

change our strategy in Iraq, and that is very clear from his own comments. Along with the tax he proposed, in fact, he announced he would not allow his committee to move forward with the bill the President has requested to fund the troops in Iraq.

This is not the Defense authorization or Defense appropriations bill, which funds the Pentagon and all the military activities over the course of next year. No, this is the money for the troops who are fighting right now in Iraq. As I said, the chairman made it very clear that was precisely what he intended. In fact, quoting from a Wall Street Journal article today, he said:

Choosing not to move legislation is our strongest card at this point.

Well, this is not a card game, and you shouldn't be playing with the lives of our troops by cutting off their funding while they are out in the field. If you wish to make a policy point that we should change our strategy in Iraq, change our mission, there are ways to do it without cutting off the funds while the troops are out there trying to perform the mission we have sent them to perform.

I thought the comment of my colleague from New Mexico, Senator DOMENICI, as reported in the Washington Times in a story this morning, was charitable and interesting.

Senator PETE V. DOMENICI, New Mexico Republican, said Mr. OBEY's threat to block war funds was pretty gutsy. But I don't see how it would work. In the end, you have to feed the soldiers.

That is the point. You can cut back Pentagon funding, you can try to pass resolutions that call for a change in strategy, but at the end of the day, you have to feed the soldiers. You can't refuse to send the money to Iraq while the troops are there or you are literally pulling out the rug from under the troops.

My colleague, Senator GRAHAM from South Carolina, put it this way:

The plan to starve the troops of funds would be cheered by America's enemies. This would be a blessing to al-Qaida, which is getting its brains beat out in Iraq.

I remember when Bob Dole ran for the Presidency, and he was trying to make some pretty important points and people didn't appear to be listening to him. At one point, he said: Where is the outrage? And that is the question I ask here. Where is the outrage of pulling the rug out from under our troops while they are in theater trying to do what we have sent them there to do?

This is not just bad policy, it represents a failure to support the troops. Everybody around here says: Well, we all support the troops, we disagree with the policy of being in Iraq. Now we have come to the point where we are going to try to change that policy by not supporting the troops? I don't think this is good policy. I don't think it is fair to the troops whom we have sent into harm's way, and it is consistent, as I said before, with this whole tax-and-spend ideology.

Try to change policy by withdrawing support for the troops but raise taxes on the American taxpayer? It makes no sense at all, unless you put it in the context with where the Democratic leadership has been going now for some time with respect to the Iraq war. Let me go back a little and quote from an article yesterday in the Associated Press.

Hoping the political landscape changes in coming months, Democratic leaders say they will renew their fight when Congress considers the money Bush wants in war funding.

Well, it didn't take long for that to come true. The Associated Press noted:

The difficulty facing Democrats in the Iraq debate: They lack the votes to pass legislation ordering troops home and are divided on whether to cut money for combat.

I might say the Speaker of the House has already announced her opposition to this new tax plan. Democrats are indeed divided. But for those who are in authority to refuse to move the legislation forward, and who talk about it in terms of it is the best card I have to play, have the ability to stop the funding at the very time that the troops need the money in the field.

Progress in Iraq, obviously, has been widely reported. An editorial today in Investors Business Daily says:

The new strategy being implemented by General Petraeus seems to have worked extraordinarily well. Al-Qaida has been backpedaling furiously.

So right at the time the strategy is working, we are going to pull the money out? It makes no sense.

The Washington Post reports today:

The numbers of U.S. soldiers and Iraqi civilians reported killed across the country last month fell to their lowest levels in more than a year, a sharp decrease in violent deaths that American military officials attribute in part to the thousands of additional soldiers who have arrived here this year.

And the New York Times today notes:

The number of violent civilian deaths in Iraq dropped precipitously in September compared with the previous month.

So at a time when the strategy of General Petraeus is working, our friends on the other side of the aisle are deciding to pull the funding so we can no longer continue the operation. That makes no sense at all. But it does fit in with this larger strategy, as I said, to find any way they can to change the course in the war.

