

preached throughout New England. He is a published author, too, and a successful small business owner. He has also had experience that all of us can relate to. In a previous community, he served as a town selectman, so he has a keen understanding of the challenges of public service, as his opening prayer demonstrated today.

It is a great pleasure to have such a dedicated spiritual and civic leader with us today and giving the opening prayer. I am sure I speak for all of my colleagues in extending him a warm welcome and in giving thanks for his inspiring prayer.

Thank you, Mr. President.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business until 10 a.m., with the first half of the time under the control of the majority leader or his designee and the second half of the time under the control of the Democratic leader or his designee.

The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I just got word that the 2,500th soldier was killed in Iraq. It is a milestone, obviously, that we all mourn deeply in this country. And that is what I rise to talk about, as a few of those who have died in the line of duty were from my State.

Mr. President, May was an especially difficult month for our home State of Nevada. We mourn the loss of four soldiers and marines who were killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. One soldier was killed during training. And just last week, another soldier from Winnemucca, NV, was killed. While there is incomparable grief following these deaths, there is also strength and pride that never ceases to amaze me.

I had the opportunity to attend two of the recent funerals: the funeral of ISG Carlos Saenz at Arlington National Cemetery and the funeral of SGT John Griffith at the Southern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Boulder City. Each funeral I have attended and each family who grieves finds a very special place in my heart, and they will always stay with me.

ISG Sergeant Carlos Saenz was born in Mexico. He became a naturalized citizen and considered himself extremely lucky and proud to have been an American, as we all should. And for more than 25 years, he dedicated himself to serving this country. His wife Nanette is a woman of great strength who understood her husband's determination and commitment to our country. They actually met during the first Persian Gulf war. She is proud of him, and we are all blessed that he came to the United States and was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for his new Nation.

SGT John Griffith lived in Las Vegas most of his life. He told his wife Christa that he was fighting this war so their son would not have to. I will never forget the image of his two young daughters, just as the funeral had ended and they were taking the coffin out. As they were putting it into the hearse, I heard his two young daughters crying, and I heard one of them say: Don't let them take daddy.

That is the real pain of war coming home to a family, and we should all remember the sacrifices that not only the men and women in uniform who have died have made but also the sacrifices and the pain their families go through.

I also had the opportunity to speak with Victoria Legaspi, the mother of SSG Emmanuel Legaspi. Manny was born in the Philippines and signed up in the Army at the age of 32, after living in the United States for only 1 year. He wanted to give back to this country, and he wanted to show his appreciation. Manny should make all of us a little more proud to be Americans.

We live in the greatest country in the world—where brave Americans such as Carlos, John, and Manny, and so many others believe so deeply in our freedom that they are willing to sacrifice their lives so that we can all live safe and free. These men follow a distinguished line of courageous men and women who have paid that ultimate price for this Nation.

They are not the only ones who have made this sacrifice. As I mentioned before, the families, and one woman in particular, Helena Lukac, have touched my heart. Helena Lukac moved to the United States in 1983 from the former Communist Czechoslovakia. Her son John was killed by a roadside bomb attack in Iraq. He was just 19 years old. Helena knows what it means to be free better than most of us. On Memorial Day, just a few weeks ago, Helena said:

I'm really grateful that we are here, even with this loss. I miss him so much, I feel it on my own skin. This freedom is not free.

Mr. President, freedom is not free. The brave men and women in our military and their families sacrifice greatly for us, and we can never thank them enough, but we can express our gratitude to them.

So today I again say thank you to the men and women who stand tall in defense of this Nation and in support of our freedom. You make us proud. And with a very heavy heart, I thank the families across America and across my State whose pain I cannot even begin to imagine. Your loss is our Nation's loss. God bless you all, and God bless this country.

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

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

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, the Senate is going to be considering in just a few minutes the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act. I do want to be clear that like most of my colleagues, I will be voting for this bill because it does provide the funding for our troops that is critically needed to carry out their mission and because it supports recovery efforts along the coast. I do wish to express three concerns I have with the conference report.

First, this bill continues the charade that this war should be funded off budget. Instead of including the money our troops need in the regular budget as requested by the President and sent to us, we keep getting sent emergency supplemental requests. It is clear to me, having been here for 13½ years, that emergency spending bills used to be for emergencies, things we could not foresee such as natural disasters. The need for funding for the war in Iraq is not a surprise. It is not like responding to an earthquake or tornado. By funding the war off budget, I fear we continue to hide the true cost of the war. It is imperative that the Senate and the House get a budget from the President that gives us the true cost of what we need to be funding.

In addition, the administration should not have the sole authority to decide what is worthy of emergency funding and what is not. We have emergencies in our backyard as well as overseas. We should not hand over to the President the final authority on what deserves emergency funding.

The second concern I have is that this bill leaves out very critical funding for areas we considered and adopted in the Senate. They were removed once the bill went to conference. Funding for health care, for port security, emergency transportation assistance in the gulf coast—much of the progress we made in the Senate was thrown out. Why? To meet an arbitrary limit set by the President. That is going to hurt many of our communities in the coming months.

Part of what we did in the Senate in April was to overwhelmingly pass the Murray-Akaka amendment that ensured our veterans would get the help they need. That amendment had broad bipartisan support on the Senate floor. It was removed in conference in the middle of the night. That is a huge setback for the men and women who are coming home from the war today and entering a VA system that is overwhelmed and underfunded. In March, the VA told us they are seeing 38 percent more Iraqi war veterans than they budgeted for. Veterans now have to wait a year to get the specialty care they deserve. Some are waiting more than 18 months before they get the benefits they have been promised. On top of that, we have waiting lists that are thousands of names long at major VA hospitals. I am frustrated that the

funding we secured for America's veterans is no longer in the bill before us. Our veterans deserve better.

