

What would Iran be up to? My belief is the reason the Iranian regime is so hellbent on making sure the Iraqi experiment in tolerance fails in representative government—from a theocracy point of view, from the Iranian Government's point of view, the biggest nightmare for them would be a representative government in Iraq on their border. So they are not going to give that to the Iraqi people without a fight. They certainly are not going to give it to us without a fight.

We need to realize we are in a proxy war with Iran over the outcome of Iraq. For those who have determined this is a civil war only in Iraq, that the outcome is about who runs Iraq, I think you misunderstand the role Iran is playing. Iran is trying to shape Iraq in a way not to be a threat to the theocracy in Iran. They are trying to shape Iraq in a way that would be detrimental to our long-term national security interests. They are trying to be able to say to the world they stood up to America and drove us out. They are trying to expand their influence by defeating us in Iraq and in trying to destabilize their representative form of government, which would, again, be a nightmare.

So this resolution designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization is well founded based on the evidence that is being gathered against this organization. There is more to come. I have had a chance to be over in Iraq a couple times now looking at some cases involving Iranian involvement with the killing and kidnapping of American soldiers. So there is more evidence to come about Iran's involvement in trying to kill Americans and destabilize this representative government in Iraq.

Now, the second resolution is: What role should we play in dictating the outcome of this representative experiment in government in Iraq? I have great respect for Senator BIDEN. I think it is ill advised for us in the Senate to be adopting a resolution basically dictating or trying to give our sense of what should happen in Iraq because that destroys the whole underpinning of what we are trying to do.

The idea that the three groups can live separate and apart from each other without regional consequences is unfounded. The Shias, who wish a theocracy for Iraq, could never achieve that goal without pushback from their Sunni Arab neighbors. The Kurds, who wish to have an independent Kurdish state in the north, are going to run right into the teeth of Turkey. The Sunnis, who wish for the good old days of Saddam where they ran the country—that is never going to happen. The region is not going to allow that to happen.

So at the end of the day, I believe the effort to reconcile Iraq in central Baghdad will be successful not by a sense-of-the-Senate resolution but by a desire and sense of the people of Iraq. The one thing I have learned from my

last visit is that local reconciliation in Iraq is proliferating because people are very much tired of the killing. They are war weary. There is a suicide bomber wave going on right now against reconciliation efforts in Diyala Province, where 21 people were killed who were meeting to reconcile that province.

So al-Qaida is alive and well in Iraq. They are greatly diminished, but they show up where reconciliation is being discussed. The reason they show up where reconciliation is being discussed is because their big nightmare is to have Iraq come together and a woman to have a say about her children and Sunnis and Shias and Kurds living in peace and rejecting their extremist view of the Koran.

So the players in Iran and al-Qaida are very much pushing back hard. The question for this country is, Will we stand up to them and push back equally hard and stand by the moderate forces in Iraq, imperfect as they may be?

So I hope one amendment is adopted, designating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organization. I hope the other amendment, trying to give our sense of what to do in Iraq from the Senate's point of view, fails and we allow the Iraqi people to work out their problems with our help but insist they get on with it.

So with that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask to proceed in morning business for 5 minutes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has that right.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, as I understand it, morning business on our side has been extended to 10:35.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator has 8 minutes 45 seconds.

Mr. GREGG. Thank you, Mr. President.

FORUM FOR THE PRESIDENT OF IRAN

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise as an alumni of Columbia College to ask a question which I suspect is on the mind of a lot of the alumni of Columbia College and probably a lot of average Americans wandering around the country, which is, why did they create a forum for the President of Iran in a way that basically almost made him look like a sympathetic figure because of the actions of the President of the college? Open dialog on our campuses is important. We all recognize that. In fact, it is the essence of a good education. Columbia has a strong history, ironically, of having an extraordinary curriculum called a core curriculum which requires you to study all sorts of subjects whether you want to study them or not so that you gain knowledge in a variety of different areas and are exposed to a variety of different areas.

