

Mr. HATCH. One concern that I raised, which we all agreed would have been included in the conference report language had we filed such a report was a clarification about the meaning of “scientific or regulatory issues.” It was our agreement during negotiations on FDARA about what is perhaps an obvious point: if the law requires a delay in approval of an ANDA or 505(b)(2) application, for example because of a patent or an exclusivity, this new provision will not change that required legal result. The law is the law, and its effect should not depend on whether or not it was brought up in a petition to FDA. I would appreciate the chairman clarifying if that was the agreement we had.

Mr. KENNEDY. I do agree. Let us be clear: The citizen petition provision is designed to address attempts to derail generic drug approvals. Those attempts, when successful, hurt consumers and the public health. The citizen petition provisions are not intended to alter laws not amended by the provision. I thank the Senator.

MEDICARE CLAIMS DATA

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, today we have before us an important piece of legislation, the FDA Amendments Act of 2007. It has come to my attention that this bill includes a section that makes an effort to authorize the FDA to use and release Medicare claims data for use in postmarket surveillance of drugs approved by the FDA. I fully support the goal of making drugs safer for all Americans.

As chairman of the Finance Committee, however, I am obligated to point out that any use of Medicare data is exclusively governed by title XVIII of the Social Security Act, and that the Finance Committee has exclusive jurisdiction over title XVIII. I would ask the distinguished chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, Senator KENNEDY, to acknowledge that the Senate Finance Committee has sole jurisdiction over Medicare data and title XVIII of the Social Security Act and ask that he endeavor to consult us on matters before the HELP Committee that touch on the Senate Finance Committee’s jurisdiction. I make the same commitment to him that he makes to me: I will commit to consult on matters before the Finance Committee that touch on the Senate HELP Committee’s jurisdiction.

To avoid unnecessary confusion as to the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee or further delay in the consideration of this important conference agreement, I would agree to accommodate your request to withhold any objection to the Senate’s consideration of it with the acknowledgement that the release and use of Medicare data are governed by title XVIII of the Social Security Act and are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Finance Committee. This does not represent any waiver of jurisdiction on the part of the Finance Committee on this subject.

I would ask the chairman of the HELP Committee, Senator KENNEDY, whether he would agree to this request.

Mr. KENNEDY. It is a great pleasure to work with my distinguished colleagues from the Finance Committee on this reauthorization of important programs at the FDA. I know they have a deep interest in seeing that the medicines that Americans take are safe and effective.

Senator BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY have rightly raised a question regarding the interpretation of section 905 of this bill. Section 905 adds a new paragraph (3) to section 505(k) of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. This new paragraph establishes a system for FDA to query databases regarding information that may help detect adverse drug effects. It is essential to detect drug safety problems early, so that they may be corrected before people are hurt and an electronic drug safety system is one important tool for doing so.

The Medicare claims database is listed as one of several possible sources of data in section 505(k)(3)(C)(i)(III)(aa). I want to assure my friends from Montana and Iowa that our intent is that Medicare’s participation will be determined by provisions of the Social Security Act, over which the Finance Committee has exclusive jurisdiction. Nothing in this section is intended to infringe on that jurisdiction or to in any way preempt the ability of the Finance committee to act to specify the participation or nonparticipation of the Medicare claims data base in the system established under section 905.

The matter before the Senate amends the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. The section to which you have raised concerns authorizes use of Medicare data “as available.” I acknowledge that under current law, that is not possible.

Mr. BAUCUS. I thank the chairman. I intend to continue working with my good friend Senator GRASSLEY to address the release and use of Medicare data by Federal health agencies and private researchers soon through legislation written by the Finance Committee.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I agree with my colleague, Senator BAUCUS. I have been working a long time on legislation to permit the use of Medicare data to improve drug safety. After all this is some of the best and most complete data available. In fact, Senator BAUCUS and I joined together to introduce legislation to accomplish just that during the 109th Congress, S. 3987, the Medicare Data Access and Research Act, and this Congress, S. 1507, the Access to Medicare Data Act of 2007. Improving drug safety is a top priority of mine and the appropriate use of Medicare data will likely enhance drug safety. That will benefit all Americans. I look forward to completing our goals for Medicare data later this year and including this on legislation within the purview of the Finance Committee. We

intend to clarify how Federal health agencies may use and release Medicare data and make the appropriate amendments in the Social Security Act. At that point, it will be important that the use of Medicare data be appropriately tied into the drug safety provisions of the FDA bill under consideration today. We would hope that our colleague, Senator KENNEDY, would agree to make conforming amendments to the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act as needed to make FDA law consistent with appropriate Medicare law.

Mr. KENNEDY. I appreciate that conforming amendments in the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act may be necessary as you point out. I agree to work with the Senator in the future on this issue.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD, without further intervening action or debate.

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

The bill (H.R. 3580) was ordered to a third reading, was read the third time, and passed.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the New England Journal of Medicine, which is probably the most distinguished medical journal in not only this country, probably in the world, has made the comment that this legislation is the greatest progress, in terms of drug safety, in a century. This ought to be reassuring for every family as to the safety of their prescription drugs and also in terms of their food.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I congratulate my colleague from Massachusetts on another landmark piece of legislation that he has been able to shepherd through this institution. It adds to a remarkable string of legislative accomplishments.

We are all pleased this important reform effort and advance is going to be made. It is a terrific step forward. I congratulate Senator KENNEDY, Senator ENZI, and others on the committee who worked so hard to make it happen.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008—Continued

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I have been listening to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, and sometimes I think we are talking past each other and about different legislation.

The proposal in the Levin-Reed-Kerry and other Senators legislation says nothing about precipitous. I don’t know how one interprets “precipitous” when we leave the President the discretion to decide how many troops he is going to have there for training, for prosecuting the war on terror against

al-Qaida, and for the job of protecting American facilities and forces.

The fact is that for many people in the country, this is inadequate. It is not precipitous. To have a debate about buzz words that excite the base does not serve our troops well, and it certainly does not serve our national security interests very well.

We keep hearing these words “surrender” and “choose to lose,” and so forth. It is insulting to a lot of people who have spent a lifetime, some who served in the Armed Forces, being told this by people who have not, that they are somehow choosing to put a strategy in place purposefully that is to surrender on behalf of America or to lose on behalf of America. Come on. It happens that a lot of people in the Senate and the country believe there is a better way to defend American interests.

