

health care under the Children's Health Care Program. We have rejected that, and we have turned to see how the program was working and found there were millions more children eligible for this very same program as the economy gets tougher and tougher for families, but the funding wasn't there to make sure those children receive children's health care as well. So we worked together, and we are now including an additional 4 million children whose families are working but have not been able to get health insurance. That, all together, equals 10 million children under the legislation we passed.

There is nothing more important we could do than to guarantee that children get a healthy start in life—whether it is the general practitioner they need to see, the dentist or whether they need mental health help. We have said the children of this country are a priority for our majority, for the Senate, for the House of Representatives.

I simply ask today at this critical moment: President Bush, please join us and sign this bill.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, are we in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Yes, we are.

Mr. DURBIN. It is my understanding the majority has its period.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. That is correct.

Mr. DURBIN. How much time remains?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There is 17 minutes remaining.

IRAQ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 2 months ago, I traveled to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kuwait, and Jordan. I also traveled to Iraq with my colleague Senator CASEY of Pennsylvania. We went to talk to and listen to our top generals and diplomats but, equally important, the soldiers and marines on the front lines of this war.

This was the third time for me visiting Iraq, the first time for Senator CASEY. Two impressions really struck me. More than either of my earlier visits, I felt overwhelmed by the tragedy that has been created in that country for Iraq, for its neighbors, for America's image around the world, and, sadly, for our troops.

I was also awed and deeply moved by the skill and bravery of our troops and their love for this Nation. In a time when sacrifice seems outdated to some

people, our troops are willing to endure almost inconceivable hardship and risk everything to protect us and our Nation.

When I visited Iraq, it was 120 degrees. Soldiers wore heavy body armor and backpacks and carried their ammunition, their weapons, had helmets on, drinking water every chance they had to try to stay hydrated and not suffer from heat exhaustion which had claimed the life of one of our soldiers just the day before.

Soldiers who knew who I was asked me occasionally when the politicians in Washington were going to start voting so they could come home. Despite the unbearable heat, the constant danger, longings for home, not one soldier I met in Iraq ever complained about walking point for America—not one.

We went 10 miles south of Baghdad to a place called Patrol Base Murray. I ate lunch with some Illinois soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division out of Chicago, Aurora, Jacksonville, and Elmhurst. Most were on their first deployments. One was on his third. Half were married with kids. They try to keep in touch with things back home through e-mails, but it is tough.

They were laughing at me as I fumbled around trying to open up my MRE, a can of chicken and noodles with a built-in heater. I never quite got it right. I am glad I gave them some comic relief there, at least for a few minutes.

On August 11, after I came back home, 1 week after I visited this patrol base, two Illinois soldiers stationed there died in a roadside bomb explosion, along with two other soldiers, in a place called Arab Jabour. All four soldiers were assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division based in Fort Stewart, GA.

The Illinois soldiers lost were SPC Justin Penrod, 24 years old, of Mahomet; and SGT Andrew Lancaster, 23, of Stockton. They are 2 of the 146 sons and daughters of Illinois who have died so far in this conflict.

The same day they died, a fifth soldier from the 3rd ID died in Arab Jabour in a separate incident, while a sixth was killed in an IED blast in Afghanistan. Six soldiers dead in 1 day. Sadly, such grim numbers don't even make the big headlines anymore. After losing 3,800, I guess somebody who runs these newspapers and television stations decides it is not big news. For some people, the daily toll of soldiers killed and wounded in Iraq seems to have just become another statistic, like the weather, but not to the devastated families of these fallen soldiers, not to the children who will grow up never knowing their fathers or mothers who have died in this war, and not to the men and women with whom they served.

A week after SGT Andrew Lancaster died in Iraq, his platoon commander, 1LT Benjamin Kim, wrote me a letter about a man he considered a gifted leader and a brother. I have never met Lieutenant Kim. I can't imagine why

he sent this to me, other than to share deep feelings that he just couldn't leave inside. He wanted someone else to read them. I really trust, based on what that letter contained, that he would not mind if I read his words into the record about his fallen comrade. The letter is dated August 18, 2007.

Dear Senator DURBIN: My name is Benjamin Kim, and I am assigned to the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division as an infantry officer. By the time you receive this letter it will have been a number of weeks since you came to Iraq and visited my unit. If you recall, you came to Patrol Base Murray in southeast Baghdad near a village called Arab Jabour, and you met some soldiers from Illinois serving here. One of these soldiers was a man named SGT Andrew Lancaster, and he was a squad leader in my platoon. He was killed in action on 11 August 2007, and as I write this letter, he and the bodies of four other soldiers who died with him that day are being prepared for transportation back to the United States.

