

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 12 to 15 minutes in morning business.

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

The Senator is recognized.

#### MISPLACED PRIORITIES

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, as my colleagues know, earlier this week President Bush announced he will ask this Congress to provide an additional \$46 billion for the war in Iraq next year. That is \$46 billion more than the \$150 billion he already told us he would ask for. Taken together, that is close to \$200 billion more than the hundreds of billions of dollars the taxpayers of this country have already poured into the sands and marshes of Iraq—for a war this President has made clear he has no intention of ending.

The people of Rhode Island are tired of watching their sons and daughters, their neighbors and their friends, sent off to war by a President who won't trouble himself to make a plan to bring them home. They are tired of spending money our country has to borrow on a war with burdens our country should no longer have to bear. And they are sick and tired of hearing this President veto or threaten to veto legislation passed by this Congress that supports the real and urgent needs of Americans and their families—all because he says it costs too much.

Clearly, this President is an expert when it comes to irresponsible and excessive spending. Look at the war. Look at the private contractors. Look at the national debt he has run up. But how can he keep a straight face and tell the American people it is more important to borrow and spend \$35 billion for 3½ more months of the Iraq war than it is to provide budgeted health insurance for 5 years to 10 million American children? What a sobering revelation of this administration's misplaced priorities.

No American should doubt for 1 minute what is going on here. Every time President Bush vetoes a bill to fund children's health care, every time he threatens to veto legislation that will send our Nation's children to college, keep families warm during the winter months, invest in job training and technical education programs, or offer the promise of medical cures through research at the National Institutes of Health, President Bush is making a choice. He is choosing prolonging a war in Iraq over battling cancer. He is choosing his no-plan war over helping families in poverty. It is a choice, and it is the wrong choice.

Last night, the Senate passed a bill to provide funding for the Departments

of Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and other agencies. On October 17, the administration expressed its opposition to this appropriations bill based on what it calls "an irresponsible and excessive level of spending." As I said, this President is certainly expert at irresponsible and excessive levels of spending, but what does he mean? The President means that \$10.8 billion spent to help millions of Americans lead healthier, more productive lives is irresponsible and excessive, but the nearly \$200 billion additional he wants to borrow and spend on the war in Iraq is just fine.

Let's look at two areas in this bill where the funding levels we propose exceed those in the administration's budget to see just how irresponsible and excessive we are.

The first is at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at NIH. Our bill funds the institute at \$67 million more than the President's request. I want to introduce my colleagues to one man who does not think this increase is irresponsible and excessive.

This is a picture of Richard Pezzillo on his last visit to Washington, DC. Rich is a bright, kind, thoughtful young man from North Providence, RI, who hopes one day to become a meteorologist. Rich also suffers from hemophilia and right now lies in a hospital bed in Rhode Island, too sick to attend his classes at Western Connecticut State University where he hopes to graduate this May. Sadly, Rich, now 24, has missed 2½ years of school due to his illness.

One of these absences was caused by an activity most of us would never even think about—something we do, in fact, to save lives—putting on a seatbelt. Three years ago, Rich unfastened his seatbelt from the airplane, collected his things, and walked off into the airport and suddenly started to feel tremendous pain. He started vomiting blood. Simply wearing his seatbelt had caused Rich to bleed internally, inside of his stomach, eventually requiring that his gall bladder be removed. Rich spent roughly 3 weeks in the hospital, accumulating bills totaling nearly \$1.5 million. Luckily, Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Rhode Island, his family's insurer, covered most of these costs. But Rich is desperately afraid what will happen to him when he graduates from college and no longer qualifies under his parents' health care plan. Hemophilia is one of the most expensive conditions a person can have, one that few insurance companies will want to take on.

Richard Pezzillo is a fighter. He is an example for us all. But he will continue to face tremendous difficulties with his health throughout his life. Soon, thanks to research going on at the National Institutes of Health; specifically at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, hemophilia could be the first disease cured by gene therapy. The funding in this appropriations bill will go toward research which could save

Richard's life and the lives of 18,000 people across this country who suffer from hemophilia. This spending is not irresponsible. This spending is not excessive. This spending is vital and it is working and it has the potential to save thousands of people like Rich Pezzillo.