I will tell you, if you take a real measurement by facts of where we are with respect to American security interests—let me give them to you: Iran is stronger than Iran has ever been in recent years. Iran loves the fact that we are bogged down in Iraq. Iran is strengthened by the fact that we are bogged down in Iraq. Our own national intelligence agency has told us we are now experiencing more terrorism, not less, because of our policy in Iraq. That is our intelligence community telling us that, that there are more terrorists, not less. Osama bin Laden is free and doing what he does out of Pakistan, talking on the Internet to the world, attracting terrorists, and plotting to attack America. Hamas is stronger than it has ever been. They took over the Gaza and are creating havoc in the West Bank. Hezbollah is stronger than it has been. Al-Qaida is reconstituted.

Those are all facts. Do you know what they add up to? They add up to a weak foreign policy, to a weak defense policy and, in fact, those who claim and talk about surrender and about choosing to lose are losing today when measured against the real interests of our country. They are not making America safer. Interestingly, one of the most important things General Petraeus said in that hearing, in answer to a question from the Republican former chairman of the Armed Services Committee, somebody respected and revered by people on both sides of the aisle, Senator WARNER, are we safer?—General Petraeus couldn't say. He said: I don't know.

So I have had enough of this gobbleygook talk about “precipitous” and “surrender” and “walking away from responsibility.” The responsibility here is to get this policy right for America and for our troops.

Where is the accountability? We were told by the President of the United States last January, when he stood up and he talked to the Nation, one of those big televised “We are going to talk to the Nation,” he said to America: The Iraqis are going to do the following. Here is what they are going to do: A, B, C, and D. Then he said: And we are going to hold them accountable.

Then after the Iraq Study Group reported, everybody said: OK, we are going to wait and give General Petraeus an opportunity to report; we are going to wait for September, and we will see whether we are going to change the strategy.

What did General Petraeus talk about when he finally gets here at this long-awaited moment that everybody is waiting for to measure the strategy with respect to Iraq? He talked about tactics, about military tactics that do not amount to a strategy for how you resolve the fundamental problems of Iraq.

The Senator from Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS, a moment ago pointed out this complete contradiction where they are claiming: Well, the streets are safer and they have been safer for, what, 7 months, 8 months now because General Petraeus's own chart shows the vast preponderance of the violence went down before our troops even got on the line.

One of the reasons it went down is because there has been a massive amount of ethnic cleansing because the militias have done their dirty deed across the country, and Baghdad, which used to be 65 percent Sunni, is now 75 percent Shia. That tells you the story.

There is a total mythology here about al-Qaida, not mythology in the sense that they are dangerous and they are real. We all understand that. Al-Qaida is a threat. Al-Qaida is a serious challenge to all of us in both parties, to the country, to every citizen. But al-Qaida is not the principal problem in Iraq.

It was again interesting that General Petraeus, in answer to a question in the Armed Services Committee, was asked about Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida in Iraq, whether they were there at the beginning, and he said no. There is no connection between al-Qaida in Iraq and 9/11, none whatsoever, despite countless, countless references by the President, the Vice President, and a bunch of folks on the other side to try to link them together and confuse Americans, grab their emotions, get them in the gut, and somehow that is going to excuse a policy that cannot find another excuse.

It is a disgrace, and it doesn't serve our national security interests. I repeat, we are not safer in the grander sense of strategic interests of our country. When you measure what they have done with respect to Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, al-Qaida, Osama bin Laden, they have a failed national security policy for this country—a failed national security policy for this country. The measurement is given to us by our own intelligence agency, which tells us al-Qaida is reconstituted and capable of attacking from anywhere.

It is obvious for everybody to see how we have lost leverage and lost credibility and lost influence in the world. That does not make our Nation safer, not in the least.

While we have waited for General Petraeus to report, a lot of young Americans have died. Meanwhile, today in the Senate, we were distracted by this much discussed, much condemned ad in a newspaper 2 weeks ago. Some saw a chance to score cheap political points on the floor of the Senate. Instead of joining with everybody to condemn all those kinds of ads and involvements in American politics that people do not like, the other side could not bring themselves to do that. But they have to have their singular targeted, one-entity specific, not even affiliated party entity, and go on and attack it. Frankly, it is as insulting as it is illuminating that in a week-long debate about Iraq, in which both sides have just five amendments to try to affect the policy, the Republicans took one of those amendments to try to, instead, play pure politics.

Mr. President, all of us opposed any kind of personal attack on the distinguished general, and we said so at the time. I think I was one of the first people to speak out and say so. But I am not going to join in some kind of hijacking of the Senate for political purposes to score points and create 30-second advertisements as a consequence of votes. It is a disgrace, and it does a disservice to what we are trying to do.

We have had a lot of colleagues who have referenced the fact that the escalation of sending more troops into Iraq was to give Iraqi politicians the chance to be able to make up their own minds about their political future. And we have heard a lot of people talk again and again and again about how there is no military solution. I know what happens in the sort of “speech-ifying” that goes on here, and the repetition, I guess, of some of these facts. They kind of get glossy. They just sort of slide by people and people don't really focus on the real meaning or the impact of what is being said as a result. But the fact is, the President very clearly told America the rationale for sending more troops was not to go out and secure a whole bunch of communities for the sake of having a general come here and say we know how to secure a community.

A lot of us, in discussing the so-called surge, said at the time that this is not going to be the thing that changes the fundamental dynamics that are now ruling Iraq absent an increase in significant political diplomacy and political strategic thinking. And in that, we have been proven 100 percent correct. The Iraqis have not made fundamental decisions.

Let me ask you, Mr. President, what is the relationship between more security and making a decision about how you distribute oil revenues? Are you telling me they can't get into a room and figure out the Kurds have this much, the south has this much, the Sunni triangle doesn't have any? The Sunnis are 20 percent of the population, so we have to have some revenue going to them from a national basis. Do you

need security to make that decision? There is a complete disconnect in what is being talked about here.

Do you need security to decide whether you are going to allow people who were formerly members of the Baath Party, but who were there because they were coerced or because it was the only way to stay alive but who never took part in the excesses of Saddam Hussein, do you need security to make the decision—and I am not saying you can get them all to go into the mainstream of the life of Iraq—but to make the decision as to whether you are going to let them go in? You need security to do that? No. You need a political will.

