

THE DEMOCRAT LEADERSHIP'S
PLAN FOR FAILURE IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. PRICE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate so much the opportunity that my leadership has provided in me in allowing me to come and share some comments this evening on the floor on what is truly a momentous and historic day for our Nation.

Within the last hour, as you know, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the President has fulfilled the promise that he made to the American people. That is to uphold and preserve and defend the Constitution of the United States; and in so doing, he has vetoed the legislation that was passed by the Democrat majority recently, last week, to provide not just funding for our troops in harm's way but also to make 535 commanders in chief here in Congress and to spend an extra 20-odd billion dollars on what was supposed to be a clean, clear definition of the amount of resources needed by our troops to keep themselves safe and out of harm's way in both Iraq and Afghanistan. So within the last hour the President has vetoed that legislation, and this Congress will take up that veto tomorrow.

Curiously, today we have had Members of the majority party come to the floor over and over and over again and express a peculiar amount of glee, glee that is highlighting their policy of failure and their policy of defeat. Frankly, I don't understand it, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents talked to me this past weekend when I was home and said they didn't understand it either. It was peculiar from their standpoint to understand and difficult to understand how the majority party in this Congress could believe that abandoning our troops in harm's way was an appropriate thing to do. And, consequently, I am as perplexed as they with the policy that this majority party has put in place.

The policy that they have put in place, as is clear to everybody and we will talk about that a bit this evening, is to ensure defeat and to ensure failure of our troops. And it seems to be all, all, for politics, which is probably as sad and distressing as anything, Mr. Speaker.

□ 1845

The Democrat leadership continues to be committed to a plan for failure in Iraq, and they seem to be doing it, as I say for political points, scoring political points, political partnership, political grandstanding, whatever you want to call it.

And some might ask, well, how can you be so certain of that? Well, Mr. Speaker, we get example day after day after day. And the most recent example is what happened today, and that is, that the bill that this Congress passed,

this majority passed last week to provide artificial timelines and specific benchmarks for our troops on the ground and to add incredible billions of dollars of pork to the war supplemental, the bill was passed last week, and they did not send it to the White House until today. Now, the President took his responsibility seriously and he vetoed that and turned that bill around rapidly.

But why, why, the American people are asking, why did it take nearly a week to send that bill to the White House? Every day that goes by, every day that is added on to our troops and our military not having the resources that they need to be able to protect themselves, to be able to continue the mission that they have defined, every day that goes by that makes it so that they have to rob from Peter to pay Paul, every day that goes by that makes it so that they are unable to repair munitions and armaments, every day that goes by is costly to our men and women in the military, and costly in a way that costs lives. And so every day that goes by, by design, is a flawed policy, is a policy for failure, and is clearly a policy that is grounded in politics only.

So the question has to be asked, Mr. Speaker, well, why did it take 5 days to send that bill to the President? Well, what we have seen today is the answer to that question; and that is, that the other side, the majority party, clearly wanted to score their political points, to take advantage of a May 1 anniversary that they would define, to distort that terribly, but to take advantage of that anniversary for political points. It is sad, Mr. Speaker, it is truly, truly very sad.

I came to the floor last Wednesday, when this House passed the bill, and I talked about it being a sad and a sobering day for America, and a shame. And I talked about it being a shame because the policy that this majority party has adopted is a policy that sends the wrong message to our troops, it sends the wrong message to our allies, and yes, Mr. Speaker, it sends the wrong message to our enemies. Because to our troops it says that we don't believe in you. We don't believe you can accomplish your mission. We don't believe that you have the ability to do what you say you can do. We don't believe in our general that we supported and endorsed by unanimous vote in the Senate just this year. The message to our troops says, "We don't believe in you."

To our allies, the message is one that, I think if you look at it seriously, Mr. Speaker, is one that nobody would want to send. Because what it says to our allies is, with this majority party you can no longer trust the commitment and the word of the United States of America. That is what it says to our allies. I don't think that is the message, Mr. Speaker, that we ought to be sending around the world in this dangerous time.

But probably the most important message is the message that it sends to

our enemies. To our enemies it says, if you happen to have a difference with the United States of America and you believe that the destruction of the United States of America is at the core of your belief, then all you have to do is wait, all you have to do is wait; America will give up. That is the wrong message, Mr. Speaker. That is the wrong message. And it will ultimately end up in a more dangerous world if it is allowed to succeed.

If that message is allowed to succeed by the policies of this Nation, it will ultimately end up in a more dangerous world. It will certainly end up in a more dangerous Middle East. And it will end up, I believe, and many scholars and experts in the military believe that it will end up causing greater amounts of casualties for the American people, and certainly for our military who will have to engage in a way and in a manner that is almost incomprehensible to us right now.

