

serve in Iraq and other places around the world. We salute all the private companies that do that. Sears & Roebuck is a good example, and many others in my State—and many units of State and local government. But it is shameful to know and acknowledge that the Federal Government does not make up the difference in pay.

How can we say that all of these other companies did the right thing by standing by their employees who are risking their lives for America and the Federal Government does not do the same thing?

If someone has a pay check for \$60,000 a year working for the Federal Government, and they are a member of the Illinois National Guard and activated for service and their military pay is only \$40,000 a year, I believe the Federal Government should make up the difference of \$20,000 a year. Private companies do it; State governments do it; local units of government do it. Why doesn't the Federal Government do it?

Twice we passed an amendment on the floor only to see it die in conference committee. I think it is important that this finally pass.

In addition, we want to repeal the prohibition against receipt of both the Survivor Benefit Plan and the Dependent and Indemnity Compensation so the soldiers can receive the full amount of the survivor benefit owed to them. We want to have full concurrent receipt for all disabled military retirees of both disability compensation and retirement provisions. We also want to guarantee funding for veterans health care.

We made a promise to the veterans of America—those who will be veterans and who are serving today, and those who served in the past. We promised that we will stand by them for their health care in the future. We have to put the money in our budget to make that promise good.

Finally, we want to expand the mental health services. This provision which we support will improve resources available to the estimated one out of every six military personnel in Iraq who are at risk of dealing with posttraumatic stress disorder.

It is a sad fact of life that many of these soldiers who witnessed horrendous events come back trying to resolve in their own minds the horror they have witnessed. We need to stand with them and give them a helping hand. I think that should be part of this administration's proposal.

#### SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, another issue that is, of course, timely and is brought up on a regular basis is the future of Social Security.

I believe there is a problem with Social Security. The President has said the same. However, I don't believe President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security is going to help. I think it is going to make the problem even worse.

Social Security should be strengthened, not weakened. Why isn't President Bush's plan the right way to save Social Security?

First, President Bush's plan would make deep cuts in the benefit paid under Social Security and in the process dramatically increase the deficit. The President's privatization plan for Social Security diverts money from the Social Security trust fund and creates an immediate cash-flow problem affecting seniors and those who are retiring right now.

We know that untouched the Social Security Program will pay every benefit promised with the cost-of-living adjustment until the year 2042, at a minimum. Some estimate 2052. For 37 to 47 years, Social Security is sound and solvent.

In comes President Bush who says we need to change Social Security. We need to take money out of the Social Security trust fund and allow people to create private accounts.

Private accounts may have some value. But what about the money the President just took out of Social Security? Unfortunately, the President has not suggested how we would pay back that money to Social Security. As a result of the President's proposal, if the Social Security trust fund is diminished in size and weakened, unfortunately, it will run out of money even sooner than the projection of 2042.

President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security does not make it stronger, it makes it weaker. The President cannot explain how he will make up for the money that he takes out of the Social Security trust fund. The President's privatization plan will cost up to \$2 trillion in the first 10 years, and then up to \$5 trillion in the second 10 years. It is an extremely expensive proposal.

Where would we come up with the money to make up the difference, \$2 to \$5 trillion? The President suggested we add it to the national debt, a national debt which has already reached a record level. How do we take care of our national debt? Who comes in and loans money to make up for a national debt? Mainly foreign governments; No. 1, Japan, China, and Korea. The President's proposal to privatize Social Security not only weakens Social Security, it creates a greater debt for Americans and forces us to be more dependent on foreign governments to loan us money. That is the only way we sustain our national debt today. That, of course, is a challenge. If those foreign governments, for whatever reason, decide not to buy America's debt, we are in a perilous position. We will have ourselves a debt and a situation where our interest rates will have to go up substantially to attract others to buy our debt.

That is not where America should be. That \$2 trillion deficit will not bring us any closer to Social Security solvency. In fact, it makes the Social Security system that much weaker.