I will tell you why they are not making the decision. It is not because of the absence of security. It is because of the fundamental reality of their constituencies. The Shia have spent 1,300 years being basically subjugated by Sunni, and they have now been given at the ballot box what they could never achieve in any other way. They have been given the right to run the country. And guess what. After what happened in 1990, when President Bush, 41, excited the notion they could take on Saddam Hussein and encouraged them to revolt, and they did, and then we pulled the rug out from under them, tens of thousands of them were brutally murdered, and they remember that. That is the freshest massacre in their memory. That memory says to them, we are not going to let go of this power very easily, especially when we now have an opportunity to have a Shia Islamic state, which is what they want. That is what the constituency wants.

The Sunni constituency, which has been running the place for most of those years—not every single one of them but most of them—has now been emboldened in the notion that they have to reject this notion of a Shia Islamic state, and Iran and Iran's influence, and they have the sense that they can return to power. In that struggle is written the history of the IEDs and most of the ethnic cleansing and most of the violence we have seen. Now, not all of it. Yes, al-Qaida has been involved in brutal incidents; and, yes, al-Qaida is trying to stir things up; and, yes, al-Qaida was involved in the Samarra mosque and other things. We all understand that. But my colleagues are dead wrong when they come to the floor of the Senate and they tell us, or tell America, that al-Qaida is the principal problem that keeps us doing what we are doing in Iraq. It is not true.

Al-Qaida will not survive in Iraq, in any kind of Iraq, if we are not there. The Sunni have made a decision. And, incidentally, the Sunni didn't make a decision that was based on security. The Sunni made a political decision to work with the United States, and then the security came as a consequence of the political decision. The political decision came first, and the Sunni made up their minds, and now they are, in

deed, being armed, being trained, and fighting back against al-Qaida because they got tired of al-Qaida's cruelty.

The Shia will never get along with al-Qaida because al-Qaida and al-Qaida's beliefs and its attempts to establish a caliphate in the region and out of Iraq does not include Shiism. You are better off as a Christian or a Jew in the eyes of al-Qaida than Shia are in the context of Muslim and the faith of Islam. So the Shia, and particularly Iran—and I heard my colleague from Alabama turn to Iran as the reason to somehow talk about what is happening with Iraq and al-Qaida. Iran is not going to tolerate al-Qaida, not for an instance.

The Kurds are not going to tolerate al-Qaida. Al-Qaida is not in Kurdistan, and al-Qaida doesn't do so well down there where the Shia are, and it is not doing so well right now where the Sunni are. The jihadists, as opposed to the former generals of Saddam Hussein—al-Qaida in Iraq is made up of a number of different entities, and the worst, obviously, are the jihadists. Those are the foreign fighters who come in across the Syrian border or across the Iranian border, but they are the first who are going to find a massive unwelcome in Iraq because they are foreign and because there is no way that either Sunni or Shia or Kurd is going to allow the jihadists to get a foothold of any kind of consequence.

The Baathists are using al-Qaida in a way because it serves their interests to foment some of the problems because they are targeting us as well as the Shia, and they want to create this disruption. The only way to resolve that is through this political issue, and that raises the question of, how you do solve it? There are some very smart people who know more about Iraq and its history than I do who suggest it may not be possible, for the time being, because of what has been unleashed—the opening of Pandora's box, or the genie out of the bottle, or whatever you want to say. It has changed the possibilities now so that you may not be able, for the time being, to achieve any kind of legitimate central government or pluralistic society. You may have to have this federalism that has been talked about for some period of time because they may have to live apart before they can live together again in order to prove you can get over these hurdles and create some governments.

Even today, we had a meeting with the French Foreign Minister here, and he mentioned how there is a growing sense among some Iraqis that this may be the way in which you have to try to build a resolution. Those are the kinds of things we should be talking about in the Senate. These are the kinds of things we ought to be pursuing in diplomacy. And where is the diplomacy? Where is the significant standing summit? I think 3 years ago, when I was running for President, I talked about the need to have a standing summit and a standing conference. Senator

LUGAR has talked about it repeatedly, to the point of exhaustion, that you have to have people who are talking to each other every day. You have to have envoys of consequence.

Why couldn't we have former President Bush and President Clinton serve as special envoys to convene and meet with these folks and work through these differences on a daily basis, with the notion that you are going to try to create a resolution, or find the resolution, like we did in Bosnia and Kosovo, as we have in so many other conflicts in the world?

As a young person, when I came into politics, I remember one of the things I admired on both sides of the aisle was those titans of American diplomatic history. During the period that I grew up, there were people with names such as Acheson and Ball and Bundy and a host of others, and some did better than others. Kissinger and then Jim Baker, who I remember made 15 trips to Damascus just to get President Asaad to agree finally to Desert Storm. And he went the last time, on the 15th trip, without even knowing what the outcome would be, but he knew that he had to repeatedly be there and be in their face and cajoling and working and moving the process.

There has been such a total absence of that kind of effort over the course of these last years, it just frustrates me to think about young men and women on the front lines suffering these grievous injuries and believing in our country and in the idea of trying to help Iraq and not having the kind of support and policy that does justice to the risks they are taking. It is stunning, Mr. President.

I believe, as Tom Friedman said the other day, negotiating in the Middle East—without leverage is playing baseball without a bat. And that is basically what we have been doing because we will not get up from the table. There has never been a baseball owner in history who went into negotiation with another player and said: I can't get up from the table. That is a negotiation that is not going to end well. That is the negotiation we are basically in today.

The President of the United States has said to the Iraqi Government, we are going to have 130,000 troops there next summer. It is already there. What did they have to do? What do you have to do if you are an Iraqi sitting there playing your game, knowing you are going to be there, not us, forever, if you stay alive; knowing that you are able to use the 130,000-troop promise of next year and you can just float along and avoid any kind of responsibility or decisionmaking and play your own political power game for the future? If you are already aligned with Iran, as many of those politicians are who are Shia, in the majority, they have no motivation whatsoever to compromise.

