

Right now, it is not, but it is still very good. So I hope Senators will come to the floor at 2:15 p.m. to hear his speech upon his return. Senator MCCONNELL and I are going to submit a resolution welcoming him back. So I encourage Members to be here at that time.

We will have some rollcall votes later today, maybe even into this evening. Senator REED and Senator HUTCHISON are the ones managing the Military Construction and Veterans bill.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 2419 AND H.R. 3221

Mr. REID. I have a matter of business, Mr. President.

There are two bills at the desk due for a second reading.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bills by title for a second time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2419) to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

A bill (H.R. 3221) moving the United States toward greater energy independence and security, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production, and modernizing our energy infrastructure, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I object to any further proceedings with respect to these two bills en bloc.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

RETURN OF SENATOR TIM JOHNSON

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, let me briefly second the observations of the majority leader about the return of our friend, TIM JOHNSON, from South Dakota. We look forward to welcoming him back after the policy luncheons today. It is a remarkable example of grit and determination to fight his way back. All of us on this side of the aisle are certainly happy he is back and look forward to welcoming him back to the Senate family officially, after the policy lunches.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, if I may say also—I said this personally to the distinguished Republican leader—Senator MCCONNELL and the entire Republican caucus have been so thoughtful regarding Senator JOHNSON's illness. There were things the Republican minority

could have done to have taken advantage of the situation of his being ill. That was never done, not on one occasion. I appreciate that very much. I know Senator JOHNSON does. It speaks well for the Senate.

I don't think I need to say more on that issue other than it is the right thing to do, but sometimes we try to take advantage of a situation politically. The Republican Senators did not do that, even though there would have been times it would have been to their advantage.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader very much. I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now be in a period for the transaction of morning business until approximately 11:30 a.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, and the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half of the time and the majority controlling the second half of the time, with the Senator from North Dakota, Mr. DORGAN, controlling up to 20 minutes of the majority time.

The Senator from Georgia.

SENATOR TIM JOHNSON

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I appreciate this opportunity. Before I make my speech, I join the two leaders in expressing my joy at the return of Senator JOHNSON. He has suffered a tragic event, but his grit, his determination, and I think the prayers of the entire Senate have paid off. I am delighted he is returning to this body, with us, at 2:15 p.m. today.

IRAQ

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I spent the month of August on our break traveling the State of Georgia and did it for a specific reason. I knew that September 15 would be the report period for Ambassador Crocker and for General Petraeus. I knew it was very important for me as a Senator to go to the people of Georgia and find out what was on their minds.

As I introduced myself in every speech I made, I said: As a Member of the Senate, and with our men and women deployed in harm's way, it is absolutely incumbent upon me, first and foremost, to address the Iraq war, to address my votes, and to hear from the people of Georgia on what they feel.

When I returned to the Senate last night and I was on the floor, I had the occasion to listen to a speech by the Senator from New York, questioning, again, our involvement in Iraq and, even in advance of the Petraeus report, taking a position that whatever it was, it would not be good enough and the United States of America should withdraw. So I thought today I would come to the floor and speak not only my mind but I think the consensus of the people of Georgia regarding where we are now and where we may be in the months ahead.

I visited civic clubs, chambers of commerce, garden clubs, the State chamber of commerce and sat for a meaningful hour with Lucy and Rick Harris, the parents of LT Noah Harris, who died 2 years ago fighting for the United States of America in Iraq. I tried to get every perspective. I even spent half a day with new recruits at Fort Benning at the Third ID on their fourth day of basic training.

Next week is an important week for the United States of America, and the report by General Petraeus is an important report. There are some Members of the Senate who are invested in, whatever it says, staying the course, there are some who are invested in coming home no matter what it says, when, in fact our actions should lie between. We should wait and hear what the general says. We should wait and hear what Ambassador Crocker says. But also it is time for us to start thinking about defining what victory is rather than declaring, as some have done, that we have lost.

We all know there are positive words coming back from Iraq. We know some positive things have happened. But we know it is not done, and we know it is not over. But I think, in defining what victory is, it is important to remember the speech the President of the United States made the day before we all voted to authorize the engagement in Iraq and enforcement of U.N. Resolution 1441.

The President established three precise goals for our involvement in Iraq. No. 1 was to depose Saddam Hussein and find, if they existed, the weapons of mass destruction that every nation in the world thought Saddam Hussein had and U.N. Resolution 1441 delineated; second, to allow the Iraqi people to hold free elections and establish a government of their choosing; and the third goal was to adequately train the Iraqi military so it could successfully defend and protect that fledgling new Government.

On goal No. 1, Saddam Hussein was captured, he was deposed, he was tried by the people of Iraq, and he was executed.

On the weapons of mass destruction, there are those who say we didn't find them. We found all the components. The problem when you find a weapon of mass destruction, when you have a smoking gun, it has already gone off. So sometimes finding the components

is better. We did find Scud missiles buried in the sand between Damascus and Baghdad in Iraq, we found traces of sarin gas, we found mobile biological laboratories dismantled, and we found mass graves where hundreds of thousands of Iraqis had been killed. The evidence was there.

Second, in terms of the Government and establishing elections, the Iraqi people in 18 months held three elections, wrote a constitution, and established a government. Goal 2 accomplished.

Goal 3, to adequately train the Iraqi Army so it could defend the people of Iraq and that fledgling government. I think it is very instructive to recognize what has happened in recent days and in past months. Yesterday, the British left Basra, and as they left Basra and their post, who replaced them? Not the American military but the Iraqi military, a clear and distinct sign that the Iraqi military is gaining the ability to defend this fledgling country on their own.

