

in 1998, began widespread protests for greater democracy, 9 years ago.

The military responded by seizing power and brutally suppressing the popular movement. Two years later, the military government allowed relatively free elections. Aung San Suu Kyi, despite being under house arrest, led her National League for Democracy Party to an overwhelming victory that captured more than 80 percent of the seats in Parliament. Yet to this date, 16 years later, the military has refused to recognize the sweeping democratic mandate by the Burmese people. Sixteen years after a landslide victory, they still wait for the results of the election to be followed.

Can any one of my colleagues in the Senate even imagine being so brazenly denied representation. Following the vote, those elected from her party attempted to take office. The military responded by detaining hundreds of members of the Parliament-elect and other democracy activists. Many remain under arrest even today, with estimates of well over 1,000 political prisoners. Conditions for these prisoners are horrible. Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for the majority of the last 16 years.

During the last two decades, the Burmese military has created an Orwellian state, one where simply owning a fax machine can lead to a harsh prison sentence. Government thugs beat a Nobel laureate for simply speaking in public. Forced labor and resettlement are widespread. Government-sanctioned violence against ethnic minorities, rape and torture are rampant.

The military suddenly moved the capital 300 miles into the remote interior out of fear of its own people, and the state watches over all aspects of daily life in a way we thought was almost forgotten in today's world.

Under military rule the country has plunged into tragic poverty and growing isolation. The educational and economic systems have all but collapsed. The military is hidden under the facade of a prolonged constitutional drafting process that is a sham.

The junta has no intention of ever allowing a representative government. All the while, it displays its naked fear of its own people as it keeps Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest. It is understandable that the Burmese people are demanding change. Even after Suu Kyi's husband Michael Aris was diagnosed with cancer in London in 1997, the military would not allow him to visit his wife. The junta would allow her to leave Burma to visit him but, undoubtedly, would never let her return.

She refused to leave because of her dedication to the Burmese people. Sadly, her husband, Michael Aris, died in 1999 without having seen his wife for more than 3 years. Leaders from around the world have spoken in support of her and about the need for change in Burma. Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton, as well as Sen-

ators FEINSTEIN and MCCAIN, have all voiced repeated concerns. Earlier today, my colleague, Senator MCCONNELL, shared similar concerns on the floor of the Senate.

In 1995, then U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Madeleine Albright became the first Cabinet level official to visit Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma since the original Democratic upheavals. Later, as Secretary of State, she continued to advocate for change in Burma, at one point saying its government was "among the most repressive and intrusive on earth."

The sweeping calls for change are truly global. South African archbishop and Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu and former Czech President Vaclav Havel have called on the U.N. to take action in Burma.

In December 2000, all living Nobel Peace laureates gathered in Oslo to honor fellow laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. In May of this year, the Norwegian Prime Minister released a letter he organized with 59 former heads of state from five continents calling for her release and the release of all Burmese political prisoners. Now thousands of extraordinarily brave Burmese monks and everyday citizens are filling the streets of Burma. They are saying it is time for peaceful change. In recent days, the monks even reached Suu Kyi's heavily guarded home where witnesses said she greeted them at her gate in tears.

One need only look at the dramatic images being shown on television and on the front pages of newspapers around the world to see the bravery and dignity of these peaceful protesters.

This is a Reuters photograph. It is so touching to look at this demonstration in Burma, monks and supporters literally risking their lives fighting for democracy, fighting for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and the Burmese prisoners. We are hoping this force in the streets, a force for peace, a force for change, will prevail. We salute their courage, and let the Burmese military know they can't get by with this forever. I want the Burmese people to know the world knows what is happening in their country. There is strong support in the Senate among Republicans and Democrats for peaceful change and democratic government. To those in Burma fighting for peaceful democratic change, our message is simple—we are with you. I call on the Burmese military to immediately release Aung San Suu Kyi and all Burmese political prisoners, to respect peaceful protests of its own citizens, and begin a timely transition to democratic rule. The eyes of the world are watching.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, this is now day 14 of debate on the Defense authorization bill. It is day 14 of the current debate. We have all been on this bill for a good number of days previously earlier this year. During the same time that we have been debating this for the past 14 days and over the course of the several months that have languished in between our last debate on Defense authorization, we have commanders and troops in the field who have been fighting bravely our terrorist enemies and fulfilling their mission with courage and professionalism.

By contrast, we in the Senate are re-debating old arguments and revoting on amendments that have previously been rejected. In fact, last week most of the amendments offered by our colleagues on the Democratic side had previously been voted on, and the result this time around was essentially the same as the result when we voted on these amendments previously. In fact, we voted now for the second and third time on arbitrary withdrawal dates, on cutting off funding for our war efforts, on changing the mission from that recommended by our commanders, and on other attempts to micromanage our war efforts from the floor of the Senate. Now we may be forced to vote on hate crimes legislation which has no relevance to or place in the Defense authorization bill.

Congress should not and Congress cannot legislate our war strategy, nor do we have the expertise or constitutional authority to micromanage the war. American generals in Iraq, not politicians in Washington, should decide how to fight this war.

I don't condemn my colleagues for a minute for their legitimate Iraq policy positions. As Senators, we have the right to offer amendments. But again, this is not the time to abandon our military efforts in Iraq or to attempt to micromanage our military strategy from thousands of miles away. The current Iraq policy debate taking place on the Defense authorization bill has already dangerously delayed this critical legislation. We all support our troops. This bill contains critical provisions that directly support our men and women in uniform.