Let me conclude with this point. It is now October 3, past the beginning of the fiscal year on October 1, and yet the Democratic majority has not passed one single appropriations bill to the President for his signature to fund the government next year. It appears to me there is a reason for this.

The Associated Press noted the following in an article on September 30:

The most basic job of Congress is to pass the bills that pay the costs of running the government. After criticizing the Republicans for falling down on the job last year, Democrats are now the ones stumbling.

And Roll Call had an editorial 3 days before, and I quote from part of it:

Senate Democrats complain that Republican obstructionism and President Bush's veto threats against nine House-passed bills caused this year's delay. But the arguments don't hold water.

Instead, it appears likely that the Democrats' failure to pass these spending bills is part of the plan designed to create a giant Omnibus appropriations bill which will tie very directly into their tax-and-spend policies.

According to an editorial today in Congressional Quarterly:

Democrats may be planning to use a widely supported veterans' bill as the vehicle for their additional spending. Frustrated veterans' groups are trying to pressure Congress to quickly pass a veterans' and military construction bill and not use it as a vehicle for an omnibus measure.

Now, this wouldn't be the first time this kind of game has been played, but especially if it is on the Veterans and Military Construction bill, or if it is the Defense authorization bill that was held up for so long, and now the measure to try to fund the troops in Iraq, there is a very disturbing pattern here. Playing games with money for veterans and the military in order to get more taxes and spending? That is wrong. It is wrong. The American people need to know that at the very time when General Petraeus's strategy is showing very positive results in Iraq, it is the Democratic plan, at least in the House of Representatives, to hold up that funding, not because there is a lack of money, not because we need a tax increase to fund it but in order to try to change the course of the President's strategy.

That is playing games with the money the troops need in the field. Again, as Senator DOMENICI said, it is a pretty gutsy move, but in the end, it would not work because you have to feed the soldiers.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, how much time remains on the Democratic side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Nine minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. Nine minutes.

Mr. President, I yield whatever time the Senator from Massachusetts would like.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

CHIP VETO

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, a few minutes ago the President of the United States vetoed the children's health insurance legislation that has reflected the bipartisan support of the Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate and which has the support of children, families, and Americans all over.

How could the President of the United States possibly veto this legislation? How could the President be so misinformed about the needs of these children? I think this is probably the most inexplicable veto in the history of

the country. It is incomprehensible, it is intolerable, and it is unacceptable.

Democrats pleaded with Members of the Republican Party to give us their help and their support so we could pass this legislation. Now we have that opportunity. The ball is in our court. We can do something about it. This is a defining issue, not only about children but also about the values of this country. So I hope Democrats and Republicans alike will come together and say children ought to come first in the United States.

This is a value issue, it is a family issue, and it is something that demands action, and I hope we will override this veto.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, how much time is remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 7½ minutes remaining.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask to be yielded 3 minutes and to give the remaining time to the Senator from Washington after I have completed.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is a strange thing when the President of the United States uses his veto pen. He does it so rarely. He has only used it on two issues. Once, when we tried to change the policy on the war in Iraq and tried to bring our troops home in a responsible manner, the President vetoed it. The second was on stem cell research. When we tried to open up this opportunity for medical research to save lives and spare suffering for American families, the President vetoed it—not once but twice. Today, the President used his veto pen for the fourth time. Unlike other vetoes, there were no television cameras, no reporters, no announcements made. Quietly, in his office, the President signed the veto of the children's health insurance measure.

This children's health insurance measure is a program that has been in business for 10 years. It is a successful program, and it has strong bipartisan support in Congress. We started this program because 15 million kids in America did not have health insurance. They were not the poorest kids. The poorest kids have coverage under Medicaid. They were not the fortunate children, those who were lucky enough to have health insurance through their parents. They were the ones caught in the middle, the kids of working parents who make such a low wage and have so few benefits they cannot provide health insurance for their kids.

