

commander in Iraq determines that such steps would be effective.

Well, of course, the new U.S. commander of Iraq is GEN David Petraeus, and he has suggested and asked for exactly that, which is why it is significant in the President's plan.

So I urge all of my colleagues to give this issue serious thought, to be responsible, to advocate whatever is in their heart and in their mind but to do it responsibly. Support some plan, and do not throw out mere words that have no concrete effect except undermining our troops and emboldening the enemy.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, could you advise me how much time our side has remaining in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Ten minutes forty seconds.

Mr. CORNYN. If there is 10 minutes remaining, I would like to take the next 5 minutes and then yield to Senator DEMINT for the remaining 5 minutes, if the Chair would please advise.

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

IRAQ

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments we have heard this morning from the distinguished Senator from Nevada and the distinguished Senator from Louisiana, and I couldn't agree more with the comments they have made. I would like to add some, perhaps, even more eloquent words—and rest assured they are not mine—to this debate because I think it helps us understand in a way that we might not otherwise understand what is at stake and what the people who are most directly impacted believe is at stake in the war on terror, particularly the conflict in Iraq.

I first want to quote the words of Roy Velez. Roy is from Lubbock, TX, and has lost two sons—one in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. Recently, Roy Velez said:

It is not about President Bush. It is not about being a Democrat or a Republican. It is about standing behind a country that we love so much. I know it has cost us a lot in lives, including my two sons, and it has taken a toll on America. But we can't walk away from this war until we're finished.

I don't know anyone who has earned the right to speak so directly to what is at stake, the sacrifices that have been made, and the consequences of our leaving Iraq before it is stabilized and able to govern and defend itself.

Then there is also the story of 2LT Mark J. Daily. Lieutenant Daily was 23 years old from Irvine, CA. He was with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division out of Fort Bliss, TX. Lieutenant Daily was killed on January 15 when an improvised explosive device exploded and ripped through his vehicle, taking his life and those of

three fellow soldiers. Mark had been, as so many of our military have done, keeping in touch with his family via e-mail, and he maintained a blog on the popular My Space Web site. In that blog, Mark specifically explained why he joined, and this is what he wrote:

Why I joined: This question has been asked of me so many times in so many different contexts that I thought it would be best if I wrote my reasons for joining the Army on my page for all to see. First, the more accurate question is why I volunteered to go to Iraq. After all, I joined the Army a week after we declared war on Saddam's government with the intention of going to Iraq. Now, after years of training and preparation, I am finally here. Much has changed in the last three years. The criminal Baath regime has been replaced by an insurgency fueled by Iraq's neighbors who hope to partition Iraq for their own ends. This is coupled with the ever-present transnational militant Islamist movement which has seized upon Iraq as the greatest way to kill Americans, along with anyone else who happens to be standing near. What was once a paralyzed state of fear is now the staging area for one of the largest transformations of power and ideology the Middle East has experienced since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

I would say in closing that we can't claim to support the troops and not support their mission. If we don't support the mission, we should not pass nonbinding resolutions. We should do everything within our power to stop it. I do believe that we should support that mission. I do believe we should support our troops. That is why I believe we should send them the message that, yes, we believe you can succeed, and it is important to our national security that you do.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. DEMINT. I thank the Senator from Texas, and I would like to add my comments to his. We are certainly discussing probably one of the most deadly serious issues that I have been a part of since being in the Congress. I must start by expressing my respect for the Senators who are proposing this resolution. I know their intent is good. They have heartfelt concerns about what we are doing.

But what I would like to do is remind all of us that our role is a role of being leaders, not just being critics. As elected officials, we know what it is like to have critics second-guess all the decisions we make, but our job as Senators is to be leaders; and to be leaders, we have to make good decisions. If we make good decisions, we have to know what our real choices are. I am afraid those who are proposing this resolution are not considering the real choices because we can keep the status quo, we can withdraw and be defeated, or we can continue until we win and accomplish our goals in Iraq.

