makers of lethal assault weapons—but no time for lifesaving cures.

The bill is right there, Mr. President, right there on that desk in front of you. At any time, the majority leader could walk over, pick it up and have a vote on a bill that would bring new hope to millions of Americans.

For years, patients and their families waited for a medical breakthrough to provide new hope for serious illnesses like Parkinson's disease, spinal injury, and Alzheimer's disease.

Then at last, dedicated scientists made that breakthrough. They discovered stem cells, which can repair the injuries that cause untold suffering and shorten lives.

The cruel irony is that just as medicine was giving patients new hope, the Bush administration snatched it away through needless restrictions on stem cell research,

In a few days, on August 9, patients across America will mark the fourth tragic anniversary of that cruel decision.

We in the United States Senate had the opportunity—no, we had the responsibility—to see that August 9 of this year did not mark 4 years of failure and 4 years of missed opportunity.

But the Republican leadership would not let us meet that responsibility. They let the first week of July slip by, and then the second, and now the last—all with no action on this urgently needed legislation.

Every day that we delay is another day of falling behind in the race to cure diabetes, cancer, Parkinson's disease, and many other serious illnesses.

It is another day for America to lose ground to Korea, Singapore, Britain, and other nations in the competition for global leadership in biotechnology.

Most of all, it is another day of shattered hopes for millions of patients and their families across America.

Some respond to the failure of the current policy by saying we should explore new ways to develop embryonic stem cells. I agree. Let's explore the potential of new discoveries in genetics and cell science to improve the ways we can tap the potential of stem cells. But let's not restrict essential research while scientists explore speculative and preliminary theories.

Some say we should encourage research on stem cells from the blood in umbilical cords or on adult stem cells from bone marrow and other tissues. Again, I agree. We should seek help for patients wherever it may be found. But it makes no sense to limit medical research to one narrow channel when the Nation's leading scientists agree that these alternatives have a more limited potential than embryonic stem cells. As a letter signed by 80 Nobel laureates in February 2001 stated:

Current evidence suggests that adult stem cells have markedly restricted differentiation potential. Therefore, for disorders that prove not to be treatable with adult stem cells, impeding human pluripotent stem cell research risks unnecessary delay for millions of patients who may die or endure needless suffering while the effectiveness of adult stem cells is evaluated.

The conclusion of an NIH report in June 2001 is clear:

Stem cells in adult tissues do not appear to have the same capacity to differentiate as do embryonic stem cells.

It would be cruel to base the hopes of millions of patients on an ideological conclusion that these experts are wrong. By all means, let's pursue vigorous research on adult stem cells, but let's not deceive the American public into thinking it's an adequate substitute for embryonic stem cell research.

Legislation should be an expression of our values, and our legislation says loud and clear that we value patients and their families—not rigid ideology.

It is a travesty that no action has been taken on this lifesaving measure.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise to speak in support of the unanimous consent request offered today by Senator REID. The Senator has asked unanimous consent for the Senate to take up H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act, and S. 1317, the Bone Marrow and Cord Blood Therapy and Research Act.

Both of these bills have been passed by the House and are sitting at the desk waiting to be passed by the Senate and sent to the President for his signature.

The month of July has come and is nearly gone. Yet these two House-passed bills, with strong bipartisan support, sit and wait at the desk.

The Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act has 41 sponsors—Republicans and Democrats alike. This legislation is the result of many years of bipartisan cooperation in both the House and Senate. I am pleased to join my colleagues, Senator ARLEN SPECTER, TOM HARKIN, ORRIN HATCH, TED KENNEDY, and GORDON SMITH, who have worked tirelessly on behalf of patients and their families across this Nation to see that embryonic stem cell research moves forward.

This legislation is proof positive that Senators from many different points of view, be they liberal or conservative, pro-life or pro-choice, can work together on legislation that will help speed the pace of cures and treatments for more than 110 million Americans.

Identical legislation passed the House on May 24 by a vote of 238 to 194. Congressman MIKE CASTLE, Republican, Delaware, and DIANA DEGETTE, Democrat, Colorado, are to be commended for their tireless work in getting this bill passed in the House.