The lieutenant went on to say:

The purpose of this letter is not to seek any political action. Nor is it to recount the grizzly details that resulted in the untimely deaths of five of my finest soldiers and subordinate leaders. I do not seek to achieve anything, except perhaps to communicate to you my boundless respect for the men who serve with me in this remote corner of the world. I will probably never meet you, and I shall make no plans to do so, but I find it oddly therapeutic to write to a man of your station and rank in an earnest and sincere manner. Whether you personally read this letter or not is irrelevant; as I write this I am finding temporary reprieve from my sorrow.

He goes on to write:

Andrew Lancaster was the iconic "Man of the Midwest." He was a pragmatist and he valued common sense and integrity as two of the most important traits a leader should have. He was straightforward with everything he said, and he was never afraid to speak his mind on issues that mattered to him. And yet, despite any of the pressures and frustrations that encumber a leader in combat, he kept his head cool and his professionalism was always above reproach.

He relentlessly pursued our elusive enemy with an intellect that any general would envy. There were countless times where he and I, and other leaders of the platoon, would discuss various tactics and methods we should apply in our mission, and more often than not we found ourselves listening attentively to his analysis of the situation.

He was also compassionate. In one instance, he spearheaded a platoon-level effort to capture a man who we suspected to be an IED emplacer and a high ranking insurgent in our area of operations. When we finally caught him, the insurgent knew he'd be going away for a long time. 'Caster, as we called him, gave him a final opportunity to kiss his family goodbye.

He was a soldier of the highest caliber, and yet his humility offered a pleasing contrast to his confidence in his own abilities. For all the times he furthered the interests of our platoon, I wanted to nominate him for a bronze star with a V-Device. His response was always the same—"I don't really care about awards. I just want all of us to go home alive and intact when these 15 months end." He was posthumously awarded his bronze star along with a purple heart; nevertheless, how ironic it is that the true heroes never want to claim themselves as such.

In his personal life, 'Caster was strongly devoted to his family. He would always sing

high praises for his wife and high school sweetheart, Tabbatha; whose outstanding cooking he would attribute both woefully and wistfully the weight gain he experienced a month before deployment. He loved her tremendously, and whenever we weren't "talking shop" her name was his constant refrain.

He would also speak reverently of his brother. We would listen to his stories about growing up in small town Illinois and laugh with him about all the trouble he and his brother would get into.

When he came to my platoon, he welcomed young soldiers who were far from their families to his home frequently, be it for Thanksgiving dinner or for a few beers or a football game. He made our platoon his family, and we will always cherish that bond.

I don't know what I planned to accomplish by writing this. All I know is that this man was like a brother to me, and I feel like I have to memorialize him somehow. He taught me a lot of things that I need to know about being a good platoon leader, and even now his legacy lives on in the soldiers he once led and the outstanding ways in which they conduct themselves.

I hope that I have given you a somewhat accurate picture of the man we loved, but I have a sneaking suspicion that there are no words eloquent enough to describe him. Nevertheless, I thank you in advance for taking the time to read this. Keep fighting the good fight, and we here will do the same.

Respectfully, ILT Benjamin Kim.

SGT Andrew Lancaster of Stockton, IL, enlisted in the Army with a friend in 2002 to protect America after September 11. Before Iraq, he served as a paratrooper in Afghanistan with the Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade.

In Stockton, IL, a small town with a population of about 1,800, Sergeant Lancaster was known as Andy, the kid everybody loved, and his death really hit the folks in that community hard.

At Freeport High School, where he graduated in 2002, where he stood out in football, basketball, and choir, his teachers and coaches recall Andy Lancaster as an outgoing and responsible young man who had a way of making everyone around him happy.

When the news of his death reached that town, the high school football team posted a tribute to Sergeant Lancaster's family on its message board. Messages of support were also posted at the local ice cream shop where Sergeant Lancaster's young widow Tabby once worked.

In addition to a town and a wife who loved him, Sergeant Lancaster leaves behind his mom and his stepfather, Donna and Steve Vanderheyden; his father Harlan Lancaster; a brother, two step-sisters, and his grandparents.

He and Tabby married just before Sergeant Lancaster left for Afghanistan, and they planned to start a family when he came home. Instead, last month, Tabby Lancaster attended a ceremony at Fort Stewart at which 10 trees were planted in honor of her husband and nine other members of the 3rd Infantry Division who died recently in Iraq. Since 2003, a total of 369 trees have been planted along the base's memorial walk.