Funding was also removed for emergency transportation relief in the gulf. In the Senate, we passed \$200 million in emergency assistance for transit authorities in the gulf region. FEMA, which is helping to fund transit service in New Orleans, is going to stop the funding for that at the end of this month. That is going to force New Orleans to cut back transit service even more. Cutting off transit routes is not going to help our gulf coast cities recover. Throwing busdrivers on unemployment lines is not going to help them recover.

Another item cut from the legislation was tenant-based rental assistance for the gulf. That funding was intended to serve about 44,000 families, including families that received HUD funding prior to Katrina and many homeless families. The bill we passed in the Senate expanded the purposes of that money to include the reconstruction and repair of HUD projects in the afflicted region, many of them damaged considerably. It provided vouchers for about 4,500 needy citizens in the region, particularly the disabled and homeless. That funding is now gone, and we are going to see some pretty vulnerable families in the gulf coast without any ability to stay in the homes in which they currently are trying to stay.

Finally, this bill improperly includes a budget ceiling that is going to affect every single spending bill we do this year. I believe the supplemental emergency spending bill is the wrong place to enact a budget that never passed the Senate floor. It is going to be hard enough to produce appropriations bills this year that will get broad bipartisan support at the levels the Senate approved back in March. It will be almost impossible to do so if we ignore amendments adopted on the Senate floor and impose the spending ceiling proposed by the President that is now included in the bill.

I am frustrated that the administration keeps funding this war off budget. I am frustrated that critical investments which we approved in the Senate were removed from the bill. I am very frustrated that this bill is now going to result in our hands being tied throughout the appropriations process. I hope in the future we can do much better.

I yield the floor and 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. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR DEFENSE, THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, AND HURRICANE RECOVERY, 2006—CONFERENCE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the hour of 10 a.m. having arrived, the Senate will proceed to vote on the conference report to accompany H.R. 4939, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4939) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment, and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I intend to vote for this emergency supplemental appropriations conference agreement because of the critical funding it will provide to our troops. Our men and women in uniform, and their families, deserve our support, not just in words but with deeds. This bill also provides important support to our fellow Americans in the gulf coast region who continue to rebuild their communities after the devastation of the 2005 hurricane season.

But I am disappointed that important provisions included in the Senate bill were stripped out in conference. With nearly 150,000 U.S. troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is shameful that this conference report stripped out \$430 million for veterans health care. And I am concerned that this bill short changes the U.S. Coast Guard and important port security measures. Through the regular appropriations process, I will continue to fight for our veterans, and to ensure the security of our coast and our ports.

In this bill, we have provided over \$15 billion to fix or replace equipment that has been damaged during combat operations and to buy additional force protection equipment desperately needed by our brave men and women on the battlefield.

To help protect our troops from deadly improvised explosive devices, IEDs, this bill creates the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Fund and provides the fund with nearly \$2 billion to develop and field the necessary tactics, equipment, and training to defeat these deadly weapons.

To ensure that we do all we can to care for soldiers when they are injured, this bill includes an additional \$1 billion for the Defense Health program. This money ensures that we can continue to provide world-class services including rapid aero-medical evacuation to our most severely wounded soldiers.

The veterans health care system is stretched to the limit at a time when more and more veterans are turning to VA. That is why I cosponsored an

amendment by Senator AKAKA to increase veterans funding by \$430 million to meet the health care needs of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan and other war veterans. I am very disappointed that this funding was removed in conference but will continue to fight for our veterans to ensure they have the funding needed to receive the care they deserve.

The rank-and-file employees of the Federal Government are the unsung heroes of this country. Unfortunately, they are often required to work in substandard or often hazardous conditions. It was recently reported that employees within this very building are forced to enter tunnels full of asbestos and on the verge of collapse. That is why I cosponsored an amendment by Senator ALLARD that provides over \$27 million for critical emergency structural repairs to the Capitol Complex utilities tunnels. I will continue to fight for our Federal workforce to ensure they have safe working environments and proper safety equipment.

We know that nearly 40 percent of the soldiers deployed today in Iraq and Afghanistan are citizen soldiers who come from the National Guard and Reserves. More than half of these will suffer a loss of income when they are mobilized because their military pay is less than the pay from their civilian job. Many patriotic employers and State governments eliminate this pay gap by continuing to pay them the difference between their civilian and military pay. The reservist pay security amendment, which I worked on with Senator DURBIN, was designed to ensure that the U.S. Government also makes up for this pay gap for Federal employees who are activated in the Guard and Reserves. Again, this important piece of legislation was removed from the bill during conference, but it is not dead with me. I will continue to push for equitable treatment for our Guard and Reserve troops who selflessly serve their Nation.

After 9/11, we realized that our borders were not secure. Since then, we have waged the war on terror and made great strides in protecting our homeland. We have made significant investments in law enforcement and security; however, the infrastructure that supports our border security has been allowed to crumble.

To counter this, I supported an amendment proposed by Senators GREGG and BYRD to add \$1.9 billion for border security initiatives to include buying additional vehicles, airplanes, helicopters, and ships. This amendment also provided \$600 million for the U.S. Coast Guard, the border protector of our waters. Of this amount, \$12 million was for the Mission Effectiveness Program at the U.S. Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, MD. This project is designed to extend the service life and increase the mission performance of the Coast Guard's aging fleet of medium endurance cutters. I regret that in conference the House and Senate agreed to