

which will happen now if your financial institution gives you any kind of a break on refinancing. You end up, with the value of the difference, paying taxes on it. We are going to make sure that doesn't happen. We are laser focused on getting the children's health insurance bill done, focusing on the right kind of trade policy that is fair for Americans—American workers and businesses. We are focused on strengthening our country, opportunity, valuing work, focusing on the things people care about every single day. When we get up in the morning and we are focused on what we want for our children and grandchildren, in order to be able to have a wonderful life, those are the things we have been bringing forward every single day. We will continue to do that.

We are getting things done for middle-class America. That is our focus. We are getting things done. But I have to say, in conclusion, that this has not been easy. We have had 52 filibusters—which is unheard of in the Senate—in less than a year—52 filibusters that require us to get 60 votes to stop, including, I might add, on the war. We have a majority of Members of this body who want to end this strategy on the war, who have been willing to say we want to put a deadline on what is happening there and refocus on what will truly keep us safe. We have a majority of Members—an overwhelming majority—who supported Senator WEBB's effort on troop readiness, to say to our troops who are being deployed, redeployed, and redeployed, we should follow the traditional policies of the military; if you have 12 or 15 months in combat in theater, you should get the same at home for rest, retraining, and the opportunity to see your family.

We have the majority of Members who have voted to change this policy in Iraq, get us out of a civil war, bring our troops home, to have troop readiness policies that make sense; but we have had 52 filibusters, which is too many, stopping us from changing this war.

This can go to 53, 54—we know it will keep going through the next year. But so will our focus. We are not going to stop. We are focused on getting things done. We are getting results for middle-class Americans, and we are going to continue to do that every single day.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

VETERANS SUICIDES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I wish to take a few minutes this morning to

talk about a subject that has tragically received far too little attention, and that is the number of veterans who take their lives because our Nation has failed them.

In a breakthrough report last night, CBS News revealed that far more veterans commit suicide than has previously been reported by the Defense Department and the VA. CBS, in fact, found that in 2005, at least 6,256 veterans took their lives. That is a rate that is twice that of other Americans.

CBS also found that veterans who are aged 20 to 24—those most likely to have served in the war on terror—are taking their lives at a rate that is estimated to be between two and four times higher than nonveterans in the same age group.

CBS should be commended for pushing past this administration's stonewalling and digging to get those numbers. The administration told the network that even the VA hadn't counted the nationwide numbers.

Those findings are sad, they are horrifying, and they should be preventable. Frankly, they are a reflection of something that many of my colleagues and I have said over and over. They reflect an administration that has failed to plan, failed to own up to its responsibilities, and failed even to complete statistics on the impact of this war on our veterans. From inadequate funding to a lack of mental health professionals to a failure to help our servicemembers make the transition from battlefield back to the homefront, this administration has dropped the ball.

The Defense Department and the VA, in particular, must own up to the true cost of this war and do a better job to ensure that our heroes are not lost when they come home.

We in Congress are taking steps to try to understand and care for the mental health wounds our troops are experiencing, but we clearly have to do more. If those numbers CBS is reporting do not wake up America, I fear nothing will. It is time for all of us to wake up to the reality and the consequences of this war. It is time to wake up our neighbors and our communities. It is time to wake up our employers and our schools and ask if we are doing enough for our veterans. It is time to wake up the White House and demand better care for our veterans, those men and women who have sacrificed for all of us.

As I stand here and speak today, a generation of servicemembers is falling through the cracks because of our failure to provide for them, and that is shameful.

Five years ago, when the President asked us to go to war in Iraq, he talked to us about weapons of mass destruction, he talked about al-Qaida, he talked about the mission to fight the war on terror, but he never talked about policing a civil war. He never talked about the stress of living months without a break and constantly waiting for the next attack. He

has never talked about, in my opinion, taking care of those men and women who have served us honorably when they finally come home.

In the past, our servicemembers were always given a rest, time to relax, time to regroup for battle. But we are today waging this war with an all-volunteer military. Some men and women are now serving their second, third, fourth, and now even fifth tour of duty. They are stretched to the breaking point. Too many of them are sustaining traumatic brain injuries. Too many are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. A third of our servicemembers are coming home with mental health conditions, and when they finally do come home, they struggle with the memories of battle. In their nightmares, they see their friends being blown apart. Some of them are turning to drugs and alcohol to numb themselves from the pain they are in.

The sad truth is that all too often the system we have set up to provide care for them does not help them, and we do not find out how much pain they are in until, obviously, it is too late.

I have taken the time to talk with these servicemembers. I have taken the time to talk with their families. I have heard their stories, and I wish to share a few with my colleagues today that illustrate, I believe, why it is so critical that we take action. These are young men and women. They are in their early twenties. They are young men and women who have served our country. They are someone's son, brother, sister, wife, best friend. Losing them is shameful.

Let me tell my colleagues about a young veteran named Justin Bailey. Justin joined the Marine Corps when he was 18, a few months after he graduated from high school. He was about to separate from the Marines in 2003 when his service was involuntarily extended because of the war in Iraq.

Justin went to Iraq. He was injured, and he returned home in pain and suffering from PTSD. He underwent several surgeries, and over a 2-year time period was prescribed a slew of medications, including hydrocone, xanax, and methadone, and he became addicted.

Justin slipped through the cracks. Despite seeking help for his addiction, he was allowed to self-medicate. Despite warnings from the FDA, he was prescribed drugs that were inconsistent with the treatment of PTSD. Justin tried to find help, but after 6 weeks in a VA program for addicts with PTSD, he never once saw a psychiatrist.

Justin's parents had assumed that he would get proper supervision in the VA program, but he didn't. This past January, Justin took too many pills and he died of an overdose.