You have to change the dynamics. You have to change the play on the ground. You have to get them worried

and get them thinking about legitimate implications of what happens if we do something. Right now, when the United States starts talking militarily about Iran, they are not particularly scared because they know the situation with our troops. They read the newspapers. They hear the debate in the Senate. They know how overstretched we are. I mean this is not complicated. We don't have the leverage that we ought to have to get them to do what they ought to be doing—if they are willing to do it at all—and put it to the test to find out if they are willing to do it at all because we are going to have 130,000 troops there no matter what they do next summer. We have already told them that. The same number of troops we had last year when America said staying the course was not good enough; we want a better strategy, our strategy is to go back to where we were when the country almost disintegrated a year ago with 130,000 troops.

The other thing we know is that we are not going to put enough troops in there to secure every single community. So when you push in Baghdad or you push in Anbar, and then somebody goes over to Baqouba, or somebody goes over to Diyala Province or one of the other provinces, they have infinitely more capacity to move around.

I learned that lesson a long time ago, back in the war of the 1960s, in Vietnam. We learned what it was like to go into these villages where you don't share the culture, the language, you don't look like the people, the religion—any of it. You are carrying guns, and they think you are occupying their land. It is tough. It is tough on our folks.

What are they doing? They are going out and finding IEDs the hard way. I hear folks talking about these battles and the enemy? The enemy? The enemy are IEDs. Obviously the people who plant them, but they don't see them very much. Most of the wounded are from IEDs. Most of the killed are from IEDs. This is not a set piece battle such as we have seen in a lot of other wars we have fought. It is not even the same kind of insurgency battle we have seen in a lot of other wars we have fought. It is very different.

I don't think we have been as smart or as thoughtful and creative in the kinds of strategies we need to change it—particularly when you hear the Iraq Study Group and our own national intelligence entities all come together saying the American footprint is part of the problem. The large presence of American forces is attracting jihadists, attracting terrorists, creating the impression of occupation. That is what General Casey said and General Abizaid. That is what the Iraq Study Group has said. Everybody has said that.

What have we done about it? We have increased the presence. We have increased the footprint. We have lent even more credibility to the concept, as General Jones said, that we are

there for the long run because we have this massive footprint with great big bases and unbelievable amounts of equipment. A whole bunch of people think we are not just there to help Iraq, we are there for the long run, we are there because we want to be there for much larger purposes.

I think we have to do this differently. The open-ended, seemingly endless commitment has clearly done nothing to directly confront the problem. What we need to do, the responsibility that each of our colleagues has, is to look at these kinds of dynamics and examine them. If the Shia really believe what they believe and the Sunni really believe what they believe—and you can talk to them and read history and make judgments about it—then the troops are not going to change what is necessary for them to try to make some decisions.

GEN Tony Zinni—for whom I have great respect, who is former CENTCOM commander, he travels frequently over there and meets with an awful lot of people—some time ago talked to me about an idea that has appealed to me very much over the last years, which is the need to negotiate a new security arrangement for the region itself; if we were to become involved in trying to engage these other countries in that arrangement, which can be leveraged by the notion that we are going to pull back, that we are going to shift responsibility to the neighbors to begin to bear some of the strategic long-term requirements—with respect to Iran, for instance; with respect to the protection of the Gulf States—Saudi interests, Jordanian interests, et cetera—remembering always that those countries are Sunni. An awful lot of the money that is reaching the 20-percent Sunni population who are resisting today is coming from those places. So our friends and our allies are even part of the problem right now because we are going it alone.

Our strategy, in my judgment, is that while Americans fight and die to give Iraqis breathing room, Iraqi politicians refuse to resolve the political issues that matter the most. There is no progress on the lynchpin issue of sharing oil revenues, no progress on the debaathification law—despite the fact they tell us, on the oil law, they are sharing some revenue. That doesn't satisfy Sunnis, if there is no law. Gee, you mean we are getting a few revenues today at the grace of the folks who want to give us the spoils or something? What happens when things start to get rough? Is it still going to be there? Is there a law? Is there a requirement? Does anybody have to live up to anything? Will it be enforced? Who will enforce it?

All of those issues are outstanding until they resolve that kind of difference, so it doesn't satisfy me, and certainly doesn't satisfy them, for someone to come and say they are sharing some of the revenue or they are putting some money into these

other areas. By any measure, until you deal with the provincial elections, the constitutional issue, the federalism, the oil, and debaathification, you cannot begin, if you can at all, in the current atmosphere, to reconcile these differences.

General Petraeus can come back next March and he can say, oh, we are making progress, but if there is no political progress, then what are our colleagues going to say and do next March? Ask for another 6 months? Say we have secured this area a little more and that area a little more, give us another little 6 months?

I think as long as you give the Iraqi politicians as long as they want, they will take as long as they want. As long as we say we are there for as long as it takes, they will take as long as they want. That is exactly what they are doing today.

That is our policy. The policy of General Petraeus is basically a policy for staying, it is not a policy for winning, absent the political reconciliation. No one has shown how you get that political reconciliation. If it was doable, why couldn't it have been done in the last 7 months? Why couldn't it have been done in the last 4 years, when there was less violence 3 years ago, and 4 years ago, than there is today? Why couldn't it have been done? Because the political will is not there to do it.

We have changed tactics, not strategy. Yes, we have some gains. I am not going to stand here and say there are not some tactical gains or that our military hasn't done a good job. They have done a tremendous job under the toughest of circumstances and they have made some gains in those communities. But it is not producing what you need to change the overall dynamic in Iraq, if it is changeable in the current context.

What I regret is all this talk will see us back here in March. They will not bring peace or long-term stability to Iraq absent diplomacy. If we come back here in March and we have resolved the political differences, it will be because they decided to resolve the political differences—which they could do at any other time or could have done anywhere in the last few days.

So rather than “no surrender,” I think the policy we have today is “no real way out.” There is no real way to resolve the differences. It is a wing and a prayer. It is a hope. Even Ambassador Crocker, for whom I have great respect; I presided over his hearing for his nomination to be there; I admire his career—he is a Middle East specialist, an Arabist, he has been there, speaks the language, understands it. But in the conversations I have had with him privately as well as what he said publicly, it is clear to me he cannot say, with any certainty at all, what is around the corner, and he specifically said none of us can predict what is going to happen in the current context. That is what we put ourselves

into, absent the kind of diplomacy necessary to try to change those dynamics.