It is essential that the Senate move quickly to pass this bill. The clock is ticking. August 9 marks the fourth anniversary of President Bush's policy limiting Federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. At the time it was thought there were 78 stem cell lines available to researchers, today that number is 22. And all 22 of the lines available are contaminated by mouse feeder cells and not usable for research in humans.

So why has the Senate still not acted? The simple unanimous consent request put forth by Senator REID would allow the Senate to vote on this bill as early as today. We could send it to the President for his signature tonight.

What is going on here is an attempt to obscure what is a very simple issue. What is going on here is an attempt to allow votes on other bills in order to pull votes away from H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act.

I think it is appropriate for the Senate to debate other related issues at a later time. In fact, yesterday I introduced S. 1520, the Human Cloning Ban Act—with 25 bipartisan cosponsors—which would prohibit once and for all the immoral and unethical act of human reproductive cloning. I believe strongly that Congress must pass a prohibition on human cloning or attempts to clone human beings.

But first we must act on the unanimous consent request offered today by Senator REID, and I hope that request will be one of the first issues the Senate deals with after the August recess.

Embryonic stem cell research is the bright new frontier of medicine. We owe it to the 110 million Americans suffering daily with debilitating and catastrophic diseases to pass H.R. 810.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa yields the floor. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that exchange be part of leader time and not interfere with the morning hour.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. To be more precise for our timekeeping purposes, did the Senator say part of the leader's time?

Mr. KENNEDY. The time not to be charged as part of the morning hour.

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

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I understand we have half an hour; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Chair. I ask the Chair to notify me when I have 3 minutes remaining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will so notify the Senator.

END TO ARMED CAMPAIGN

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, this morning the IRA has issued a statement indicating that it has formally ordered an end to the armed campaign. I welcome the statement. Hopefully, the statement means we are finally nearing the end of this very long process to take guns and criminality out of politics in Northern Ireland once and for all.

I look forward to the final act of decommissioning and the verification that paramilitary activity and criminality have ended. The all-important restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly is reestablished. Peace and violence cannot coexist in Northern Ireland, and all who care about peace and stability look forward to these final actions.

PROTECTION OF LAWFUL COMMERCE IN ARMS ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I wish to speak on another subject, the underlying legislation, the gun immunity bill. This bill is deceptively named the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, but it will make it virtually impossible to bring lawsuits against the gun industry, even in circumstances in which the industry's conduct contributes to unlawful gun violence.

The bill purports to exempt suits in which the manufacturers and sellers engage in illegal or negligent conduct, but these exemptions are poorly defined and clearly would not cover many types of bad conduct.

The Senate majority leader says this bill is of urgent importance, taking precedence over the Defense bill because the Department of Defense faces the real prospect of having to outsource side arms for our soldiers to foreign manufacturers. But the real story is that the Republican leadership and the Bush administration will do whatever it takes to give the gun industry all that it wants.

The NRA wants gun dealers and manufacturers to be protected from lawsuits. The NRA expects—the NRA demands—that this body remove the last resort for victims of gun violence against negligent and often complicit gun dealers and manufacturers by barring all types of cases.

Let's be clear about what this bill does not do.

It does not help our law enforcement officials fight crime or terrorism.

It does not meet the urgent need to strengthen any of our gun control laws.

It does not affect—it does not address at all—the rights or ability of law-abiding citizens to purchase and own a gun.

It does not have anything to do with the second amendment, no matter how you interpret the language of that amendment.

This bill has one motivation: payback by the Bush administration and the Republican leadership of the Congress to the powerful special interests of the National Rifle Association.

As the New York Times reported less than 2 weeks ago, Wayne LaPierre, the executive vice president of the NRA, made it clear that the NRA expected total support from its allies—or else.

Mr. LaPierre said, ''It's simply bad politics to be on the wrong side of the second amendment at election time,'' asserting that Vice President Al Gore lost the 2000 Presidential election because he supported gun control, including a Federal ban on assault weapons.

That is the same assault weapons ban that President Bush told the American people he supported but then allowed to expire.