Most of us in this Chamber, who we are privileged to serve, but most of us have members of the military who have come from our district; all of them have sacrificed to serve. They have recognized the importance of service to our Nation. They have stood up and they have said, I hear the call. If you talk to them, most of them will say that they are not in favor of the kind of policy that has been adopted by this majority party. One of them has been very open about that in this letter that I am going to read. It comes from a Lieutenant Jason Nichols, United States Navy, who is serving currently in Baghdad, in Iraq.

The statements by the majority leader in the United States Senate recently about the war being lost have hit a nerve, they have struck a cord on the part of our men and women in the military. They have struck a cord across this Nation, Mr. Speaker. And the cord that they have struck is one that says, how on earth can we have a majority party, a majority leader who makes that kind of statement in the middle of conflict when our men and women are in harm's way? What kind of leader is that?

This letter, as I say, comes from Lieutenant Jason Nichols, United States Navy, it is addressed to Senator REID. And he says, "Senator REID, when you say we've lost in Iraq, I don't think you understand the effect of your words. The Iraqis I speak with are the good guys here, fighting to build a stable government. They hear what you say, but they don't understand it. They don't know about the political game, they don't know about a Presidential veto, and they don't know about party politics. But they do know that if they help us, they are noticed by terrorists and extremists, and they decide to help us if they think we can protect them from those terrorists. They tell us where caches of weapons are hidden. They call and report small groups of men who are strangers to the neighborhood, men that look the same to us but

are obvious to them to be a foreign suicide cell.

“To be brief, your words are killing us. Your statements make the Iraqis afraid to help us for fear we will leave them unprotected in the future. They don’t report a cache, and its weapons blow up my friends in a convoy. They don’t report a foreign fighter, and that fighter sends a mortar onto my base. Your statements are noticed, and they have an effect.

“Finally, you are mistaken when you say we are losing. We are winning, I see it every day. However, we will win with fewer casualties if you will help us. Will you?”

Respectfully, Lieutenant Jason Nichols, United States Navy.

Do you hear that, Mr. Speaker? The message that we are sending to our enemy, as I said, is all you have to do, if you oppose the United States, is just wait. But it is more than that, isn’t it, Mr. Speaker? As Lieutenant Nichols said, quote, “To be brief, your words are killing us.” Mr. Speaker, who is “us” in that letter? Who is “us”? “Us,” Mr. Speaker, are the brave men and women who stand up and fight on behalf of the United States of America, who stand up and defend our liberty and our freedom.

Mr. Speaker, there are some people in my district who wonder why the action of Members of Congress who will make those kinds of statements, why that isn’t defined as treason. I get asked those questions at home. They are tough to answer. They are tough to answer. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, why? Why? Why do we have leaders that make those kinds of statements?

It is not just members of the military that are saying that this policy that’s being adopted and the kind of language that’s being used are detrimental to our Nation and to our alliances and to our men and women in harm’s way. There are all sorts of press reports and press opinions, editorials across this Nation that say what on earth are the Democrats doing? What on earth is the majority party doing?

The Chicago Tribune described the Democrat surrender bill as “Self-Defeating.” They had in an editorial on the 27th of April, just 4 or 5 days ago, “Establishing a timetable now would be self-defeating. A new defense secretary and a new commander on the ground should have time and flexibility to see if they can succeed where their predecessors failed,” which is exactly what Americans believe. But there is this peculiar glee on the other side of the aisle that they are accomplishing something for political gain; however, that something puts America at greater risk.

The Chicago Tribune goes on to say, “President Bush will veto the spending bill approved by Congress this week because it contains a timetable for withdrawing U.S. combat troops from Iraq. He is right to do so.” Mr. Speaker, this isn’t a paper that is known to be terribly supportive of this President, but

they understand the consequences of the actions of this majority party, they understand that they put us at greater risk.

And finally, the editorial from the 27th of April from the Chicago Tribune goes on to say, “Establishing a congressionally mandated timetable for withdrawal would straitjacket the ability of General Davis Petraeus, the top commander on the ground, to pursue the stabilization of Iraq as events and conditions warrant.

“Senator HARRY REID said recently the war is lost. This legislation would all but guarantee it.”

So in addition to having a certain amount of glee with the actions that are occurring, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Democrat leadership in both the Senate and the House is vested in the defeat of the United States in Iraq. They are now on record as being in favor of the defeat of the United States. It is a very peculiar strategy, Mr. Speaker. And the only way it makes sense is if you believe that this Congress ought to act for short-term political gain by a given political party; that is the only way it makes sense. No other way could it be deemed as being appropriate for the policy of this Nation to hamstring, to handcuff, to tie the ability of our generals on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan to make decisions. It seems truly that failure and defeat are the goal of the majority party. How sad, how sad for a once proud party in this Nation to have failure for the United States be their new strategy.