I think what we are seeing are the moves of the President, who has decided to wait out his time in office and shift responsibility for this disaster to the next President. He has as much as said that, that we are going to have troops there for a long time, and the next President is going to have to resolve these differences.

I believe we have a bigger responsibility than that in the Senate. I believe that very deeply. When I was a young serviceman and in a war, I remember looking to Washington and wanting those folks who were in positions of responsibility to make the judgments that affected my life on a day-to-day basis.

I remember being bitterly disappointed in the debates that went on as people kept finding these same kinds of excuses, the same arguments were made. I remember President Nixon actually stood up and said: I am not going to be the first President to lose a war.

Our military has not lost this. Our military has won everything they engaged in on a personal basis. Nobody doubts the power or strength of the American military. No one would doubt the power or strength of the American military if they announced that, because the Iraqis are not making their decisions, we are not going to stay here and keep dying for you, folks. I don't think that is losing. I think that is actually a note of reality. It is the Iraqis who are losing. It is the Iraqi politicians, led by Mr. Maliki, if they are led at all, who are unwilling to make the decisions. They are the ones losing this opportunity for democracy. They are the ones losing the opportunity for peace. They are the ones turning their backs on the opportunity for reconciliation—not us. It is not for us to reconcile. No brave troop in Iraq has the ability to create that reconciliation. You are not going to create that reconciliation at the end of a gun barrel. It doesn't happen. It never has.

I think it was the Roman historian Tacitus who, with respect to Carthage, said: "They made a desert and called it peace."

That is what you can do with guns and with military might. But those who have always thought the power of ideas and the pen is more powerful than the sword right now believe we have a better ability here to be able to find a way through this.

I think we ought to be refocusing on what we are doing. It is not precipitous. It is not a withdrawal sufficient to please a certain number of people. It is the beginning of the change of the footprint. It is a clear statement that we are drawing down and you have to assume a certain responsibility.

There is a complete contradiction, incidentally, in the arguments made by the other side. I remember visiting General Petraeus when he was training

people. Two years ago, he said we will have 125,000, 200,000-something next year. How long does it take to train people? We have been training people for 4½ years. We certainly have been training them for at least 2 years in a highly focused manner—2½ or 3 years. How long does it take to take our recruits down to Parris Island or out to the Great Lakes, from total civilian status to graduation? Three or four months. Then they go to a specialty school and then, within a few months, they are ready to go and serve on the frontlines. They always do it with great distinction.

These folks have been training and training and training. The problem is, it is not a lack of training, it is a lack of motivation. It is a lack of commitment and will. It manifests itself in the following way. If you are a Shia, can you safely go into a Sunni neighborhood and police? Can a Shia go tell a Sunni what to do? Will the Sunni listen and feel safe? Ask anybody in the country about that equation. That is part of the problem, a lack of historical understanding, a lack of cultural understanding, a remarkable kind of arrogance that came out of corners in the Pentagon, led by Secretary Rumsfeld and Richard Perle and Doug Feith and these other folks, all of whom talked about parades and flowers and the easy welcome of our troops and welcomed as liberators and every decision was wrong, not to mention the arrogance of turning their backs on the plans that the State Department and Secretary Powell drew up for how you deal with postwar Iraq.

We are paying for that now. I think those who argue somehow these buzzwords of retreat and surrender—it is almost pathetic, to be honest with you. Because it is so divorced from the reality of what is being talked about, about how you strengthen America and strengthen our position and support the troops. The troops deserve a policy that is equal to the sacrifice they are being asked to make.

Let me go through a couple of principal arguments and then I will yield the floor. First of all, those who want more of the same failed policy, this surrender talk, it seems to me—I think I mostly covered that. I think I pretty much discussed the idea, but I want to emphasize something. Leaving the President the discretion to fight al-Qaida, to finish the training and standing up of Iraqis, to protect American facilities and forces and to do so over the course of a year—to set a target date for the achievement of that goal a year from now is anything but precipitous.

They cannot achieve these fundamental benchmarks of what they needed to do to show they are reconciling in that year; they are not going to do it while we are there.

Secondly, it seems to me you have to remember what General Jones himself said. I want to quote from his report. He said:

If our security gains are to be anything more than short-lived, the single most important event that could immediately and favorably affect Iraq's direction and security is political reconciliation.

So General Jones is saying: If you want to have an impact on security, you have to have political reconciliation. He is not saying that the security is going to be given to you by the military; he is saying it is the political reconciliation—nothing will have more significance with the security.

Sustained progress within the Iraq security forces depends on such a political agreement.

That is precisely what we are trying to achieve.

Supporters of the escalation asked for more time to translate military success into political progress. But if General Petraeus is correct, that sectarian violence began decreasing in January. I do not have that chart here, but I absolutely know this because we asked him direct questions about that. And he spoke to the fact. He acknowledged that the better part of the violence reduction did, in fact, take place prior to the American forces becoming part of it. It is partly because of the dislocation that had taken place as a consequence of the militia and also the political decisions that were made individually in Anbar and elsewhere which preceded the vast majority of those forces arriving.

Now, Prime Minister Maliki has been in office since May of 2006. But the fact is, the Iraqi Government, as we have discussed, has simply been absent from any kind of adequate responsibility to meet what they themselves said they would do.

Now, why a deadline? I guess it is kind of like anybody doing their homework—we operate under deadlines here. Does anybody here believe we get the budget done without a deadline that we usually have? We usually have drop-dead times. In fact, we even move the clocks. We have a continuing resolution that is short-lived, and then we come back and we live under a certain sense of, you know, a responsibility factor there and all kinds of deadlines.

The fact is, deadlines have worked in Iraq already. There was a deadline to have the transfer from the Provisional Authority from Paul Bremer. In fact, Iraqis and a lot of other people said: Do not do this to us; we are not ready. But the Government, our Government, to its credit, we insisted and said: No, this is what is going to happen. And it happened. Now, the decisions they made afterward were awful. But the transfer took place; likewise, the elections; likewise, the Constitution. Each of them was accomplished with a deadline.

In fact, the President himself has already set a deadline, in some ways, because he is saying: We are going to have X number of forces out by such and such a time—30,000. That is a deadline. He has told us when—by next spring. General Petraeus has set a

deadline that he is going to come back by next March and he is going to say something to us. So this idea that deadlines don't work or it is a losing equation, I just do not agree with that. I think, like any human reaction, when a big country like the United States of America gets serious in putting some deadlines there, people can begin to respond and you change the dynamics that people are dealing with.