Second, what happened 3 weeks ago. We finally captured and killed the bomber who set off the mosque bombing that set off the sectarian violence about a year and a half ago. Who captured him? Mr. President, 1,000 Iraqi troops with close air support by America, but the ground action was the Iraqis. On the “clear and hold and secure” of the surge, we have Americans and Iraqi soldiers embedded, side by side, holding those parts of Baghdad that we have secured, holding them so reconstruction can take place.

We are making positive steps, and we are on the cusp of the third goal being accomplished. We are not there yet, but we are on the cusp of it.

Where are we? We need to listen to what General Petraeus comes back and recommends, and Ambassador Crocker. I will not prejudge what the report will say because I have not seen it yet, but I think we all know there is enough evidence that we are coming close that it is very important we pay attention to the months ahead, which will be the most critical in our engagement in Iraq.

To that end, I want to share a little bit of the advice of a good friend to me, Lucy Harris, in Ellijay, GA. Lucy and I and her husband Rick and her late son Noah's fiancee—he was killed in Iraq—sat with a reporter and photographer from the Washington Post, and they recorded our conversation that particular day for an article they wrote recently. But I want to share with the Members the Senate some of the advice Lucy gave to me. She lost her only son. Her only son was a cheerleader at the University of Georgia on 9/11/2001 who, upon that tragic day, walked up to the military ROTC on campus as a junior and said: I want to join and get a commission.

They said: You can't because you don't have enough time. You have to have 2 years.

He said: I will make up the time.

Finally, the Army reluctantly agreed, and sure enough, in 18 months Noah Harris got his commission in ROTC and became a second lieutenant in the U.S. military. He volunteered because he wanted to confront the evil and terror he saw on that particular day.

He was known as the Beanie Baby soldier in Iraq. He led a platoon in Iraq, and he carried, in one big pocket on his right leg, bullets, and in another big pocket on his left leg he carried Beanie Babies, and he shared them with the Iraqi kids as he would go through securing and patrolling areas of Baghdad. His unit started carrying Beanie Babies and other good things for the Iraqi kids. While defending freedom and hopefully securing that country, he was also winning the minds of those children.

Tragically, he was lost in the explosion of an IED in Iraq. I attended his funeral and saw the outpouring of love from a thousand people in his community. So when Lucy sat down last week in Ellijay, GA, her advice to me was important and her advice to me was what appears on their car's license plate: IDWIC, those letters, because her son, Noah, who e-mailed back and forth with me before his tragic passing, always said: IDWIC—I do what I can. That was his motto. That is why he went to Iraq, to do what he could for freedom and democracy, for peace and to end terror.

That is what his mom Lucy and Rick do today—they do what they can. In their comments to the reporter, when asked what they think about all the debate going on in Washington about Iraq, Lucy said: I think the debate is healthy. I watch it. I think it is important. I think we should all do what we can, but we need to make sure that my son Noah did not die in vain.

To that end, as I approach the votes we will take—I don't know on what, but I know it will be about Iraq—in the months and weeks ahead following the Petraeus report, I will do what I can to give us a chance to finish the job, win the victory the President outlined at the outset 5 years ago on our entering Iraq, and honor and pay tribute to the sacrifice of the 3,700 or more Americans who have given their lives in the effort of the overall war on terror and in particular the securing of Iraq and the opportunity for a fledgling democracy to take hold in the Middle East.

These are difficult times but not nearly as difficult for us as for the men and women who voluntarily go because they believe in our cause. I stand here today in the Senate hoping that all of us will not prejudge what Ambassador Crocker will say, or General Petraeus, nor should we declare defeat when we have victory within reach, nor should we declare victory if it is not there. But we should move forward in order to honor the sacrifice of the men and women who fight for our country voluntarily every day.

For me, I am going to do what I can. I am going to take Lucy Harris and

Rick Harris and Ashley's advice. I am going to honor the life of Noah by listening closely to the report, by recognizing why we went in the first place, and see to it we give ourselves a chance to declare the victory that has been so bravely fought for by the men and women of the U.S. military.

I hope we will all have open minds and open hearts and give thanks for the sacrifices taking place and recognize again why we went in the first place and recognize again how close we are to achieving our goals.

I yield the remainder of my time and suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I wish to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about what I think is a very important debate, and that is about Iraq war policy. Next week, I believe, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will be coming to the Congress to brief us about the situation as they see it. I think most of us in the Senate are very anxious to hear what our Ambassador has to say and our leading general in Iraq. There are GAO reports about benchmarks. The idea that we are trying to evaluate performance and progress in Iraq is a good thing. Some of the benchmarks have not been met, apparently, some have. It depends upon how you measure. The one thing I would caution my colleagues to not forget is that the biggest benchmark is whether our presence in Iraq should be maintained in terms of our national security interests or should we leave. If we do leave, how does that affect our long-term security interests?

I think the biggest issue facing each Senator is how they view the war in Iraq. This is a legitimate debate. There are two different ways of looking at the engagement in Iraq. Some Senators believe our military presence in Iraq at such levels is propping up the Iraqi Government; they are relying too much upon us, they are putting off the hard decisions because we are doing the fighting and they can kind of take their time, and that we should put more pressure on the Iraqi Government by beginning to withdraw troops.

There is another view that any presence in Iraq is creating more terrorism than it is preventing, that our presence in Iraq is creating instability and problems for the Mideast as a whole, and that we should basically get our eye back on the ball, Afghanistan, al-Qaida operations in other areas.