A second place where this bill calls for spending above the President's budget—\$128 million above his budget to be exact—is at the National Cancer Institute. Here I want to share the story of Benjamin Haight. I met Ben's parents this summer when they came down to my office from Warwick, RI, to share their little boy's story. Ben was diagnosed with neuroblastoma early in 1999 when he was just 4½ years old. At the time, Ben's dad was a senior chief in the Navy, serving aboard the USS Miami. He was airlifted off the submarine to join his son, as Ben underwent five rounds of chemo, surgery, radiation, and endured two stem cell transplants. These treatments left Ben with no high frequency hearing, requiring him to wear the two hearing aids, and they left him with a severely compromised immune system. But Ben refused to let any of this keep him from being a kid. He told his doctors there would be no treatments during science class, and that they would have to be out by 3 to go to Cub Scouts or baseball or soccer or other activities. He often left his chemotherapy sessions dressed in his Little League uniform. Ben was a snorkler, a sailor, a swimmer, a fisherman, a climber, an artist, and an animal lover. He was, as his parents say, a child first and a child with cancer second.

Though Ben and his family enjoyed 2 years of remission, he relapsed again in October 2001 at the start of second grade. This new round of treatment consisted of more chemo and over 200 blood and platelet transfusions. Ben lost his battle with neuroblastoma on August 8, 2003, at the age of 9. The night before he died, Ben turned to his mom and asked: "Can't we try a stronger medicine?"

Well, Ben, at the pediatric oncology branch of the National Cancer Institute, they are trying to create that stronger medicine. Ten phase I and four phase II clinical trials are currently being conducted on neuroblastoma, and scientists are closer and closer every day to the stronger medicine you asked for.

Is it really so irresponsible and excessive to provide the funding for these studies, to find the treatments that could have saved Ben Haight and could save so many more children like him?

To me, irresponsible and excessive is borrowing and spending \$450 billion for an endless war that undermines our national security and then asking the Congress for another \$196.4 billion without a plan to bring our troops home, all while nearly 50 million Americans go without health insurance and millions of families hover at the door of poverty.

We should be clear that the nearly \$200 billion this President has requested for the war in Iraq, on top of the hundreds of billions he has already spent, is not even the whole story. When this administration tells us about the financial costs of this disastrous war, they don't tell us about the interest payments we will have to pay. The Congressional Budget Office tells us that interest on the war will total \$415 billion by 2017, and then there will be more interest on the additional \$200 billion the President wants us to borrow and spend. The final interest costs of this war could approach \$1 trillion, passed on to our children and grandchildren.

President Bush, I think most Americans would argue with you. I think most Americans would argue that \$22 billion to keep our families healthy is a pretty sound investment in our country's future, and trillions of dollars in spending and hundreds of billions of dollars in interest for a war you won't take action to end, that is what is irresponsible and excessive.

The President's threatened veto of this appropriations bill is just another illustration of his extraordinarily misplaced priorities. The \$67 million increase this bill calls for to fund the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute is a few hours of the cost of the war in Iraq—not even a full day, not even half a day, a few hours. In fact, the entire NIH budget in this bill is only \$1 billion above the President's request. One billion dollars sounds like a lot of money, of course, but it is, in fact, only a few days of the war in Iraq—not a month, not a week, only a few days.

President Bush would rather prolong the war in Iraq than fund additional research at the National Institutes of Health into pediatric cancer, into hemophilia, and into other diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, autism, Parkinson's, and Alzheimer's. He would rather fund a continuous war than provide hope for millions of families around this country.

Well, I hope President Bush will listen to Rich Pezzillo's story. I hope he will listen to Ben Haight's parents. I hope he will listen to the thousands of Rhode Islanders who have reached out to me to demand a new direction, not only in Iraq but here at home in America. I hope he will listen to Americans across this country who think that people such as Rich and Ben should be our first priorities.