The Wall Street Journal sees it similarly. They say that Washington Democrats are taking ownership of the defeat in Iraq. In an editorial on April 25, just last month, they say, “In calling for withdrawal, Mr. REID and his allies, just as with Vietnam, may think they are merely following polls that show the public is unhappy with the war. Yet Americans will come to dislike a humiliation and its aftermath even more, especially if they realize that a withdrawal from Iraq now will only make it harder to stabilize the region and defeat Islamist radicals. And they will like it even less should we be required to re-enter the country someday under far worse circumstances.”

It is peculiar, when you think about it, Mr. Speaker, because what you hear from the other side, what you hear from the Democrat majority in all of their discussion and all of their points, their political partisan points that they make about this, all that you hear is about this issue of failure. You never hear about what the next step is.

We are going to talk about that a little bit tonight, about what the next step ought to be, about the consequences for failure. Because it is important that the American people appreciate that the decisions made in this Congress will affect this Nation for a long period of time if the decisions aren’t made in the light of day and with eyes wide open about what the

consequences of failure in this day and time in the Middle East will be.

The Wall Street Journal also went on to say, “At least Mr. Bush and his commanders are now trying to make up for previous mistakes with a strategy to put Prime Minister Maliki’s government on a stronger footing, secure Baghdad and the Sunni provinces against al Qaeda, and allow for an eventual honorable U.S. withdrawal. That’s more than can be said for Mr. REID and the Democratic left, who are making the job for our troops more difficult by undermining U.S. morale and Iraqi confidence in American support.”

□ 1900

It gets to the issue of what kind of message, Mr. Speaker, we are sending to our allies.

The San Diego Tribune was another paper that weighed in on this issue. They went on to describe the Democrat surrender bill as “a sham that is detrimental to our efforts.” They said, “The Democratic campaign is a textbook lesson in why the war cannot be managed by a committee of 535 bitterly divided lawmakers. The Constitution gives Congress control of the Federal purse strings, to be sure, but this authority has never been an effective instrument for directing forces in a combat zone. The Constitution gives that authority to the commander-in-chief alone.”

This brings up the interesting issue, Mr. Speaker, of how this Congress can believe that it ought to be having 535 commanders-in-chief. It doesn’t make any sense, because it puts every one of the Members of Congress who believe that they know better what ought to go on on the ground in a position that ties the hands of our generals.

It is not unusual for the Democrat party to believe that Congress knows best. Oftentimes their decisions affect people in kind of peripheral and tangential ways. In this decision, Mr. Speaker, it affects our military men and women who are putting themselves in harm’s way very directly and adversely.

Now, I want to be clear that those of us in the Republican Party believe that this is an appropriate debate for Congress to have. It is appropriate for Congress to say, as the paper that I just cited says, that Congress has the power of the purse string, and it is appropriate for Congress to say, if it so desires, if the majority party so desires, that we ought not fund the troops anymore in Iraq or in Afghanistan or wherever else this majority party deems that it is not appropriate for us to fund troops. That is an appropriate debate. That is a clear debate, that is a clear vote, which is why we asked for a clear vote, a clean vote, on the war supplemental. Because, Mr. Speaker, when that happens, then it is very clear what people are voting upon. That, yes, we believe there ought to be resources available for our men and women in harm’s way; or, no, we do not. That is a clear vote.

We muddy the waters and we confound the issue and we do a disservice to our Constitution and we do a disservice to our men and women in the field, certainly, when we put arbitrary timelines and benchmarks in a bill that clearly, clearly, is not appropriate, and makes it so that the Constitution becomes undermined.

The San Diego Union Tribune goes on to say more on April 26. General Petraeus was here, who is the Commander of American forces in Iraq on the ground. He visited this Congress last Wednesday and was not given the opportunity to speak to the House of Representatives as a whole in this Chamber. In fact, it is curious, Mr. Speaker, because the Speaker of this House went out of her way to visit the President of Syria on a visit recently to the Middle East, but she didn't go out of her way to visit with the American commanding general when he visited Congress.

So, the San Diego Tribune last week said, "Yesterday's pleas to lawmakers by General David Petraeus, the top commander in Iraq, not to micro-manage the war were brushed off without serious consideration in the House's partisan stampede. Meanwhile, essential funding for the troops has been sidetracked by the phony legislative exercise playing out on Capitol Hill."

That is what I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that the only rational conclusion that one could come to about why we are going through this process, why we are going through this "sham bill," as the San Diego Union Tribune calls it, why we are going through this exercise and putting the American people and our troops in harm's way through this exercise, is all about politics. It is all about politics. How sad, Mr. Speaker. How sad.

