops. There is some talk about that. But that is not generally agreed to. Of course, almost no one agrees the troops ought to be pulled out immediately at a certain time.

My point is there seems to be great differences between the critics and the administration. But when they look at it, everyone is pretty much on the same side. We need to finish our job, reduce our troops there, turn it over to the Iraqis as soon as possible. The time to do that, the way you do that, there is an area for difference, but that is a common argument.

I am trying to say, finger-pointing aside, regarding the debate over whether we should begin to gradually have a withdrawal of troops, there is no debate over that. How you do it, of course, there are different views. There is no disagreement as to bringing the news into the political process. I think it is exciting that this week there will be an election and we will see what kind of bringing there is into that process.

So I guess I am kind of pleased that even though we have differences of view—and that is perfectly legitimate—I am finding there is less difference in the policy between the people who have disagreement than there might have been in the past.

Obviously, the war on terrorism is being fought overseas in Afghanistan and Iraq. Of course, fundamentally, it has changed the environment that has given rise to the Islamic extremism that brought about the attacks, and so on. In a broad sense, that is exactly why we are there. It is one to bring justice back to the perpetrators, but also to change the conditions in the Middle East. I think that basically is beginning to happen: the introduction of a stable democracy and freedom, a democracy that is shaped on the basis of what Iraqis want. We are not imposing on them the same kind of system we have here necessarily; for instance, that there has to be endless discussion on the floor. We are not saying that. There are great steps being made in de-liberation there.

I guess it has been a year and a half since I have been in Iraq, but certainly I think some real progress has been made. I felt as if there had been great progress when I was there. And as to the polls, in the preliminary election, ABC News shows that three-fourths of the Iraqi people express confidence in these elections. That is good and 70 percent approve of the new Iraqi constitution. In a country that has never done those kinds of things before, that is an excellent movement.

We are talking about positive things, which does not mean everything is great, of course. But it does mean we are moving forward, and there is an unmistakable shift from tyranny to democracy that is taking place.

As to the Iraqi forces, we all want them to shoulder a greater share of security efforts. In fact, that is happening. Now, I am also one who believes the system we have used, the military system, has to change as the situation changes. It was one kind of a military opportunity to be moving into Iraq to get rid of Saddam, and having troop movements, routine, normal military activities. Now the time has changed.

I was very impressed with the conversation I had with a police officer from Cheyenne, WY, who was there on a contract to help train police who said: That has all changed now. Instead of having platoons and companies moving around, we are having two or three insurgents over here, and we need more of a police kind of a system rather than a larger military system. I think certainly that is true.

And the Iraqis are moving forward. There are now 97 Iraqi army battalions conducting operations. Thirty-three Iraqi army battalions have assumed their own areas of responsibility. This is a good thing. The Iraqi navy is guarding its coastline and protecting offshore oil platforms. The Iraqi air force is moving supplies throughout the country. Iraqi border police are manning 170 border forts and 22 ports of entry.

Certainly, there is a lot to do yet, probably more in the support—the supply support, the management from the background—as there is in being on the front lines as far as the military of the United States is concerned. I hope and think that movement and that change of role is indeed taking place. There are some 68,000 police who are there. So we are making some progress.

Again, some time ago, when I was there, I was real pleased. We would go down the road in a military vehicle and all the little kids would be waving their arms. We went to some schools. We went to some hospitals.

Now we are getting a report that 762 out of 834 schools are back in place. That is a good move—not complete, of course, not perfect. It is also reported that 12 out of 29 hospitals are back in place; 5 out of 12 major airports are functioning. So there is a great deal going on. It is reported that 144 out of

222 water treatment stations are functioning. There is still work to do, but, nevertheless, a substantial amount of work has been done.

So the fact is, of course, the road from tyranny to freedom is not an easy process. It is a process that we have not always experienced in the past. So as we see new challenges, then we have to face them in different ways. Having been in the military, I know sometimes it is difficult to sort of change the methods the military is accustomed and trained to do. But these are different sorts of challenges. I am very proud of the military in doing what they have done.

The al-Qaida terrorist leader has indicated that Iraq is a central battlefield for this war, certainly in terms of terrorism. And our people continue, of course, to do well in spite of the deadly insurgency. That is a tough thing. The insurgency is just people coming out of nowhere with bombs, roadside bombs in cars.

So I guess really what I am trying to say is there is good evidence that things are going well—not as well as you would like, obviously. There are improvements being made. We are moving towards our goal. The goal is to be able to turn this back over to the Iraqis, to return our folks home as soon as possible. Everyone agrees with that: as soon as possible. There is always room for disagreement as to what is necessary, of course, to be able to do that.

But despite the naysayers we hear here, the Iraqis are generally optimistic. A recent ABC News poll showed that 70 percent of Iraqis sampled said life in Iraq was “good.” So in addition to that, of course, the actions that are being taken are being felt in Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. So we are having some sort of an impact in that whole Middle East area, which is, of course, what we had hoped to be able to do.

So these are some of the things that are happening there. I think there is a surprising amount of optimism about the living conditions improving. Time magazine and others did some analysis and showed living conditions were rated positively for 7 out of 10 Iraqis. I presume that is a legitimate sort of sample. At any rate, it certainly sounds so. Average household income has soared some 60 percent in the last 20 months. It is only \$263, but nevertheless that is substantially more than they had.

So in any event, we have a challenge yet before us. I think there is increasing recognition that we are there until our job is finished; that our job is to turn it over to the Iraqis; that we ought to indeed move and continue to move towards doing that as soon as we can; that the reduction of our troops, as soon as possible, is the goal of all of us. I think the change in the role certainly is a goal as well. And that, too, is happening.

So I guess the bottom line of what I have read here and what I am saying is

that even though, for various reasons, it seems as if there is a great difference, I think you can see, as you hear about the difference in the parties here, and so on, that there is not that kind of a spread. Sure, there is room for discussion. But the fact is, the majority of people here want to stay until the job is done. The majority wants to turn it over to the Iraqis. The majority wants to remove our folks as soon as we can. And that includes the administration and the folks in opposition.

So that is a good sign that we are moving forward. And I hope certainly we can continue to do that, we can continue to support our goal there and, maybe more importantly, support our men and women who are there committed to carrying out this goal and to helping provide freedom around the world and to protect freedom in our country.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

THE PATRIOT ACT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to describe the conference report on the PATRIOT Act, which was agreed to by conferees in the House of Representatives and the Senate last Thursday. This is the first time the Senate has been in session since that time, and the first opportunity for me to make a floor statement outlining the provisions of the conference report.

I begin by thanking the distinguished chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Congressman JAMES SENSENBRENNER, for his cooperation and cordiality in working through many very difficult issues to come to agreement between the House and Senate conferees.

There has been general agreement that reauthorization of the PATRIOT Act is necessary as an important tool in the fight against terrorism. One item which the PATRIOT Act accomplished, which was enacted shortly after 3,000 Americans were killed and many wounded on 9/11, was elimination of the so-called wall, so that evidence gathered under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act could be used in a criminal prosecution. Prior to the enactment of that provision, if there was evidence obtained under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which has a slightly lesser standard than probable cause used for a criminal search warrant, it could not be used for a criminal case. There is no disagreement, to my knowledge, with the proposition that this provision is very important and ought to be retained.