

I want to conclude my remarks by coming back to the beginning. There has been a lot of debate about what is going on at Guantanamo. What is the United States doing? Why is it doing it? Is the United States creating some type of a new detention circumstance in modern warfare, which parallels some of the most terrible examples that our critics have been able to throw up at us? I went down there wanting to know and wanting to see and to be able to report back to the American people about what truly is happening.

What I found was that the U.S. men and women of our Armed Forces are committed, honorable, loyal, duty-bound members of the American military who are following the orders of their Commander in Chief to the letter, following the Geneva Conventions, and providing beyond what the Geneva Conventions even requires in terms of protection to these detainees, in a service to America and to the world. I found a circumstance where I don't believe a valid argument can be made that there is any nonhumane treatment of these detainees. I found a circumstance in which it appears to me that what is being portrayed by some is simply manufactured out of whole cloth in order to perpetuate a broader debate against the United States and our interests.

I also became convinced that, far beyond being simply a detention facility, Guantanamo is one of the key strategic interrogation facilities necessary for the United States in pursuit of the war against terror in this world. As we have said in both of our remarks, Guantanamo is where the worst of the worst are taken. They are taken there to be protected so that we can be protected from them and so that we can gain information from them that will help us better protect ourselves as we continue to fight to defend against the likes of Osama bin Laden.

I also stand here to commend the young men and women of our fighting forces—not just those who at Guantanamo are suffering the abuse of the detainees and the extremes of the weather and the living circumstances there to defend us, but those who serve throughout this world, whether it be in Iraq or Afghanistan or any of the other points of conflict or in any other of the stations around this world, where we have men and women deployed to defend our interests.

The United States is at war against terrorists and we must acknowledge that. The efforts of the men and women in our military should be commended, not discredited. I stand as one Senator to thank the men and women of our Armed Forces for the tremendous job they do. They put their lives on the line daily for us and they should be given our thanks, not our criticism.

With that, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

Mr. BUNNING. I thank my colleague from Idaho for his great observation of our trip yesterday. I also know that Senator ISAKSON was unable to be here, but he will make a statement later this evening. I hope Senator BEN NELSON and Senator RON WYDEN will also come forward and report what they saw at Guantanamo.

I am happy to also thank, as Senator CRAPO has, all of our men and women in the military who serve our great country.

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

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SOCIAL SECURITY PRIVATIZATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, soon after President Bush won reelection last November, he made it clear that the top priority of his second term would be the privatization of Social Security. This is something the President had thought of long before his second term. In fact, when he ran for Congress in the late seventies from Texas, he talked then about the Social Security plan going broke and that it should be privatized. So this is something he has thought of a long time. But since he was elected the second time, he and other members of his administration have organized a massive campaign, given countless speeches, and criss-crossed the country all in an effort to sell the American people privatization.

It has been a tough sell, though. The polls show that people have accepted this whole Social Security agenda about 25 percent. When he started it was in the 70s. Now it is down to 25 percent. It has been a tough sell because the President's privatization proposal is flawed in many ways. It would require deep benefit cuts, even for workers who don't choose to privatize accounts. It would require massive borrowing from countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, where we borrow about 40 percent of the money we borrow for this year's deficit, which will be in the hundreds of billions of dollars, probably closer to half a trillion than not. It would turn Social Security from a guarantee into a gamble. And his privatized accounts would not strengthen Social Security's finances at all. In fact, it would make the long-term challenge worse, not better. The President has said the privatization plan will not stabilize Social Security.

It is important to remember that even if we do nothing, which no one here is advocating, Social Security will pay 100 percent of promised benefits until about 2055 and about 80 percent thereafter. In fact, President Bush will

be about 108 years old at the time Social Security would start paying 80 percent of benefits.

While claims of a crisis are obviously false, it is also true that we face a long-term challenge, and we as Democrats need to address that, as we have said we would.

Unfortunately, the President has other ideas. His goal is not to bolster Social Security. To the contrary, he went all the way to West Virginia, arguing that the trust fund is nothing more than an accounting fiction. And you can't argue for strengthening something if you don't believe it exists.

No, the President's goal isn't to strengthen Social Security. His goal is to privatize it. Privatization, with its deep benefit cuts and massive debt, would undermine Social Security, and as a matter of principle we Democrats will never go along.

Social Security is based on the best of American values. It promises Americans if they work hard, contribute, and play by the rules, they can retire and live in dignity, and their families will be protected if they become disabled or pass away. A third of the benefits paid out by Social Security are not, as my grandmother referred to it, old-age pensions. They are for people who are disabled, widows, orphans. Social Security is not a handout. It promises benefits that people earn through their hard work. That is as it should be, and we need to do everything we can to make good on that promise.

Fortunately, the American people agree with us. Along with several of my Democratic colleagues, I have traveled the country on behalf of Social Security and against privatization. Everywhere we go, whether rural areas, suburban settings, or big cities, the response is the same: Americans don't want Social Security privatized. Middle class workers don't want their benefits cut. They don't want our Nation to get even further in debt to the Chinese and Japanese and Saudis. They don't want to adopt a risky scheme that could undermine the retirement security they have worked so hard to earn.