The Union Tribune concludes, "And even though this sham bill is merely a political show, the Democratic majorities in the House and Senate managed to lard it up with nearly \$25 billion in wasteful pork, most of it entirely unrelated to war funding."

So, Mr. Speaker, it is not just our men and women in the field who say that this is a wrong-headed policy. It is not just those of us on the minority side of the aisle who say that this is a wrong-headed policy and it sends the wrong message to our troops and to our allies and to our enemies. It is cogent individuals across this Nation who have come to that same conclusion.

The opportunity to come to the floor is a true privilege and a great opportunity to share with the American people what our belief is about this supplemental war bill, and I am pleased to be joined by a colleague, the gentlelady from Tennessee, Congresswoman BLACKBURN, who is a true leader in this House and has been a true leader on this issue, because she understands and appreciates the importance and the consequences of the decisions that we make as they relate to our troops in

the field and as they relate to our Nation and to our future liberty and our future freedom.

I am so pleased you would join us this evening. I look forward to your comments.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Georgia so very much. I appreciate his diligence on the issue.

Mr. Speaker, as we have been through this issue and with our troops, I have got a letter with me tonight that I received from one of our men and women that is in Baghdad who is thanking me for the support and thanking so many Members of the House for their support in standing with them and their families and supporting our troops. I think it is so interesting how they have viewed this and kind of the filter they view this issue of our troop funding from.

As I read that letter and as I have been home over the weekend and talked to so many of my National Guard families, talked to so many of the military families that call Tennessee's Seventh District home, one of the things that has been mentioned repeatedly is, "Marsha, I hope that people in Washington look at this debate and that they take a little bit of a historical view to this and focus on what should be some lessons learned." Because there are lots of lessons learned, or should be lots of lessons learned in this, Mr. Speaker.

One of the ones that was highlighted for me by one of my constituents is that we have to realize when you go back and you look at the decade of the nineties and look at the view that then President Clinton took of the military, saying, well, the wall has come down. Well, we have survived these threats. Well, let's reduce funding to the military. Well, let's reduce funding on intelligence. Let's put it into domestic programs, social service programs.

Then the unintended consequence, I am sure he would say, is when you look at what happens when you have to go back through that rebuilding process. When you hear from those in our intelligence agencies and in the FBI and the CIA that say, my goodness, it takes 5 years for us to develop an asset in these countries. When you hear from our men and women in uniform about the importance of maintenance, maintenance on those posts, maintenance on that equipment, R&D and how that should have been continued. When they point to equipment and artillery that didn't get developed. We have to look at that as a lesson learned and realize, yes, indeed, you do get peace through strength, and you maintain it by being certain that you are ever-vigilant and that you are always making certain we fulfill the constitutional duty to provide for the common defense.

There are lessons learned, and I hope that this body does take it seriously, and I hope that our friends across the aisle will join us and say let's be fair to our military, to those families and to

those troops, because for the debate that has taken place, for the rhetoric that has been spewed, for some of the statements that have been made, there are many of them that can look at this and say they are not being fair to us and they are not being fair to the job that we would do.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentlewoman's comments. I am struck by the general sense by the majority party, or seeming sense by the majority party, that their actions don't really make any difference to date. In fact, the delay we have already had, I have heard from some folks in the military that they are not able to keep up some of the repair of some of the equipment in other areas, not in the field of war right now, but in other areas, which makes us less safe as a nation.

I was wondering if you had anybody you talked with who was giving a similar story?

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Yes, and I appreciate the gentleman yielding. Yes, indeed, we hear this regularly, not only from our Guardsmen, but we also hear it from those that are on active duty, that are moving forward and readying for another deployment. They talk about how they work to make ends meet, and they talk about how deeply it hurt the ongoing progress of developing different equipment and protocols as funding was cut through the nineties.

I think another thing that we have to remember, and this has been highlighted by a couple of my constituents who are so wonderful and love keeping up with the issue, is we have to remember on September 11, 2001, we were not under a George Bush budget. We were still under the last Clinton budget. The focus was shifting for that budget that was going into place on the first of October in 2001.

Actually, Mr. Speaker, I think everybody realizes that prior to September 11, this Nation had responded to acts of terrorism as civil disobedience. September 11, all of that changed and we called it what it is, and that is a war. Because no one can deny, and I do think it is foolhardy to stand and say, oh, there is no such thing as a global war on terror. Everybody knows there is, because they know we have a very dedicated, very focused enemy. You can listen to their own words. They want to annihilate us and end our way of life.