I have always believed that core curriculum was one of the great strengths of the college and was certainly one of the things I most enjoyed while I was there. So open discussion and having people on the campus who have an opinion which is antithetical to the values of our society is, I suppose, reasonable. But you have to put it in the context of what other discussion is allowed on our allegedly elite university campuses or even some campuses which are maybe Ivy League; that is, if you have a view which is conservative and you happen to want to express that opinion, you are quite often limited as to your ability to speak on those campuses. I, for example, suspect it would be very hard to get a date for Donald Rumsfeld to speak at Columbia. I suspect it would be probably even more difficult to get a date for the President of the United States to speak at Columbia. I am absolutely sure the Vice President of the United States would never be invited to speak at Columbia.

So one has to ask the question, Why did they decide to give a forum to an individual who is running a government of a country, the purpose of which is to develop a nuclear weapon, which nuclear weapon and weapons will be used to threaten world stability and clearly threaten their neighbors in the Middle East? Ahmadi-Nejad has said he intends to eliminate Israel. In his speech yesterday, he affirmed his view that the Holocaust was a theoretical event, maybe never happened—an absurd statement. Yesterday, he went so far as to even describe his whole society as having nobody of a homosexual persuasion. He is leading a terrorist nation, or a terrorist government—the nation itself isn't terrorist, I suspect—but a terrorist government which is in the process of arming people in Iraq who are killing American soldiers. Yet Columbia invites him and gives him a forum in which to spread his values, to the extent you can call them values, or his views. It seems ironic and inconsistent and highly inappropriate in the context of what Columbia would not allow in the area of open discussion, which would be to have, for example, the Vice President of the United States speak, I suspect.

Then, to compound this error—the President of Iran is going to have his forum today at the U.N. Columbia did not have to give him an additional forum—but to compound that error, the president of the university was so egregious in the way he handled the situation, in my opinion, that he actually almost made the President of Iran look somewhat sympathetic, which is almost impossible to do. The attitude of arrogance and officiousness and the posturing of positions and questions by the president of Columbia in a way that basically gave Ahmadi-Nejad the opportunity to basically respond as if he were being coherent—because the questions and the attacks were so aggressive in a way that was arrogant and inappropriate, even in dealing with

somebody like Ahmadi-Nejad—was a startling failure of leadership at the university by the president of the university.

As an alumni, I was embarrassed, to put it quite simply. I was embarrassed by the fact that they would choose to give this individual such a forum, this individual who will probably, for my children, my children's children, and maybe even our generation, be the most significant threat to world peace that we have as soon as he develops his nuclear weapon, which he is on course to do, and then to compound that by setting up the forum in a way where the president of the university basically went way beyond what would be considered to be a coherent and thoughtful and balanced approach to addressing this individual. It would have been much more effective had the president of the university simply allowed the President of Iran to make his statement and, by his own statement, indict himself because that is exactly what he would have done, and he did. But, unfortunately, rather than the President of Iran becoming the issue, which he should be, the president of the university made himself part of the story and the issue.

It was not a good day for Columbia or for alumni of Columbia, in my humble opinion, and it speaks volumes about the level to which the universities in our country, especially those which proclaim themselves elite, have sunk in the area of setting up open and free dialog because, as I said, as has been seen in various universities across this country, conservative thought would not have been given the type of forum this militaristic individual, whose purpose it is to essentially destabilize the world through the use of nuclear weapons, was given. Others would not be given such a forum.

So it is with regret that I rise today to ask why—again, why—why did Columbia pursue this course and why did the president of the university pursue the course he pursued in responding to the attendance of the President of Iran on his campus?

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent that the time for morning business be extended to 11:45 a.m. today under the same conditions and limitations as previously ordered.

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

REAUTHORIZATION OF CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a very impor-

tant and very positive issue we are going to be addressing and sending to the President this week; that is, the reauthorization of the children's health care program. This is really a historic, bipartisan effort that has been put together, and it is something we have done together for all of our families and children across America.

We urgently need to pass this bill in its final form and send it to the President of the United States. I know the House of Representatives is doing that today, and it will then come to us. There is no question that it is one of the most important things we will do this year, not only guaranteeing that some 6 million children who currently receive this children's health care program will be able to continue to get health care, but we will be expanding upwards of another 4 million children who will be able to have the health care they need and deserve.

I wish to particularly thank leaders on the Finance Committee, including Senator BAUCUS, Senator GRASSLEY, Senator ROCKEFELLER, and Senator HATCH, for working together in such a wonderful way that has given us the opportunity in the Senate to come together, with the original vote on the bill being 68 Members of the Senate—68 Members of the Senate. In addition to that, we are so thrilled to have Senator JOHNSON back with us so that his vote will be added as well to this very important program.

I also thank our leader, Senator HARRY REID, for making this a top priority and for personally engaging in the negotiations that took place to be able to get us to the point where we have something on which we can move forward in the House and the Senate in a bipartisan way.

This really builds on the bipartisan spirit that created the whole program in 1997. I was in the U.S. House of Representatives representing mid-Michigan at the time and felt that as we put this program together then, it was an incredibly important statement of our values and our priorities. We are talking about working families, moms and dads who go to work every day to maybe one, two, or three jobs who are trying to hold things together and desperately want to make sure their children have the health care they need. That is what this legislation is all about. That is what this program is all about.

Among many good things that have been placed into this bipartisan legislation, I am very proud to say that it makes important improvements in dental care and in mental health care for children. It looks at quality issues and health information technology. I am very pleased that language which I authored concerning creating an electronic medical record for children, a pediatric electronic medical record, is in this legislation so that we can bring children's information together around immunizations and other kinds of health care needs in one place so we

can more effectively have them treated and have doctors and hospitals knowing what, in fact, a child's medical record is. I am also very pleased about another piece of the legislation I worked on in relation to school-based health centers and the importance of recognizing them as part of a continuum of care for children.

This bill really does represent a very successful public sector and private sector partnership that helps our families and makes sure more children, children of working families, are able to get health care in this country. In my State of Michigan, a private insurer runs what we call the MICHild Program. Last year, nearly one-third of the children in Michigan relied on either Healthy Kids through Medicaid for low-income children or MICHild, which represents working families, for health care coverage. About three-quarters of the children have at least one working parent. I must say that oftentimes that is mom—mom trying to, again, work one job or two jobs or three jobs, desperately concerned about her children, needing to put food on the table, needing to buy them school clothes, needing to get them what they need to be able to survive and function every day, and knowing that when they desperately need to go to the dentist, they are able to get a dental checkup, or to be able to get basic kinds of health care.

I know too many people who tell me they go to bed at night saying: Please, God, don't let the kids get sick. This program in Michigan, MICHild, and this program which we are now coming together on a bipartisan basis to expand says to those parents: Somebody is hearing you; that we as a country and as a Congress care about the children of this country and making sure they have their health care needs met.

It is so important to stress that this is not a program for wealthy families, for rich kids. We have heard so much misinformation about what this program is all about. In Michigan, a family of four cannot make over \$40,000 to qualify for MICHild. This is, again, a family of four. If there are two working parents, working just barely above poverty level, this allows them to be able to get the health insurance they need for their children.

The Saginaw-based Center for Civil Justice shared a story with me about a young mother named Christie whose husband was laid off and the family income dropped to less than \$2,000 a month for a family of five—less than \$24,000 a year for a family of five. Nearly half of that goes to rent and utilities, like most families. The children's health care program in Michigan, MICHild, has helped their three children, who are 4 years old, 3 years old, and 8 months. Thankfully, they have been able to—in Michigan, we have had a dental benefit, which is something we are going to provide through this bill. Without that, Christie's children would not have what they need.