According to one poll, as I have mentioned, only 25 percent of Americans support the President's handling of Social Security. The opposition to privatization is as broad as it is deep. From those numbers, it is very obvious that it is not only Democrats throughout the country who oppose this, Republicans oppose it, also. Most Americans in rural areas who are especially reliant on Social Security voted for President Bush last year, but they strongly oppose his privatization plan. In fact, among those rural residents who know a great deal about the President's plan, opponents outnumber supporters by almost 40 percent.

That certainly seems to be the prevailing view among my neighbors at home in Searchlight. Whenever I am home, folks tell me the same thing:

Protect Social Security and stop privatization. It is a message my colleagues are hearing from their constituents in every part of the country.

Because of this widespread opposition, some here in Washington have apparently concluded they could not pass this proposal on the Senate floor in an open and public debate. Rather than give up on this unpopular proposal, they are, instead, adopting a stealth strategy. It has been widely reported that many in the minority party are now seeking to move a bill through the Senate without the private accounts or painful benefit cuts included in the President's plan, not because the President has abandoned privatization or benefit cuts but, instead, because they recognize this is the only means available to them to get their flawed plan adopted by Congress.

Under this bait-and-switch strategy, what the Senate says or does on private accounts or benefit cuts during its consideration of legislation would be largely irrelevant. The Senate would pass a bill lacking private accounts or significant cuts and send it to conference with the House, which would be controlled by a handful of privatization supporters. These supporters would work behind closed doors to ensure that private accounts emerge in the conference report.

We will not allow that to happen. In recent weeks, we have seen new evidence that this is, in fact, the administration's strategy. Last week, for example, bills were introduced in the Senate and the House that were advertised as establishing private accounts with no pain whatsoever. But these proposals are nothing more than political gimmicks. In truth, they still would threaten benefits, they still would require massive borrowing from foreign countries, and they would still fail, at one day, Social Security's solvency. In fact, like the President's plan, the private accounts they propose would make matters worse.

No one is going to be fooled by this type of gimmickry, and Democrats are not naive or foolish enough to fall for a bait-and-switch strategy that has been widely advertised in advance.

So I call on the President and his supporters to face reality and give up on privatization. Rather than continuing to push for this radical and ideologically driven proposal, which is a buzzword for getting rid of Social Security, I propose they listen to the words of another Republican President from 50 years ago, Dwight D. Eisenhower. This is what General Eisenhower said back then—This is not some Democratic Senator, Democratic Governor, Democratic State legislator, or Democratic Member of the Senate. This is President Eisenhower:

Should any political party attempt to abolish Social Security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again in our political history. There is a tiny splinter group, of course, that believes you

can do all these things. Among them are H.L. Hunt . . . and a few other Texas oil millionaires, and an occasional politician or businessman from other areas. Their number is negligible and they are stupid.

President Eisenhower.

As I have said, I want to make sure these words are not coming from me. These are President Eisenhower's words. But if President Eisenhower's view is not persuasive to our current President, I would propose he listen to the words of another Republican President, his dad. In 1987, the first President Bush called privatization, "nutty." As he said at the time: "It may be a new idea, but it's a dumb one."

That is what two Republican Presidents said about privatization. They are right.

So I hope we can move beyond privatization, move beyond gimmicks, move beyond the attempt to secure private accounts through a transparent strategy of bait and switch. Instead, let's agree to strengthen Social Security and to do it on a bipartisan basis. That would be the right thing to do for America's workers and our country.

Is it my understanding the distinguished Senator from Texas wants to speak in time that has been reserved to the minority?

Mr. CORNYN. That is correct. I will need about 15 minutes.

Mr. REID. I don't think we have anyone coming, so you are sure welcome to use our time.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the distinguished Democratic leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senator from Texas is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. CORNYN, relating to the introduction of S. 1313, are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

Mr. BURNS. Parliamentary inquiry, Mr. President, we are now on the Interior appropriations bill; is that correct?

DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2361, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2361) making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Burns (for Voinovich) amendment No. 1010, to prohibit the use of funds to take certain land into trust without the consent of the Governor of the State in which the land is located.

AMENDMENT NO. 1022

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk. First of all, it is on behalf of the majority leader and minority leader. It relates to congressional security.

This issue relates to a recent DC Board zoning adjustment granting a building height variance for a developer here in the vicinity of the Capitol.

Without going through some sensitive detail, let me simply say our two leaders have offered this amendment to prevent this variance from going into effect until the Capitol Police Board, with the consent of the Senate and House leadership, certifies that such a variance will not impact negatively on congressional security and increase Federal expenditures related to congressional security.

This amendment does not preclude development of the property, but it ensures that existing height regulations are honored and the security of the Capitol and all the people who work here is protected.

So I offer this amendment for the majority leader and minority leader.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the pending amendment is set aside. The clerk will report.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I have a very important little conference to go to at 3:15. I see the ranking member of this committee on the floor. He did a great job on Friday, I am told, flying solo. So I am going to go to that meeting and just kind of turn the reins over to Senator DORGAN, my good friend from North Dakota.

We will start going through some amendments and start working this bill out this afternoon. It is our intention not to keep the Senate open all that long today. We will start working on those amendments as soon as possible.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will now report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Montana [Mr. BURNS] for Mr. FRIST, for himself and Mr. REID, proposes an amendment numbered 1022.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end of title IV, insert the following:
SEC. ____ CONGRESSIONAL SECURITY RELATING TO CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided under subsection (b)—

(1) the District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustments and the District of Columbia Zoning Commission may not take any action to grant any variance relating to the property located at 51 Louisiana Avenue NW,