I think it would not be wise for us to let that go unattended. We are right to respond with diligence and tenacity and focus to make certain that we defeat the radical Islamic jihadists who want to tear our Nation and our communities apart by the very fabric that holds them together.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I appreciate those comments, because it is an incredible privilege and honor to represent a nation where we have men and women who are willing to stand up and serve, to volunteer to stand up and

serve to protect the freedoms that you describe, which is why in my district people are so confounded by the kind of policy that is being pushed by the majority party at this point. Because what they see is a majority party now that is saying to our troops, we don't believe in you, we don't believe you can accomplish your mission. It is saying to our allies that you can't believe in the commitment of the United States. And it says to our enemies that all you have to do is wait. It is very strange policy.

I yield to the gentlewoman.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, we see that. The message that it sends, actions do speak louder than words. We heard that as children growing up, "your actions are going to say more about your intent than the words that you speak." And we know that.

The message that it is sending by the actions is one that does not serve us well, in my opinion. It is one that causes our intent to be called into question, because we know what the enemy would do with us if they were given the chance. We have to realize that we have to be vigilant and we cannot let down our guard, not for a minute, not for an hour, not for a day. We have to continue to work to defeat this enemy.

So many of my constituents have called about the bill. I brought a copy of the bill today to the floor with me, and here it is. It is I think 93 pages when we printed the whole thing out. It is not that difficult to read. I can even read parts of it without my reading glasses, the print is big enough, and I like that. It makes it a little bit easier to focus on.

□ 1915

For constituents who are watching tonight and want to follow along through the debate with us, I would encourage them, go to thomas.loc.gov. That is all you have to enter in your search engine. When you get in thomas.loc.gov to query the site, enter "H.R. 1591." That is the number on this bill. I do encourage individuals to go in and pull this down so they can see what is contained in here.

Now some of the comments that I have had, and you mentioned this earlier, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, the Democrat majority, ran railing against pork spending. From so many of our families I have heard: How in the world could they have drafted a bill that had money for all of these different interests? It sounds like a grocery list when you talk about beef and cheese and dairy products and spinach and shrimp. And when you look at the intent or what we have come to believe that they want to do, which was not put it through PAYGO rules, not put it through regular order, but slide it in here because they felt this was something Members couldn't refuse to vote for.

How unfair to our troops and our military families, to put this on their back and saddle them with this \$24 billion worth of pork barrel spending. It is not what they said they were going to do; and quite frankly, I don't think that is the kind of change that the American people wanted to see.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I appreciate you bringing up the extra \$20-plus billion in the bill. And I am not often struck by the candor of some of our friends in the Democratic Party, but I was moved and struck by the candor of the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, Mr. RANGEL, who was on one of the Sunday shows. I think it was "Meet the Press" with Mr. Russert. And Mr. Russert said: Why did you put all of that money in the bill? And Chairman RANGEL, to his remarkable credit of candor said "because we needed the votes."

So it is clear that the reason that the extra \$20-plus billion of pork spending is in that bill is because, exactly as you said, they believe that people won't be able to vote against the bill if that kind of pork spending is in it.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. That is right. It is so unfortunate. What we need is a clean bill that allows a good debate over how we are moving forward in Iraq.

I think it has been striking to see the Senate confirm and give a vote of support for General David Petraeus who is commanding our efforts in Iraq, a very scholarly general. He truly is a leader for our men and women and for the Iraqis. He has great respect from them.

But then to turnaround and say we are going to second guess or Monday morning quarterback your decisions and we are not going to give the funding and we are not going to give it in a timely manner. As the gentleman from Georgia was so eloquently stating earlier, there comes a time when you have to look at it and talk about what their intent is, and if they even trust the troops, if they even trust the commanders in the field to have the flexibility that they need to respond.

Certainly today we have seen and have noted the demise of al-Masri who is the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Now I know that it is probably a subject that the majority doesn't want to talk about, that al-Masri was killed in Iraq, had been found there and had been working there. So it leads one to ask the question: What was he doing in Iraq? Why was he in Iraq? And why was it that he met his death in Iraq?

Well, the answer to that question is he was there because he and the other terrorists and the other terrorist groups all tell us the central front of the global war on terror is in Iraq. This is where they are fighting it.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank you once again for pointing out this incredibly prescient and clear perspective on this issue, if people in the majority party would just step back and take a look. And that is why it is important that you pointed out that the bill num-

ber is H.R. 1591 and how to find it online at www.thomas.loc.gov, and I urge people to look at the area in the bill that has the artificial time lines and benchmarks. What we oftentimes hear from our friends on the other side of the aisle is there is no specific time line; but the bill is very specific. It says by October 1, we will begin to bring the troops home.