What is more, some people may not like to hear this, but clearly and obviously an administration would have the ability to come back in 4 months and say: Look at all of the progress we have just made because we set the deadline, and we are making so much progress, but we can't get over the hump by the end of this period. Will you not give us a little longer? There is no one here, if that is a true measure of what is happening, who is not going to respond responsibly.

So, again, this is a phony debate about the impact of a deadline, what it means.

We can get together in a room, sensible people, and come up with a way to do this. But it has been made into a challenge to the President's authority; it has been made into a big political football where Republicans feel they have to go out and defend the President, and somehow everyone else thinks everybody else is after him, when what we are really after is a sensible policy in Iraq in the face of 4½ years of having not been given it time after time, even under the withering criticisms of some Senators from the other side, such as Senator HAGEL, Senator MCCAIN, and others, who have called the shots as they saw them over a number of years.

Third. Supporters of the escalation point to the consequences of failure in Iraq. Well, I can remember how people used the sort of cataclysmic, dire end result as a legitimization of carrying on something that was going into oblivion. It was called Vietnam. We had the Domino Theory, we had the Bloodbath, we had all kinds of arguments thrown out there about what it would be like if the United States ultimately withdrew.

Ultimately, we withdrew. Ultimately, Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon negotiated a withdrawal, and they negotiated a withdrawal with something that was then called the "decent interval"; 1973 we left, and in 1975 the place fell because the Government itself was so corrupt and so inept and so incapable they were not able to withstand what came at them. They did not have legitimacy, but they were given the opportunity to have it. What ultimately happened is precisely what could have been avoided 4 or 5 years later. Half the names that are on that Vietnam wall down the street were put on that wall from a time period after which our top leaders in the Defense Department and elsewhere knew the policy wasn't going to work, and they have since even written exactly that.

That is craven, that so many lives were lost, 25,000 or so, more than half, in that period of time to pursue a policy that people knew was ultimately what could have been achieved even earlier.

So when people talk about the dire consequences, we all understand Iran is a threat. Well, let's go back to what I said earlier: Iran is more of a threat today because we are less capable of confronting them and because we have not engaged in that kind of robust diplomacy that the French, the Germans, and the British engaged in for almost 3 successive years without us at all, because we had a policy of not talking to anybody; just do as I say. The result is, you know, they throw out these consequences, so we wind up staying there because we have been there.

I have heard people say: Well, you know, we obviously need to honor the lives of those we have lost. Yes, we do. I believe that is what we are trying to do. I think you honor the lives of those who have been lost there and those who have given their lives by making certain that we are not wasteful going forward, that we are reasonable, that we are not stupid going forward, that we do what is correct. But you do not lose lives to honor the lives you have lost. That does not honor them. And losing more lives and the fact that we have lost lives is not an excuse for continuing the same policy.

Now they argue it is not the same policy; we have a new general, we have a new strategy. But it is not a strategy; it is a tactic that has no relationship to the real strategy that has to be political and diplomatic and much more creative and much more global in this case.

So we have lost sight of what is at stake here. I believe we are paralyzed in a sense because of it. You cannot leave because of this. Oh, gosh, Iran is going to do this. In fact, the Senator from Alabama talked a little while ago about how Iran will become involved in Iraq. Iran is involved in Iraq. Iran has thousands of agents in Iraq. It has people training people in Iraq. The Shiia in the south are aligned, particularly in the Basra area. But the British, nevertheless, have redeployed to the airport, and they have left those factions to kind of duke it out against each other without any serious enough consequence that we are rushing in to fill the breach. If it is okay for them, why is it not for us? If it is not okay for them, why did we let them do it, and why are we not responding?

These contradictions just sort of leap out at you. And the fact is that Iran and al-Qaida are thrilled that we are bogged down in Iraq. Every day that we are bogged down in Iraq, we are presenting al-Qaida with targets. We are presenting al-Qaida with the image of American forces occupying a country, and they can run around and enlist more jihadists. They have been doing it. You can just talk to anybody in the intelligence community about it.

This is a policy which makes America weaker. This is a policy which puts

America at greatest risk. This is not a policy which advances America's larger strategic interests in the region or elsewhere in the world. That is a bad foreign policy when that is what is happening. A policy that makes you weaker, not stronger, is not a policy I would want to take out to the country. That is exactly what they are presenting us with. Americans are dying at greater levels now than in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006, for a policy they have already told us is going to end next summer. And the Iraqi politicians know it is going to end next summer. That is a deadline. So, evidently, it is okay for them to plot and plan for the end of the surge, but they are not going to be changed in their planning for the end of American involvement. I do not get that. That is a complete contradiction.

Fourth. The President's allies warn that Iraq could become a failed state. Well, guess what. According to Foreign Policy Magazine, Iraq is becoming a failed state under the current strategy. In fact, it ranks second in the entire world on the Failed State Index behind only the Sudan as the state most at risk for failure. That will only change when the Iraqi Government steps up, not our troops. Our troops cannot run the Government, and most of the Iraqis have said they do not want us there. Incidentally, the new polls coming out of Iraq show that 50-plus—58 percent of the Sunnis think it is okay to go kill and hurt Americans. Seventy percent of the Iraqis think America should be gone.

Our friends warn of a humanitarian catastrophe. But as the New York Times reported earlier this month, many mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad and surrounding provinces in Iraq have already been ethnically cleansed. Two million people are internally displaced, 2 million people have left the country as refugees. Baghdad, as I said earlier, which had a population when we went there of 65 percent Sunni, now is a 75-percent Shiia majority city.

What we are supposedly staying in Iraq trying to prevent is happening right under our very noses, and General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker told us that in their testimony. Ambassador Crocker specifically referenced the movement of personnel and the ethnic cleansing and did not say that our troops or the surge is capable of stopping it. So we are witnessing right now a very high level of sectarian violence. Over 1,000 civilians are dying a month.