I am proud this bill puts people such as Rich and Ben ahead of the extreme rightwing ideologies and reckless wars this President pursues, and I hope we in Congress will stand our ground when, of all people, this President charges that putting Rich and Ben first is irresponsible and excessive.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and 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. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### PASSENGER RAIL INVESTMENT AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2007

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we are going to move to the Amtrak bill. There is an understanding that I have with Senator LOTT that a number of Members on the Republican side want to be able to have a little extra time to do some amendments dealing with this bill. There are no games being played with this legislation. This is something which is long overdue, and we want to complete this.

I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to consideration of Calendar No. 158, S. 294, the Amtrak authorization measure.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, let me say this. We have a lot to do here. For people who are concerned with why we haven't been doing things this afternoon, it takes time getting things done, and I appreciate that. This is a bipartisan effort to move forward on this legislation. It is something I think we can do. There is no effort to do anything other than get a bill passed.

I have had a conversation with Senator LOTT and with two other Republican Senators, and we have agreements with what we have talked about with them. It is a gentleman's agreement, but we will live up to it on our side.

Mr. President, there will be no more votes today. We hope there will be a good debate on this important issue today and hope there will be some amendments offered tomorrow and Friday.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 294) to reauthorize Amtrak, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, with amendments, as follows:

(The parts of the bill intended to be stricken are shown in boldface brackets and the parts of the bill intended to be inserted are shown in italic.)

S. 294

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007".

#### SEC. 2. AMENDMENT OF TITLE 49, UNITED STATES CODE.

Except as otherwise specifically provided, whenever in this Act an amendment is expressed in terms of an amendment to a section or other provision of law, the reference

shall be considered to be made to a section or other provision of title 49, United States Code.

#### SEC. 3. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title.  
Sec. 2. Amendment of title 49, United States Code.

Sec. 3. Table of contents.

#### TITLE I—AUTHORIZATIONS

Sec. 101. Authorization for Amtrak capital and operating expenses and State capital grants.  
Sec. 102. Authorization for the Federal Railroad Administration.  
Sec. 103. Repayment of long-term debt and capital leases.  
Sec. 104. Excess railroad retirement.  
Sec. 105. Other authorizations.

#### TITLE II—AMTRAK REFORM AND OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

Sec. 201. National railroad passenger transportation system defined.  
Sec. 202. Amtrak Board of Directors.  
Sec. 203. Establishment of improved financial accounting system.  
Sec. 204. Development of 5-year financial plan.  
Sec. 205. Establishment of grant process.  
Sec. 206. State-supported routes.  
Sec. 207. Independent auditor to establish methodologies for Amtrak route and service planning decisions.  
Sec. 208. Metrics and standards.  
Sec. 209. Passenger train performance.  
Sec. 210. Long distance routes.  
Sec. 211. Alternate passenger rail service program.  
Sec. 212. Employee transition assistance.  
Sec. 213. Northeast Corridor state-of-good-repair plan.  
Sec. 214. Northeast Corridor infrastructure and operations improvements.  
Sec. 215. Restructuring long-term debt and capital leases.  
Sec. 216. Study of compliance requirements at existing intercity rail stations.  
Sec. 217. Incentive pay.  
Sec. 218. Access to Amtrak equipment and services.  
Sec. 219. General Amtrak provisions.  
Sec. 220. Private sector funding of passenger trains.  
Sec. 221. On-board service improvements.  
Sec. 222. Management accountability.  
Sec. 223. *Locomotive biodiesel fuel use study.*

#### TITLE III—INTERCITY PASSENGER RAIL POLICY

Sec. 301. Capital assistance for intercity passenger rail service.  
Sec. 302. State rail plans.  
Sec. 303. Next generation corridor train equipment pool.  
Sec. 304. Federal rail policy.  
Sec. 305. Rail cooperative research program.

#### TITLE IV—PASSENGER RAIL SECURITY AND SAFETY

Sec. 400. Short title.  
Sec. 401. Rail transportation security risk assessment.  
Sec. 402. Systemwide Amtrak security upgrades.  
Sec. 403. Fire and life-safety improvements.  
Sec. 404. Freight and passenger rail security upgrades.  
Sec. 405. Rail security research and development.  
Sec. 406. Oversight and grant procedures.  
Sec. 407. Amtrak plan to assist families of passengers involved in rail passenger accidents.  
Sec. 408. Northern border rail passenger report.