So it is clear that their mission is politics. The majority party's mission is politics. There can be no other reason for the remarkably foolish, if you want to support the United States, the remarkably foolish policy that they put on the table. The only reason can be politics, and short-term politics at that.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. One of the things that is so disappointing to me, having as many veterans and as many military families and members of the military as I have in my district, one of the things that is disappointing to me is they may want to do this over and over and over and delay the funding that gets to those troops.

One of the things that it always brings to mind, if you don't want to get the money to them and you don't want to get it to them in a timely manner, and you want to push benchmarks on our troops, then you have to be able to answer some questions. You've got to answer the question: What is going to happen if we leave?

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Absolutely.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. What is going to happen if we leave Iraq? What are the Iraqi people going to do if we leave Iraq? What is going to happen in the Middle East?

Somebody asked me earlier today, asked me, how many more people have to die? I said that is the question to ask the terrorists: How many more people have to die?

But what we do know is that we cannot let down our guard. We do have to continue to fight. We have to realize terror and the war on terror is a new enemy. They do not have a headquarters. They do not show allegiance to a country. They do not wear a uniform. They are an illusive enemy.

Right now they are saying the central battle front is Iraq. September 11, 2001, we know where that central battle front was.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Exactly.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. We know. And what we have to do is be certain that we meet our obligation to our men and women in uniform and that we send a message to every terrorist that is breathing on the face of the earth that we will not stop.

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. I thank the gentlelady because it is the question that needs to be asked, and it is a question that our friends on the other side of the aisle asked all the time about what the President asked once Saddam fell, what next? What we ask them now, given our current situation: Where is your strategy? If you succeed with your policy of ending the funding

for the troops and ending our involvement in Iraq, what next? What happens then?

There are some very good scholarly individuals who have looked at this, and they have said what they believe will happen next. In fact, the chart that I have here shows what the National Intelligence Estimate, the NIE, says will happen if we fail in Iraq. That is important because that group, the National Intelligence Estimate, is the group that our good friends cite all of the time, incorrectly, I might add oftentimes, but they cite them as the source for information about what ought to be done in Iraq.

But what the National Intelligence Estimate has said that the consequences of failure in Iraq would be: "Coalition capabilities, including force levels, resources, and operations remain an essential, stabilizing element in Iraq." Essential stabilizing element in Iraq.

Last week when General Petraeus was here and what he said, and it was so distorted by our friends on the other side of the aisle, but what he said on April 26 was: "As I noted during my confirmation hearing, military action is necessary but not sufficient. We can provide the Iraqis an opportunity, but they will have to exploit it."

He also said: "And again I note that we are just really getting started with the new effort."

He went on to say: "Success will take continued commitment, perseverance and sacrifice, all to make possible an opportunity for the all-important Iraqi political actions that are the key to long-term solutions to Iraq's many problems. And because we are operating in new areas and challenging elements in those areas, this effort may get harder before it gets easier."

Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of information that is imperative for this Congress to appreciate and recognize and utilize in its formula for where we go from here. If we ignore that kind of information from our general that was unanimously approved by our Senate, if we ignore that kind of information, we do so at our peril.

So what happens if we have failure in Iraq, according to the National Intelligence Estimate, well, one, Iraqi security forces would be subject to sectarian control. What does that mean? That means in essence the nation breaks into three warring factions, three warring factions, and some would say that is what is happening right now. The difference is there would be no stabilizing influence whatsoever, and the estimates are that ten of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of Iraqis would be slaughtered. Mr. Speaker, that is a sobering assessment. That is a sobering assessment.

Secondly, interference by neighboring countries in an open conflict is what the National Intelligence Estimate says is likely with failure in Iraq. What does that mean.

Mr. Speaker, as you well know, what that means is that the conflagration,

the battles, the war in Iraq becomes a war in the larger Middle East in a way that can only be described as a nightmare not just for the Middle East but for peace in the world, for peace in the world.

The National Intelligence Estimate went on to say there would be massive civilian casualties and population displacement, as I mentioned before. The estimates range from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of individuals slaughtered, killed, murdered, in sectarian violence that would put the kind of violence that we are seeing right now, which is horrendous, but it would make it seem like just a prelude, just a prelude.

Fourth, the al Qaeda in Iraq would plan increased attacks inside and outside Iraq.

This is important because if al Qaeda, if in the larger war on terror which we sometimes or oftentimes in this Chamber seem to lose sight of, but if in the larger war on terror the terrorists, the Islamic terrorists whose stated desire is to wipe Israel off the map and to end our way of life, that is their stated desire, not my opinion, that is their stated desire. If we fail in Iraq, what results is a haven of significant size and significant ability to attract terrorists in a way and to allow them the opportunity to plot for significant violence and attacks both inside and outside Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, as we saw outside Iraq doesn't just mean next door. It means around the world. As we saw on September 11, around the world can mean violence and horrendous activities visiting our shores when we least expect it.