We know what happened when the NRA pushed this special interest bill last year. When the Senate voted to reauthorize the assault weapons ban as part of the bill, the NRA called their supporters and instructed them to vote against the bill for which it had just lobbied. What a disgraceful spectacle, Members of this great body reversing themselves on the Senate floor minutes before a vote because of a single call from the NRA.

That same kind of raw special interest power is now being used again to take the Senate away from the important business of protecting our men and women who are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan so that a few unsavory gun dealers and gun manufacturers can channel powerful killing machines into the hands of criminals and terrorists in this country without any regulation or judicial oversight whatever.

The manufacturing of guns, unlike the manufacturing of nearly every other consumer product in the country, is not subject to consumer product safety standards. As it stands, manufacturers and sellers in the industry are free to design, make, and market these products with no independent review of their potential risk.

The gun industry is the only industry whose products are not subject to basic consumer health and safety regulation. Why stop with the gun industry? Why not make tire manufacturers immune from lawsuits or car manufacturers or bicycle manufacturers or toy manufacturers? Obviously, it would be absurd to shield any negligent manufacturers from liability for their action. But when it comes to shielding the gun industry, the NRA is calling the tune and too many Members of this body are tragically dancing to it.

The other side also tells us that it is too burdensome on the gun industry to fight these lawsuits. After all, we are told there are thousands of gun laws on the books and the Government can enforce them. Let us look at some of those gun laws and how the gun lobby has systematically made it more difficult, and in some cases even impossible, for the Government to police negligent gun dealers and manufacturers while making it easier for criminals to get their hands on guns.

Federal gun dealers are regulated under Federal law and required to perform background checks of gun buyers, but at the urging of the gun lobby several years ago, Congress drastically narrowed the definition of gun dealer. Now there are many unregulated individuals who do not meet the new definition. These reckless and unlicensed dealers are now selling millions of guns to people, including criminals and terrorists, without background checks. All of that is legal because the U.S. Congress kowtowed to the NRA.

In the case of Afghanistan, our troops found an al-Qaida manual that instructed terrorists on how to buy guns legally in the United States without having to undergo a background check. Al-Qaida understands that we have created a mess that allows, even encourages, criminals and terrorists to traffic in guns. But we will not do anything about the so-called gun show loophole because the NRA has snapped its fingers and said no.

We are told by the other side that victims of gun violence do not need recourse to the courts because the Government is already inspecting and overseeing the businesses of gun dealers. But is that the whole story? Absolutely not. At the direction of the NRA, Congress limited Federal inspection of gun dealers to once a year, and passed laws making it virtually impossible for agents to conduct inspections more than once a year. If an agent happens to inspect a negligent or even grossly negligent gun dealer in January, the dealer does not have to worry about the feds showing up for at least another year.

Federally regulated financial institutions can be inspected without notice whenever and as often as the regulators deem appropriate. Meatpacking companies, shipyards, iron foundries, gas refineries can all be inspected without notice whenever and as often as the regulators deem appropriate, but not gun dealers. Congress and the NRA have said they can be inspected only once a year.

What difference does that make in the life of the average citizen? It makes a lot of difference. Just ask the innocent victims of the DC sniper attacks. When the regulators cannot keep tabs on gun dealers it means the companies like Bull's Eye Shooter Supply Store, the dealer that supplied the Bushmaster rifle to the DC snipers, can get away with supposedly losing the rifle that ended up in the hands of DC snipers and losing more than 200 other guns that ended up who knows where.

The DC sniper victims had only the courts to turn to for recourse because Congress made it impossible for Federal agents to police unsavory gun dealers such as Bull's Eye. Now the NRA is telling us, take away the courts, too. Why? An obvious answer is that gun dealers and manufacturers want to sell more guns.

Our laws are designed by the NRA to increase the sales of guns by dealers and manufacturers even if they are sold to or by criminals. The NRA is lavishly rewarded for lobbying successes and so are the Members of Congress who do their bidding. It is hard to reach any other conclusion. The unholy alliance and control of the legislative process against the safety of our citizens is immoral and it is a disgrace. But let us look at the other outrageous actions that this body has taken because the NRA has demanded it.

Congress has cut Federal funding for the agency that oversees gun dealers