So when President Bush vetoed this bill, why did he veto it? In a short, one-sentence statement he said: It was a middle-class entitlement.

I would say to the President: Isn't it about time someone stood up for the middle class in this country? To argue that a couple making \$60,000 a year, without health insurance where they go to work, can spend \$800 or \$900 a

month on health insurance and not feel that pain in their budget tells me the President or his advisers are out of touch with America.

When I go home to Illinois, and our colleagues go home to their States, the first thing you hear about is health insurance. You know what it is—people say: We don't have it where we work, and we cannot afford to buy it. We have health insurance, but it doesn't cover enough. Those are the realities of family life in America, and the President's veto today tells me he is out of touch with the real issues challenging middle-class working families in America.

Fortunately, we have put together a bipartisan bill. With the leadership of Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY of Iowa and ORRIN HATCH of Utah on the Republican side, MAX BAUCUS on the Democrat side, and Senator KENNEDY of Massachusetts, we have a compromise bipartisan bill. It is paid for. It does not add to the deficit. A tobacco tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products will pay for health insurance, so we will move from 6.6 million kids covered to 10 million kids, over 5 years, moving toward the goal of all children in America having health insurance.

The President's veto today tells me he doesn't share our goal that every American, every family, should have health insurance that they can count on and afford. It tells me the President is not in touch with the real life of middle-class working families struggling to make ends meet, struggling to pay for college, struggling to make sure their kids have health insurance.

This is an opportunity for Congress to come together, the House and the Senate on a bipartisan basis, to say to the President: Pay close attention to America. America needs a helping hand, and working-class, middle-class families need an opportunity for health insurance that they can afford for their children.

I urge my colleagues on both sides, let's continue this effort on behalf of these families to provide affordable health insurance for kids across our Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There remains 3½ minutes.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, the President is turning a deaf ear to the crying needs of millions of American children by vetoing the Children's Health Insurance Program. The President claims this is an inefficient use of Federal dollars, but nothing could be further from the truth. When a family goes without health insurance, it means going without regular checkups, children missing more school than other children, and children waiting until the emergency room is the only answer.

It means we don't catch ailments like ear infections and cavities and dia-

betes and asthma. It means treatable conditions are more likely to spiral out of control. And it means American taxpayers are spending billions of dollars for uncompensated care instead of spending money up front to provide continuity of care.

It is not more efficient to veto this bill. With better coverage, we can treat things like fevers and injuries and infections before they turn into something far worse. We can catch chronic illnesses earlier and help children manage their conditions. We can save American taxpayers' dollars.

But the President is turning a deaf ear to over 3.8 million Americans who simply cannot afford health insurance. How could they? Mr. President, are your budget analysts just numb to the fact that Americans are seeing higher and higher costs of health insurance? Are you choosing to ignore the fact that health insurance premiums grew by 78 percent since 2001, while wages only grew 19 percent? Are you choosing to ignore that nearly half of the increase of uninsured children in America in the last several years occurred among those between 200 percent and 400 percent of the poverty line? That means more Americans are falling into the category of not being able to cover health insurance.

Are you ignoring the fact that record numbers of businesses are dropping health insurance for their employees? That means a family with \$41,000 trying to find health insurance could end up having to pay 30 percent of their annual income. What American family can afford to pay 30 percent of their income to find health insurance? American families are being squeezed out of health insurance, and the President of the United States is turning a deaf ear to the crying health care needs of our children. All we are doing is paying the bill later.

The President should not be so heartless when it comes to the children of America. I know my colleagues are working shoulder to shoulder, Democrats and Republicans, trying to stop the President's veto. I hope my colleagues in the House of Representatives will have the courage to stand up to the President. But be assured that Republicans and Democrats in the Senate will continue this measure in whatever ways we can on behalf of America's children.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.