Finally, the National Intelligence Estimate says there will be spiraling violence and political disarray, including Kurdish attempts at autonomy in Kirkuk. What that means is the nation breaks apart. And if Iraq breaks apart in the way that the National Intelligence Estimate has stated would be the likely outcome of failure in Iraq, if that nation breaks apart, what happens is it becomes a magnet for terrorism and a terrorist haven in the Middle East, a less stable Middle East, a more endangered Middle East, an emboldened enemy, a likely scenario that would bring about significant violence upon our shores once again.

□ 1930

So, Mr. Speaker, the consequence of the actions that have been adopted by this majority party, by this bill that the President has vetoed this evening, the consequences of moving forward with that same kind of legislation, which the majority party has threatened to do, and "threatened" is the right term because it threatens to place, Mr. Speaker, at greatest risk and in greater harm's way, if we continue along that path, what we do is bring about a less stable Middle East, certainly a less stable Iraq, a greater threat to Israel and other Nations in

the Middle East and certainly a greater threat to the United States.

I was quoting earlier, Mr. Speaker, from some news reports and newspapers from around the Nation on what they believed was the essence of this bill that the President has appropriately vetoed this evening.

The Washington Times said that, "The Democrats' lack of interest in the real-world impact of their legislation is reflected in their shabby treatment of the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, Lieutenant General David Petraeus. Last week, House Democratic leaders initially declined General Petraeus' invitation to brief Members, reversing themselves only after coming under fire from Republicans. And by tying funding for the war to a surrender bill that the President will veto, the Democrats are showing studied contempt for our troops in the field."

Studied contempt, Mr. Speaker, which brings me back to the original letter that I read from Lieutenant Jason Nichols, who clearly appreciates this studied contempt, but also takes it to the next step and describes what that studied contempt does. I quote Lieutenant Nichols once again, "To be brief, your words are killing us."

A powerful statement, Mr. Speaker, and we ought to be listening. We ought to be listening to the brave men and women who stand up to defend our liberty.

The Washington Times went on to say on April 26, "When it came to the 150,000 U.S. troops now fighting in Iraq, lawmakers included enough poison-pill language to ensure a presidential veto which will in turn delay much-needed support for military operations in Iraq."

In another paragraph in that same article on April 26, "To satisfy the MoveOn.org types, particularly in the House, the bill stars the pullout as early as nine and a half weeks from now. In an effort to provide political cover for House 'Blue Dogs' from more conservative districts who want to vote with Mrs. Pelosi, it contains troop-withdrawal language that sets a 'goal' for pulling out rather than a deadline."

However, Mr. Speaker, if you read the bill H.R. 1591, what it states, indeed, is a hard and fast deadline.

I want to quote one more individual who has stood tall and taken a lot of heat for it, and this is Senator JOSEPH LIEBERMAN who last week wrote in the Washington Post that the Democrat surrender bill is "dangerously wrong."

He went on to say, "And today, perversely, the Senate is likely to vote on a binding timeline of withdrawal from Iraq. This reaction is dangerously wrong. It reflects a fundamental misunderstanding of both the reality in Iraq and the nature of the enemy we are fighting there. What is needed in Iraq policy is not overheated rhetoric but a sober assessment of the progress we have made and the challenges we still face."

He went on to say on April 25 of this year, "Indeed, to the extent that last

week's bloodshed clarified anything, it is that the battle of Baghdad is increasingly a battle against al Qaeda. Whether we like it or not, al Qaeda views the Iraqi capital as a central front of its war against us."

Finally in that article, Mr. Speaker, Senator LIEBERMAN said, "In the two months since Petraeus took command, the United States and its Iraqi allies have made encouraging progress on two problems that once seemed intractable: tamping down the Shiite-led sectarian violence that paralyzed Baghdad until recently and consolidating support from Iraqi Sunnis, particularly in Anbar, a province dismissed just a few months ago as hopelessly mired in insurgency."