The next young man I wish to tell my colleagues about is Joshua Omvig. Josh, I am told, was an eager soldier who dreamed of being a police officer. He insisted on graduating from high school early so he could join the military and begin his career. He was sent

to Iraq. But after one visit home his parents could see he was shaken. Ordinary things, they said, made him nervous, and he was having nightmares that made him shout out in his sleep.

When he completed his tour of duty, he was transitioned back into civilian life after only a couple of weeks. His parents saw he was not the same. They said he didn't say much about Iraq, but he did talk about hearing voices and seeing faces and he was very jittery.

His parents wanted him to get care, but he refused to see a doctor for fear it would hurt his career. Despite his parents' efforts to help him, Josh could not get over the trauma he experienced in Iraq. It got worse and his world slowly unraveled. Josh took his life at the age of 22.

Josh's and Justin's stories came to light because their families came here and asked Congress for help. As a result, we passed the Joshua Omvig Veteran Suicide Prevention Act this year because his family pushed and pushed for legislation that would require the military and the VA to better understand and treat psychological trauma for our servicemembers.

Are these extreme examples? Well, maybe, but they are not isolated examples, and the reality is many others are slipping unnoticed through the cracks today.

It would be one thing if we had no idea what the mental health strains are for our veterans, but that is not the case. We have seen servicemembers come home with mental wounds in every military conflict in which we have ever been involved.

When I was a young college student in the late sixties, I volunteered at the Seattle VA. I was assigned to the psychiatric ward. I worked with Vietnam veterans who were my age at the time coming home from Vietnam. I saw what was in their eyes. For some, it was a blank stare. For many, it was anger. For a lot, it was talking and talking and talking about what they had been through.

There was no word called post-traumatic stress syndrome when I worked at the VA with those Vietnam veterans. But we know now the strains of war and what it causes, and we should be doing so much more for the thousands and thousands of young men and women who are coming home today and feeling lost and alone in their homes and communities because no one has reached out to help them.

Our understanding of the impact that warfare has on the minds of servicemembers has evolved since I worked at the VA as a young student many years ago. One thing we know is that the mental wound suffered by men and women in uniform can be as devastating as their physical injuries. So it is long past time that the military knock down the stigma associated with mental health care. It is long past time that the military provide the care our veterans desperately need and deserve and back it up with adequate funding.

We must acknowledge that this is a cost of war we cannot ignore.

What can we do to prevent more stories such as Josh and Justin? We have to better understand the trauma our troops have experienced. The Joshua Omvig Act we passed takes steps to do that, but it is so clear we have more to do. We need more mental health care clinics, and we need more providers. We need the VA to be proactive. We need them to reach out to these veterans who are not enrolled in the VA system and who are at risk for suicide. And we in Congress have to provide the money to fully fund their care.

The Senate has passed a bill that will increase funding for veterans by almost \$4 billion over what the President asked. I hope we can get those improvements to our veterans as quickly as possible. We have to finally provide a seamless transition for our servicemembers when they come home, and that starts with making sure that veterans can get their disability benefits without having to fight through the system. It is unconscionable to me that our heroes return home from the battlefield today only to have to fight a bureaucracy to get the benefits they were promised.

Veterans Day was a few days ago. Many of us went home and took part in ceremonies to thank our servicemembers for securing our safety and our freedom—well-deserved. In my own speech in Kitsap County, at home in Washington State, I said I believe that Veterans Day should not be just a day for ceremony. It should be a day to consider whether there is something more we can do for our veterans. And what are the implications for not doing enough? As the "CBS News" report found, too often the implications are that many veterans are stretched to the breaking point. That is a tragedy. We have to wake up to the reality that we have already lost too many.

Ours is a great Nation. No matter how any of us feel about this current conflict, we know our troops are serving us honorably. But we owe them so much more than we have given them so far. We can do better. We must do better. I ask anyone who is listening to me this morning, anyone who watched the CBS report and saw those families talk about the tragedy of losing a son or a daughter to suicide after they had come home from this war, to reach out and say: Am I doing enough? Do I know of a family who is suffering? Do I know of someone at my child's school whose parent has come home? Do I know an employee who has come home from Iraq? Have I reached out myself and said: I am here for you if you need me?

All of us can do more. Congress needs to act and do more as well. We are a great nation. We should do much better.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

FARM, NUTRITION, AND BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2419, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2419) to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Harkin amendment No. 3500, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid (for Dorgan-Grassley) amendment No. 3508 (to amendment No. 3500), to strengthen payment limitations and direct the savings to increased funding for certain programs.

Reid amendment No. 3509 (to amendment No. 3508), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3510 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 3500), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3511 (to Amendment No. 3510), to change the enactment date.

Motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, with instructions to report back forthwith, with Reid amendment No. 3512.

Reid amendment No. 3512 (to the instructions of the motion to commit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, with instructions), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3513 (to the instructions of the motion to recommit), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3514 (to amendment No. 3513), to change the enactment date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I see my friend, Senator CHAMBLISS, is on the floor. I think we are both very frustrated. I don't think, I know we are both very frustrated that we are stymied on this farm bill. We are not moving anywhere. But in hopes that maybe we can get something moving, I am going to propound some unanimous consent requests to see if we can't break out and move ahead.

So I inquire of my colleague, Senator CHAMBLISS, as to whether we can agree to a time limitation for debate with respect to the pending Dorgan-Grassley amendment. Therefore, I ask unanimous consent that there be 60 minutes of debate prior to a vote in relation to the Dorgan amendment No. 3508, with the time equally divided and controlled in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate vote in relation to the amendment; that no second-degree amendment be in order prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? The Senator from Georgia.