This resolution is a resolution of defeat and disgrace. There is no other way it could come out. That is the choice they are making. That is the decision they are making because we

know if we withdraw and leave this to the Iraqis when they are not ready, we will lose all. Not only will we be disgraced as a nation, but we will have probably the biggest catastrophe—human catastrophe as well as political catastrophe—in the Middle East that is going to occur. We have to discuss the real implications of that choice.

I oppose this resolution because it does not support our mission, it does not support success, and it makes the decision for defeat. Real leaders would come up with a plan of action that they follow through on. And whether we agree with the President or not, he has put a plan on the table and he intends to follow through on it with all the advice he can get from his military people. Our role is not just to criticize that, but if we don't agree, it is to come up with another plan, propose it, and our responsibility is to sell it to the American people—not just to criticize, not to come up with resolutions that don't mean anything, intended to embarrass the President. But what it really does is deteriorate the morale of our troops.

I know we are frustrated with this war, and the fear of failure is all around us. But we cannot digress into being critics in this body. Our job is to lead.

I want to conclude this morning with some comments from the soldiers. I know other Senators have called parents who have soldier sons and daughters who have been killed. I have not had one who told me to get out of Iraq. I have had a lot of them tell me: Win. That is how to honor the sacrifice is to win.

SPC Peter Manna:

If they don't think we're doing a good job, everything we have done here is all in vain.

We have a number of these, but I don't have time to read them all.

SGT Manuel Sahagun said:

One thing I don't like is when people back home say they support the troops but they don't support the war. If they're going to support us, support us all the way.

Americans are not against this war; they are against losing. They need to know we can win it.

General Petraeus, the best general that we have, whom we have just approved, confirmed in the Senate, has told us that we can succeed with the President's plan. This is our last best hope to leave Iraq as a free democracy and to help stabilize the Middle East. The other choice is defeat and disgrace.

Mr. President, I call on all of my Senate colleagues not to support this resolution and to act as leaders: to put forward a plan or support the one that the President has put forward.

I yield the floor and reserve the remainder of the time.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry: I believe I have time reserved at this point. I was going to speak for a little over 20 minutes or so. I would like to inquire through the Chair of my colleagues if they wish to finish their remarks before I go to mine.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, in response to the distinguished Senator from Oregon, I believe our morning business time has expired and we would yield back any remaining time so the Senator from Oregon can begin his remarks.

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

Mr. WYDEN. I thank my colleagues for their courtesy.

HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, it is not breaking news that the American health care system is broken, even though our country has scores of dedicated and talented health care providers. It isn't breaking news that Congress has ducked fixing health care since 1994.

What should be breaking news is that for the first time in decades there is a genuine opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to work together to fix American health care.

A few days ago in his State of the Union Address, the President put forward a health care reform proposal that focuses on changing the Federal Tax Code. Since then, leading Democratic and Republican economists have joined forces to point out how Federal health care tax rules benefit the most affluent among us, and subsidize inefficiency as well.

For example, right now under the Federal Tax Code, a high-flying CEO can write off the cost on their Federal taxes of going out and getting a designer smile while a hard-working gal in a small hardware store in Montana, Oregon, or anywhere else in the country, gets virtually nothing.

I am of the view that Democrats and Republicans should work together to change this inequity and make sure that all of our citizens have affordable, quality, private health care coverage with private sector choices—the way Members of Congress do.

The Federal Tax Code and its policies have disproportionately rewarded the affluent. They came about because of what happened in the 1940s when there were wage and price controls. These policies might have worked for the 1940s, but they are clearly not right 60 years later. Democrats and Republicans can work together to change the Federal tax rules that grease the system and disproportionately reward the most affluent and subsidize inefficiency.

In return for those on the Democratic side of the aisle supporting a change in Federal health tax rules and coverage through private sector choices, the President and Republicans should join with Democrats and independent health experts of all political philosophies who say to fix health care we have to cover everybody for essential benefits. What is very clear now on health care is if we do not cover everybody—and not for Cadillac coverage,

but for the essentials—our country will always have a health care system where those who have no coverage have their costs transferred to people who do have coverage. Every night in Montana, Oregon, and elsewhere in our country we have folks in hospital emergency rooms because they have not been able to get good outpatient health care, and the costs for folks in hospital emergency rooms who cannot pay get transferred to people who can pay. Many health care experts have theorized that perhaps up to 20 percent of the premium paid by people who have coverage is because of the costs for caring for those without coverage.