So, Mr. Speaker, where do we go from here? Well, I think that it is time for the majority party to regroup, to reassess, to appreciate that what they have done is spent four months on a policy that is candidly shameful; that brings about a discredit and a disservice to our troops; that sends the wrong message to our allies saying that you cannot trust the United States of America; and certainly sends the wrong message to our enemies saying that if you oppose the United States and you are in a conflict, all you have got to do is wait because the United States will not live up to its commitment.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we need to do from here, the President has vetoed this bill this evening. I would challenge the leadership in the majority party to bring the House together. I would challenge the Senate to work together in a bipartisan way and come up with a bill that the President can sign and to do so in very rapid fashion. Every day that we delay makes it more harmful for our troops, makes it so they know not whether or not they will get the resources that they need to carry on their mission, makes it less predictable, continues to erode their morale because of the comments like the ones by the Senate majority leader last week. So we must in short order come together and pass a bill that the President can sign.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of what you believe, what one believes about the nature of this battle and whether or not it is indeed the central front of the war on terror, it is incumbent that we live up to our responsibilities, to our oath as Members of the United States House of Representatives, that we live up to the responsibility and the duty that we have. That primary responsibility is to preserve and to protect and to defend the United States.

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that one of the issues about preserving and protecting and defending the United States is making certain that the men and women who stand up and volunteer to protect our liberty and our freedom deserve all of our support and the resources that they require to protect themselves and to carry out their missions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I challenge the leadership of the House and the Senate to

make certain that this week we act to bring forth a bill that will pass both chambers of this Congress, and that the President can sign, that does a credit and honors our troops; that sends the correct message to our allies, and that is, that you can count on the word of the United States of America; and sends the correct message to our enemies, and that is, that if you engage the United States in military battle, that you have met an enemy that you cannot defeat.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COHEN). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, it is an honor to come before the House once again, especially this evening.

As you know, the 30-Something Working Group, we come to the floor to bring forth the truth on behalf of the American people, not just Independents or not just Democrats, not just Republicans, but on behalf of the American people.

I am so glad to be joined once again by my good friend from Niles, Ohio, Mr. TIM RYAN, and I am always excited about being on the floor with him. I am excited by the fact that, Mr. Speaker, today that there was a conference report signed to support our men and women that are in harm's way in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in areas where they are staging to move into theater, one that brings about the equipment and support, going above and beyond what the President called for, but it also had benchmarks to bring about the kind of standards that the American people are crying out for.

It happened today at 3 p.m., and I am very proud of not only the Speaker but Majority Leader HARRY REID over in the Senate, Senator REID. I think it is also important for us to realize that in both chambers it passed by a bipartisan vote. I think it is also important to note that as soon as we were able to get that conference report signed, that the President, one of his first actions was to announce officially his veto of that legislation, saying tomorrow that Democrats and Republicans will come together at the White House to discuss where we can compromise.

Let me just say this before I yield to Mr. RYAN. I understand that there is a discussion that is going on about who is right and who is wrong, but I think it is very, very important to understand especially on the date that Mr. RYAN is going to address in a minute, some 4 years ago, where there was a great announcement of accomplishment and now to continue to move on under that light of saying trust me, that everything is going to be okay, I think that those days are over. I am not saying they are over. The American people are saying they are over.

One time here on the floor, Mr. RYAN went down a litany of things, and actually I was checking out some of your work on YouTube recently, and it had the one when you came and you said, forgive me for questioning what the President says or what the Republican majority at that time had to say about the fact of liberators and paying for the war and on and on and on.

It continues, but the American people are now saying, Mr. Speaker, that we understand this Commander in Chief but we need the Congress to stand up and be the Congress, asking for accountability.

So, with that, I know that we have a number of things to talk about here this evening, and we also have some fresh quotes from former brass because, of course, if you are enlisted or you are inside, you cannot speak truth to power or speak your mind. This information has just been released not only publicly but to those of us here in Congress. We want to share that with the Members.

Also, I want to add that the death toll in Iraq is 3,351; wounded in action, returned to duty is up 13,875; and wounded in action and not returning to duty is 11,215. That is the latest at 10:00 a.m. today. As you know, when we come to the floor, we give that report of that information because I think the Members need to understand that this is not a political issue. This is a serious issue that is facing the country and also facing the men and women in uniform and their families.

So I do know that the American people are, and a super majority of them are, 100 percent behind accountability and also oversight. I think it is important that we have that, and the President is asking for a blank check.

The thing that I am disappointed about is that the President had an opportunity to share something great with the country about a dialogue, but he decided to misrepresent what is in the legislation. I think that as we continue to talk about this tonight, that we continue to share with the Members, because every time we take a vote, the vote gets greater on behalf of accountability. I am hoping that we can meter up enough on both sides of the aisle to make sure that we hang in there with the men and women in harm's way and those that may be placed in harm's way and not wince to the President on some sort of floating politics that is going on right now.

I hope they have a true dialogue. I am not about the political part of this. I am about the action part of this and making sure that our men and women have what they need.

Mr. Speaker, we have done what we said we would do: make sure that they are funded; make sure that they have the equipment that they need; make sure that the men and women that went over into harm's way, that the Department of Defense regulation as it relates to the downtime that they are supposed to have with their families,