The President has said over and over his plan to privatize Social Security is voluntary. If you do not want to create a private account with the President's plan, he says you do not have to. That may be, but, understand, when the President takes money out of the Social Security trust fund leading to benefit cuts, those benefit cuts are going to affect people whether or not they choose to have a private account. To say it is voluntary is to overlook the obvious. The cost of this privatization plan will affect every Social Security retiree whether or not they want to sign up for President Bush's privatization plan.

The President argues Americans will do better in the stock market than they would if they wait for Social Security benefits. That is possible, but there are risks attached to investment. Every ad on television for a mutual fund or investment says the same thing: Past performance is no indication of future return. What they are saying is, there is risk involved. If you put your life savings, your retirement savings, into a private account under President Bush's plan, you may come out ahead, but then again you may not.

Relying on Wall Street is like playing retirement roulette. You may guess right, you may come out ahead, but those who are invested in mutual funds in the stock market over the last 4 or 5 years know there have been probably more losers than winners.

Keep in mind that under the President's plan, part of all of your retirement savings invested are going to be paid to Wall Street stockbrokers for so-called administrative fees that can reduce your benefits by 25 percent—a windfall for Wall Street at the expense of retirees across America.

Democrats want to encourage and support retirement accounts not at the expense of Social Security but in addition to Social Security. We should change the Tax Code to encourage people to save, encourage people to create individual retirement accounts, 401(k) plans. We can do that but not at the expense of Social Security—in addition to Social Security.

Some say private accounts would be more efficient. Keep in mind the President's Commission on Social Security came up with the only plan we have for private accounts so far, and they would call for a massive new Government agency to administer these Social Security private accounts. This Government board will control the investment accounts of some 47 million Americans and administer the program. The private accounts will cost the average senior \$134,000 in lost Social Security benefits over a 20-year period. This is not the great positive thing that has been portrayed.

Young people like to invest money. That is a good thing. Savings and investment ought to be encouraged, particularly by young people. We need to make certain we do not have savings and investment at the expense of retirement benefits that workers have

paid for over their lifetime. People following this debate every day pay into Social Security with the understanding when they retire, this is going to be something they can count on. They may not be able to live in luxury with Social Security, but it is the nest egg, the cornerstone of your retirement income. The idea behind Social Security is still a sound idea. We should keep Social Security strong, we should strengthen it and do it on a bipartisan basis, but not at the expense of cutting benefits. That is what President Bush's privatization plan will do in addition to creating \$2 trillion in additional debt. That does not help Social Security; in fact, it weakens Social Security. That should not be our goal.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT BRIAN BLAND, USMC

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I today to express our Nation's deepest thanks and gratitude to a special young man and his family. I recently received word that on January 26, 2005, Marine SSgt Brian Bland of Newcastle, WY died in the line of duty while serving his country in the war on terrorism. SSgt Bland was killed, along with 30 of his brothers in arms when the CH 53E Super Stallion helicopter they were riding in crashed in western Iraq. The Marines were on their way to provide security operations for the recent Iraqi elections.

SSgt Bland was member of 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment out of Hawaii. He grew up in Newcastle and joined the Marine Corps after graduating from high school there in 1995. He had re-enlisted twice. He held a profound sense of duty and knew he was doing the right thing, telling family members shortly before the crash that he felt good about what he was doing in Iraq. He was very proud of being a Marine and had planned to stay in the service until he retired. He is remembered as one who enjoyed motorcycles and was friendly to everyone, and he took every opportunity to return to visit family and friends in Wyoming and South Dakota.

Because of people like Brian Bland we continue to live safe and free. America's men and women who answer the call of service and wear our Nation's uniform deserve respect and recognition for the enormous burden that they willingly bear. Our people put everything on the line everyday, and because of these folks, our Nation remains free and strong in the face of danger.

The motto of the Marine Corps is "Semper Fidelis." It means "Always Faithful." Through his selfless and courageous sacrifice, Staff Sergeant Brian Bland lived up to those words with great honor in that he willingly gave the last full measure so that others could live in freedom and liberty.