At this point in the debate, Democrats can say that Federal tax rules are inequitable with respect to health care and we can use private sector choices. My hope is Republicans will say to fix health care we have to have a system that covers everybody. Democrats and Republicans can come together to make that case.

There are other areas where we can find common ground right now between the political parties on health care. For example, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate think we ought to give a broad berth to the States to innovate in the health care area. Surely what works in the State of Montana may not necessarily work in Florida, Iowa, or New York. They say, "Let's give a broad berth to the States to show innovative approaches." Particularly Governor Schwarzenegger and Governor Romney deserve a lot of credit for being willing to lead at the State level. In my State, folks have some innovative ideas, as well. My guess is they do in Montana, elsewhere. We can take steps to promote them. I personally don't think the States can do it all because the States cannot solve problems they did not create. That is why we need to change the Federal health care tax rules. Because of the federal tax rules, the Federal Government is the big spender in health care. The States cannot do a lot about that. But surely, as part of the effort to bring Democrats and Republicans together, we can agree to make changes in the Federal health care tax care rules and we can agree to get everyone covered. We can also agree there is a lot of common ground between Democrats and Republicans, to give States the opportunity to innovate.

Democrats and Republicans, as we look at the possibility of a coalition, can join together so we have health care rather than sick care. We do not do a lot to promote wellness and prevention in this country. Medicare shows that better than anything else. Medicare Part A will pay checks for thousands and thousands of dollars of hospital expenses. Medicare Part B, on the other hand, the part for outpatient services, hardly does anything to reward prevention and wellness. You can not even get a break on your premium—the Part B premium, they call it—if you help to hold down your blood

pressure, cholesterol, stop smoking, and that sort of thing. Surely Democrats and Republicans can join hands to do more to promote prevention, and to have incentives for parents, for example, to get their kids involved in wellness.

This would not be some kind of national nanny program where we have the Federal Government saying, we are going to watch the chip bowl, but sensible prevention policies on which Democrats and Republicans can agree.

It also seems to me that Democrats and Republicans can join hands with respect to chronic health care and end of life health care. We know in the Medicare Program close to 5 percent of the people take about 50 percent of the health care dollars because those folks need chronic care and because of spending at the end of life. They need compassionate health care. We have not thought through policies that can bring both Democrats and Republicans together to deal with this area of health care where an enormous amount of the money is going.

For example, to get Medicare's hospice benefits, right now seniors have to choose whether they are going to get curative care or hospice care. That makes no sense at all. Why should a senior have to give up the prospects of getting a cure for their particular illness in order to get hospice benefit? Let's not pit the hospice benefit against curative care. Let's have Democrats and Republicans work together in order to make changes that expand the options available for older people.

The door is open right now. The State of the Union gave new visibility to the health care cause. Democrats, such as myself, who serve on the Committee on Finance, who will say these Federal health care tax rules are inequitable, can join hands with Republicans who will say we need to cover everybody and stop the cost shifting. The door is open right now if Democrats and Republicans will work together in a bipartisan basis.

Some people are saying it can't be done. They are saying there is too much polarization on health care and other big issues. Let's talk about it, once again, when there is a Presidential campaign. I send a clear message on that point, as well. Of course, this country can put off fixing health care once more, as it has done again and again for 60 years—going back to Harry Truman in the 81st Congress. It was 1945 when he began to talk about fixing health care. I guess one can argue, let's put it off again and have another Presidential campaign where people go back and forth on this issue. However, I submit that whoever the new President is in 2009—and I am very excited about our Democratic candidates—no matter who is the new President—should address this issue. However if, heaven forbid, there is a terrorist attack early in the new Administration, health care would get put