Across Iraq, the level of violence is higher than it was in 2004 and 2005. The Washington Post reported on Monday that about 2 million Iraqis are displaced in Iraq and 2.2 million to the neighboring countries. Apparently, 60,000 Iraqis are evacuating their homes every month. And what I have been told in the visits when I have been there, people have described to me the exodus of the middle class. You do not have the middle class there now to try to help do some of the reconciliation and building that is necessary.

I have also heard many people point to the legacy of Vietnam. But I hear the wrong conclusions being drawn about that legacy—somehow a presumption that given the great power conflict that we were caught in, people seem to forget that one of the reasons we did not invade the north was not that we did not have the military ability or other things; it was because China and Russia and the Cold War was raging at the time, and those countries were aligned with Vietnam, North Vietnam then, and many people saw a bigger, wider, more complicated, and dangerous conflict as a consequence. So it was not our withdrawal from Vietnam. People need to remember this.

You know, we did a period of Vietnamization, we did a period of transition, we negotiated the process, we left in 1973. It was not our withdrawal that caused the instability in the region; it was the underlying cause of the violence that had gone on for 10 years preceding it. It was the American bombing in Cambodia that many people remember that created the instability of that country and China which created problems with the Khmer Rouge and the ethnic Chinese that created many of the original boat people, the original exodus. It was a civil war, a civil war that our military could not end. Many of the conditions that came about were the result of being there and what happened in that dislocation.

Our troops cannot end the Iraqi civil war. Only, again, a political accommodation can achieve it, and that can only come through adequate diplomacy and effort. We ought to be working over time on that.

The final thing I will point out is, supporters of the Bush escalation say we cannot abandon the central fight in the global war on terror. I have pointed out again and again, as we all do, it is OK to have a good debate about issues. But somehow the world's greatest deliberative body ought to find a way to accept what is fact and accept what is fiction and kind of put the fiction aside and deal with the facts, instead of coming back speech after speech repeating the same fiction, which is what happens. The fact is, we have never suggested pulling any punch or reducing the effort to go after al-Qaida. We give the President complete and total discretion in this legislation to do what the President needs to do in order to prosecute the war on terror against al-Qaida. So to keep reasserting al-Qaida in a way that suggests that Democrats somehow are forgetting about that is not accurate.

In fact, we have been the ones who consistently point out that al-Qaida is reconstituted globally, that al-Qaida's principal leaders are in Pakistan and Afghanistan, that it is from Pakistan and Afghanistan they have plotted and conducted the attacks they have conducted in recent months and plotted the attack against our airlines most recently, and that they communicate to the world network, not Iraq.

The reality is, we all intend to defeat al-Qaida. Al-Qaida will be defeated. I am absolutely confident of that. I don't think a nihilistic, cynical, completely ideologically, and morally barren effort such as al-Qaida's has a chance in the long haul. What it can do is confuse people and attract converts in the absence of a legitimate counter moral force, and that moral force can come from moderate Islam, and needs to, and it can come from the rest of the world.

I have heard this all through every visit I have made in every part of the region. I serve now as chairman of the Near East-South Asia Subcommittee. I make a point of trying to understand what is going on. The fact is, Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo and the current torture practices that we know are being engaged in, and the world knows, and the new 4,500 Web sites of various jihadist groups exploit those things. That is the war on ideas the President appropriately talked about, that supposedly Karen Hughes was appointed to lead a great effort on. Nobody has seen her or knows what is happening with respect to that most significant effort.

I don't think this escalation or this current policy is protecting our homeland. I believe where there was previously no threat from al-Qaida in a place called Iraq, there is now a threat, though not the level of threat or the kind of threat that is often described. The real threat remains centered in Afghanistan and Pakistan and many other places, including Europe. It is growing in Europe. Unless we deal with these larger implications, that challenge is going to become more significant as a consequence of this policy.

This is an opportunity for us to try to do what I know is very difficult, because I understand the pressures that are put on colleagues, many of whom have come to the floor and spoken eloquently in opposition to the war and in opposition to the strategy. But they somehow won't translate those words into a vote. They won't go that extra step of actually confronting the President and changing the policy. What General Petraeus has obviously succeeded in doing—and we understand it—is giving people a reason to say: Give us 6 more months. He is obviously going to get that 6 more months, because the President has the power to veto and the power to move his policy in these next days. But I hope my colleagues will think about how history is going to measure what we do here and how their own responsibilities measure up to what this moment is about. I think the facts speak loudly and clearly for the imperative to have a policy that moves in a better direction to protect our Nation. That is the bottom line. That is what is at stake, our national security and our ability to protect future generations and stand up and lead the world in a more effective way in order to eliminate al-Qaida and, in fact, open up a whole set of new possibilities with Islam and a host of

countries that are currently sitting on the sidelines and standing apart from us because they disagree with our policy and the way we are implementing it.

I hope our colleagues will take advantage of this opportunity, and I hope we will cease to have a debate on buzz words and slogans but instead a debate on facts and do justice to the troops who, as I said, deserve a policy that is equal to what they are doing on our behalf every single day. We salute them.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today we saw the floor of the Senate hijacked for purely partisan political purposes at a time when we need the U.S. Senate to instead come together for the purpose of protecting our national security and changing a policy in Iraq that is not working.

What happened in the Senate today is partisan, political and demeaning of this institution. The Republican minority is desperate to distract the Senate and our country from the real issue at hand, which is a failed escalation and an administration policy in Iraq that is every day costing American blood and treasure. The same Senators who have gone along with the President's Iraq policy every step of the way, who have expressed not a shred of outrage about nonexistent weapons of mass destruction, predictions of a "cakewalk," "mission accomplished," or "an insurgency, its last throes" will now say and do anything to avoid talking about what is really happening in Iraq. They would rather express outrage about a newspaper ad run by an independent entity, than express outrage about a policy pursued by their party and their administration. And certainly they don't want to address the outrage of more Americans dying for a policy we know is not working.

The Senate did not need to spend hours today on this debate. Nine days ago, the first time I was asked about the ad which the Senator from Texas loves to talk about, I said it was "over the top" and "inappropriate, period." I said that, as a veteran, I thought it was wrong to characterize any member of the military in the way General Petraeus was characterized in that advertisement. I have nothing but respect for General Petraeus. I wasn't alone in that feeling. Senator REID spoke out. Senator BIDEN spoke out. There was no question about where Democrats stood. And we ratified that opinion in a broad condemnation of that behavior—including the Petraeus ad—in the Boxer amendment.