SSgt Bland is survived by his wife Stacey, his mother Beverly and stepfather Mark, his brother Jeremy, his grandmother Emma Lee, and his brothers of the United States Marine Corps. We say goodbye to a husband, a son, a brother, a Marine, and an American. Our Nation pays its deepest respect to SSgt Brian Bland for his courage, his love of country and his sacrifice, so that we may remain free. He was a hero in life and he remains a hero in death. All of Wyoming, and indeed the entire Nation, is proud of him.

So from one Marine to another, SSgt Bland, Semper Fi.

#### CORPORAL NATHAN SCHUBERT

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Cpl Nathan Schubert, a member of the U.S. Marine Corps, who died on January 26, 2005, while serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Corporal Schubert was a member of the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Division based out of Kaneohe Bay, HI.

Answering America's call to the military, Corporal Schubert joined the U.S. Marines in October 2001. His brother, Matthew, remembers him as a skilled athlete and a pheasant hunter. Corporal Schubert was carefree and a bit of a joker. His sister, Elizabeth, remembered that, "He would sometimes wrap stuff from around the house to give as gag gifts."

Corporal Schubert courageously served our country with great distinction and, as a hero, died as a proud member of our Armed Forces. He served as a model of the loyalty, dedication, and military professionalism that is required for the preservation of freedom. The thoughts and prayers of my family, as well as our Nation's, are with his family during this time of mourning. As well, our thoughts continue to be with all those families who have children, spouses, parents, and other loved ones serving overseas.

The lives of countless people were enormously enhanced by Nathan's goodwill and service. He inspired all those who knew him and our Nation is a far better place because of his life. All Americans owe Nathan, and the other soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom, a great debt of gratitude for their service.

I join with all South Dakotans in expressing my sympathies to the friends and family of Corporal Schubert. I know that he will always be missed, but his service to our Nation will never be forgotten.

#### NOMINATION OF ALBERTO GONZALES

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I rise in support of the nomination of Alberto Gonzales to be our next Attorney General. Certainly his life story embodies the American dream: Son of immigrant farmers, the first in his family to go to college, attended Rice University, Harvard Law School, now nominee to be our Nation's first Hispanic top law enforcement officer.

I am troubled by some remarks unfairly distorting his honorable record. I am concerned, as well, that the Senate is losing some of its civility, which is what makes our Chamber unique.

I cannot think of anyone who would do a better job than this man as U.S. Attorney General. I support him.

I yield to my friend from Montana.

Mr. BURNS. I thank my friend from Wyoming.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BURNS. Could the Senator arrange some more snow to Montana?

Mr. THOMAS. We are not ready yet.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I am in support of the nomination of Judge Alberto Gonzales for Attorney General of the United States. We have all heard his life story. I can relate to that somewhat because he grew up in Texas. I grew up in Missouri, starting out on 160 acres consisting of two rocks and dirt. He comes to this job with a different perspective.

When we look down the line of the nominees the President has sent to the Senate for confirmation, we can see there are a lot of calluses, a lot of dirt under their fingernails. That is what he brings to this job.

We congratulate the former Attorney General. John Ashcroft has done a wonderful job on the heels of September 11. As the primary law enforcement officer, he was not only in charge of law enforcement on the domestic side but had a lot to do around the world with the collection of intelligence, coordinating, protecting.

We are in a time where we do not get smacked and then just simply pick up the pieces and continue. We are in the business of preempting activities. When these nominees come with a different perspective, a ground-level perspective, everything they do touches American lives.

I commend Judge Gonzales for accepting the President's call to service. It is a thankless job if you look at the dollars. Yet it carries with it great responsibilities.

We are quickly learning how to adapt to the threat of terrorism. In an attempt to make all Americans safe, we have changed policy and government structure dramatically. In a free society, a mobile society this makes our job even more difficult.

The groundwork we have laid and will continue to build upon is what makes us a great nation. The United States is a world model for picking up the pieces, adapting to new challenges.