Mr. President, I regret I never had a chance to meet Andy Lancaster, but I

have met so many soldiers just like him. They are natural leaders who probably succeed at whatever they choose to do in life. They certainly could have made a lot more money and lived far more comfortably, but they chose to enlist to defend our country.

Those are the kind of people we are losing every day in these wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Like Andy Lancaster, each of them leaves a hole in the hearts of those who loved them and in the heart of our Nation. We honor their sacrifice and grieve their loss.

In a few minutes, Mr. President, we will start debating the Defense appropriations bill. It is a critically important bill. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I know a lot of the discussion about this bill will be about numbers. This little statement that I have made on the floor, reading into the record the letter of Lieutenant Kim about his fallen sergeant, really takes this discussion and debate way beyond numbers. It reminds us of 3,800 brave soldiers, such as Andy Lancaster, who have given their lives for America, soldiers whose lives continue to be lost every single day that we continue this war.

I stand today in tribute not just to Sergeant Lancaster but to all the men and women who continue to serve us with such honor and dignity. I hope all of us who value and cherish the contributions they make will remember them in our hearts and our prayers and our votes.

Mr. President, I yield back morning business time.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 3222, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3222) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Appropriations, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

That the following sums are appropriated, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, for military functions administered by the Department of Defense and for other purposes, namely:

TITLE I

MILITARY PERSONNEL

MILITARY PERSONNEL, ARMY

For pay, allowances, individual clothing, subsistence, interest on deposits, gratuities, perma-

nent change of station travel (including all expenses thereof for organizational movements), and expenses of temporary duty travel between permanent duty stations, for members of the Army on active duty, (except members of reserve components provided for elsewhere), cadets, and aviation cadets; for members of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps; and for payments pursuant to section 156 of Public Law 97-377, as amended (42 U.S.C. 402 note), and to the Department of Defense Military Retirement Fund, \$31,734,076,000.

MILITARY PERSONNEL, NAVY

For pay, allowances, individual clothing, subsistence, interest on deposits, gratuities, permanent change of station travel (including all expenses thereof for organizational movements), and expenses of temporary duty travel between permanent duty stations, for members of the Navy on active duty (except members of the Reserve provided for elsewhere), midshipmen, and aviation cadets; for members of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps; and for payments pursuant to section 156 of Public Law 97-377, as amended (42 U.S.C. 402 note), and to the Department of Defense Military Retirement Fund, \$23,338,772,000.

MILITARY PERSONNEL, MARINE CORPS

For pay, allowances, individual clothing, subsistence, interest on deposits, gratuities, permanent change of station travel (including all expenses thereof for organizational movements), and expenses of temporary duty travel between permanent duty stations, for members of the Marine Corps on active duty (except members of the Reserve provided for elsewhere); and for payments pursuant to section 156 of Public Law 97-377, as amended (42 U.S.C. 402 note), and to the Department of Defense Military Retirement Fund, \$10,291,831,000.

MILITARY PERSONNEL, AIR FORCE

For pay, allowances, individual clothing, subsistence, interest on deposits, gratuities, permanent change of station travel (including all expenses thereof for organizational movements), and expenses of temporary duty travel between permanent duty stations, for members of the Air Force on active duty (except members of reserve components provided for elsewhere), cadets, and aviation cadets; for members of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps; and for payments pursuant to section 156 of Public Law 97-377, as amended (42 U.S.C. 402 note), and to the Department of Defense Military Retirement Fund, \$24,155,054,000.

RESERVE PERSONNEL, ARMY

For pay, allowances, clothing, subsistence, gratuities, travel, and related expenses for personnel of the Army Reserve on active duty under sections 10211, 10302, and 3038 of title 10, United States Code, or while serving on active duty under section 12301(d) of title 10, United States Code, in connection with performing duty specified in section 12310(a) of title 10, United States Code, or while undergoing reserve training, or while performing drills or equivalent duty or other duty, and expenses authorized by section 16131 of title 10, United States Code; and for payments to the Department of Defense Military Retirement Fund, \$3,672,440,000.

RESERVE PERSONNEL, NAVY

For pay, allowances, clothing, subsistence, gratuities, travel, and related expenses for personnel of the Navy Reserve on active duty under section 10211 of title 10, United States Code, or while serving on active duty under section 12301(d) of title 10, United States Code, in connection with performing duty specified in section 12310(a) of title 10, United States Code, or while undergoing reserve training, or while performing drills or equivalent duty, and expenses authorized by section 16131 of title 10, United States Code; and for payments to the Department of Defense Military Retirement Fund, \$1,801,985,000.