But I also asked that we all recognize that the emotion behind that ad is an emotion shared by the American people: frustration—frustration as we head into the 5th year of being told one thing about Iraq and finding out another. That is why we should be having a real debate and a real discussion about the policy in Iraq rather than trying to score partisan points over the politics of Iraq. It is as insulting as it is illuminating that in a week-long debate in which each side can offer just

five amendments, the Republicans would waste one of their chances to change a broken policy by choosing instead to embrace a political stunt.

We are where we are. I vehemently oppose the kind of political abuse of the Senate embodied in the Cornyn amendment, and I am saddened if not surprised to see that so many of the Republicans who believe that what happened to General Petraeus was wrong, could not bring themselves to vote for the Boxer amendment which made clear that the assault on Senator Cleland's patriotism in 2002 was wrong, and that the lies broadcast about my own military record in 2004 were also wrong. The votes against the Boxer amendment—an amendment which makes clear our disagreement with the ad which ran September 10—speak volumes about the partisan motivations behind the Cornyn amendment, and the fact that, apparently, many of our colleagues believe that attacking the integrity of veterans and members of the military is fair game as long as they are Democrats. I would remind them that when you sign up for military duty, no one asks whether you are a Democrat or Republican, liberal, or conservative.

Over the last years, I have defended veterans who have been under assault from any quarters, left or right. I spoke out in 2000 when JOHN MCCAIN's integrity and military record was questioned by the Bush campaign in South Carolina. I spoke out when Max Cleland's patriotism was savaged by people who had never worn the uniform. I defended Jack Murtha when vicious partisans on the right called that decorated marine a "coward." I spoke out when the Bush administration questioned the patriotism of career military men and Generals throughout the war in Iraq, whether it was General Shinseki, or many in uniform who spoke out against Secretary Rumsfeld. I don't reserve my defense of patriotism for Democrats, I defend all who have worn the uniform, whether they agree with me or not. I wish I could say the same for those who brought forward the Cornyn amendment and voted against the Boxer amendment.

This was not a proud day in the Senate, or a high mark in our politics; rather, it was hours lost and time wasted when the Senate should have delivered what all the men and women of the armed forces truly deserve: a policy equal to their sacrifice.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I opposed the amendments offered by Senators CORNYN and BOXER because they were a diversion from the real issue before us; namely, the future of our military involvement in Iraq. I disagreed with the language used in all of the ads addressed in these amendments, but we should not let those ads sidetrack the real work of the Senate. I hope the Senate will not get in the habit of condemning political speech, even speech that is offensive.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business.

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

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, earlier today, the President announced his intention to veto the extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program bill. I believe such a veto would be a terrible mistake.

One of the very first bills I cosponsored when I first came to the Senate was legislation to create the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or SCHIP as it has become known. It provides health care coverage for children in families where the parents do not have sufficient income to purchase health insurance and are not getting health insurance in the workplace, and yet they make a bit too much money to qualify for coverage under the State's Medicaid program. So these low-income children in working families have been falling through the cracks. That is why this law has been so important.

I remember it well that Senator HATCH, Senator KENNEDY, and Senator ROCKEFELLER all came up to me to enlist my support. I was very eager to sign on as one of the original cosponsors of this law because I knew it could make such a positive difference. Indeed, it has.

Since 1997, the SCHIP program has contributed to a one-third decline in the rate of uninsured low-income children. Today, an estimated 6.6 million children, including more than 14,500 children living in Maine, receive health care coverage through this program. Still, there is more we could do.

While Maine ranks among the top four States in reducing the number of uninsured children, we still have more than 20,000 children in our State who lack coverage. Nationally, about 9 million children remain uninsured. That is why I was so pleased to hear the conferees appeared to be very near to an agreement that is modeled on the legislation that passed the Senate in August with strong bipartisan support, in fact, by a vote of 68 to 31.

Our Senate bill increases funding for the SCHIP program by \$35 million over the next 5 years, a level that is sufficient to maintain coverage for all 6.6 million children currently enrolled, and it would also allow the program to expand to cover an additional 3.3 million low-income children. In Maine, this legislation would allow us to cover an additional 11,000 low-income children who are currently eligible for the SCHIP program but not enrolled.

I urge the administration to take a second look at the Senate bill, the bill that is the basis for the conference agreement. This legislation has made a

real difference in the lives of working families with low-income children across this country. It is helping to ensure these children grow up to be healthy adults. Surely, we can get this done on a bipartisan basis before the program is scheduled to expire on September 30.

I urge the President of the United States to reconsider his threat to veto this vital program, this highly successful program that has a proven track record of reducing the number of children who lack health insurance. If the President does proceed to veto the bill, I will vote to override his veto. Surely, this bill has a track record that has made a real difference to low-income children in working families. We simply cannot allow this program to expire. The extension and expansion we are proposing will enable us to more fully cover these children.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE SHERMAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on Wednesday, September 5, 2007, the State of Nevada and our Nation lost a true hero: Retired U.S. Army Air Corp LTC George Sherman, who served our Nation during World War II as a member of the famed Tuskegee Airmen.

Like so many African-American soldiers during that time, Colonel Sherman answered the call to fight for freedom and justice abroad, even when it was categorically denied at home. These men traveled and fought thousands of miles from their families—when every day, their mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers faced injustice at home.

While our Nation can never fully repay the debt to our veterans, in March of this year Congress officially thanked Colonel Sherman and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen for their service to our Nation. Colonel Sherman joined nearly 300 other Tuskegee Airmen in the Capitol Rotunda as thousands watched President Bush and leaders from the House and Senate award them the Congressional Gold Medal.

Colonel Sherman and the Tuskegee Airmen were in prestigious company in receiving the highest honor our Nation can bestow upon private citizens. Other honorees include individuals such as President Harry Truman, Jackie Robinson, Reverend Billy Graham, Rosa Parks, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to watch Colonel Sherman and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen proudly take their place among all American heroes. Yet in addition to their accomplishments as Tuskegee Airmen, Colonel Sherman and many others continued to serve their country and local communities.

Colonel Sherman had a long record of service to Nevada. After 22 years of military service, he made his home in Las Vegas. Colonel Sherman was a tireless supporter of the Boy Scouts of America, where he earned the highest