Specifically, while we have been re-debating and revoting on amendments for the second and third time, the Defense authorization bill waits for final action. What does it do? This bill directly supports our men and women in uniform. It increases the size of the Army and the Marine Corps. It provides increased authorization to purchase more Mine Resistant Ambush Protected armored vehicles, otherwise known as MRAPs, which will save more lives. It provides a much needed 3.5-percent pay raise for our troops. It further empowers the Army and Air

Force National Guard as they continue their critical role in our warfighting efforts. And it includes the badly needed Wounded Warrior legislation that will address the broader issues of patient care which we saw manifested at Walter Reed.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, I am committed to seeing this bill pass the floor of the Senate. It would be a complete failure of leadership on our part if we failed to pass this vital measure while our men and women are engaged in conflict. Unfortunately, this bill has been bogged down by politically motivated Iraq votes the Senate has taken many times before. Again, I understand the legitimate differences of opinion others may have on our strategy in Iraq, but it demonstrates a lack of seriousness about the enemy we face and the needs of our men and women in uniform to be here after 14 days of debate and not to have passed this critical legislation, particularly as we come up against the end of the fiscal year on September 30.

It is time to put the politics aside. It is time to put aside the nondefense related amendments. Every day, our men and women in uniform are out there making us proud with their courage and dedication to their mission. We should be here doing our job making sure we are supporting them by passing this critical legislation.

There are some legitimate amendments related to the underlying bill that we have debated at length, but there are also a lot of amendments that are unrelated to the underlying bill. Switching gears and moving to hate crimes legislation or to restart the immigration debate on the Defense authorization bill, in my view, would be a mistake. It would demonstrate a lack of leadership and a lack of good judgment on our part when we have men and women in the field who are fighting every single day. We need to make sure we get them a Defense authorization bill that gives them the pay raise they deserve, that addresses the equipment needs they have, that deals with the Wounded Warrior legislation, and that cares for our veterans when they come back from that conflict. There are so many important things in this underlying bill that we need to deal with, and we need to deal with them in a timely way.

I would hope that as the debate gets underway again tomorrow, we will be able to come to some final conclusion about this bill and get it passed into law without having to get bogged down in what are ancillary and unrelated issues, many of which are now, at this late juncture, being brought forward.

I urge my colleagues on both sides to do what is in the national interest, the right thing for our men and women in uniform; that is, to pass a Defense authorization bill that addresses their fundamental needs to make sure they have the funding and support, training and equipment they need to do their jobs and complete their mission.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASEY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SCHIP

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to talk about an issue we have debated for many months on the floor of the Senate. It has been debated in the other body, and it has been debated a lot of places across the country. The issue is children's health insurance.

We have a vehicle in place to make sure that not only do the 6.5 million children who are covered already under the program maintain their coverage all across the country, but in particular with this legislation, this bipartisan legislation, the Senate bill, which a couple of weeks ago we saw got 68 votes—the Presiding Officer and others in this body know it is hard to get 68 votes on anything, especially something as significant as children's health insurance. But that was a resounding vote in favor of a policy which will make sure we cover those 6.5 million children but add substantially to that to the point where this legislation would allow us to make sure 10 million American children have health insurance. We have a vehicle. We have a program that works. We have bipartisan consensus from across the board, even beyond parties. We have people who don't agree on much in legislation over the course of a year or two agreeing on this. There is strong support across America for it, certainly in my State of Pennsylvania, certainly in the State of New Jersey. But all across America we see support from virtually every corner.

There is only one problem. Despite the bipartisan consensus which exists here and in the other body, the President has threatened and seems determined to veto this legislation. For the life of me, I can't understand that. I can't understand why the President would say that he supports reauthorizing the program, that he thinks the program is good and it works, but he will not support a bipartisan consensus. This makes no sense, especially since States across America have had this kind of insurance in place for many years. In Pennsylvania, we have about 160,000 children covered right now, maybe a little more. We could increase that substantially over the next 5 years to add another 140,000 or more. So instead of having 160,000 kids covered, we get 300,000 children in Pennsylvania covered.

We know this doesn't end the discussion. We know there will still be children who won't be covered. Even if we get to that 10 million number, we know there will be millions of children,

maybe as many as 5 million, who are not covered. So we can't rest just on the foundation of this legislation.

I plead with the President, don't veto legislation that will provide 10 million American children with the health care they should have, the health care their parents and their communities have a right to expect but also the health care for children in the dawn of their lives which, beyond what it does for that child, which is obvious, I think there is a strong moral argument, but even beyond that argument, what this will do for the American economy years into the future.

These children, if they get the kind of health care and early learning we all support, will do better in school. They will achieve more. They will learn more. And if they learn more, they can earn more. We know there are CEOs across the country who understand this investment in our children is an investment in our economic future.

I join a lot of people in this Chamber in both parties who worked very hard to get 68 votes for this legislation. There was a lot of tough negotiating in the Senate Finance Committee, where the vote, I think, was 17 to 4 way back in the summer. There is the work that has been done in the House and the work that has been done between both bodies to get this right.

I ask anyone who has an interest in this legislation across the country—or anywhere someone is following this issue—to urge the President not to veto children's health insurance that will cover 10 million American children.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008—Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 3047

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of H.R. 1585, that the amendments to the substitute be laid aside, and the Senate proceed to the Hatch amendment No. 3047; that the cloture motion at the desk on the amendment be considered as having been filed and reported, and the Senate then resume the regular order regarding the bill, and then return to morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment (No. 3047) is as follows: