

On September 16, 2005, Sergeant Deckard was driving an M1A1 Abrams tank during patrol operations in Baghdad when an improvised explosive device set by terrorists detonated near another tank in his patrol, killing two soldiers and wounding two others.

Sergeant Deckard heroically left the shelter—left the shelter—of his M1A1 Abrams to help tend to his fallen and wounded comrades. Shortly after returning to his own tank, a second device exploded, this time tragically taking Sergeant Deckard's life.

For his courage and bravery as a soldier, Sergeant Deckard received numerous medals and awards, including the Bronze Star Medal and two Purple Hearts. His family saw him laid to rest in Harlan, KY, with full military honors.

Sergeant Deckard—Matt to his family and friends—was in that tank because he wanted to be there. More specifically, he wanted to follow in the footsteps of his stepfather, Glenn Gill, a retired U.S. Army staff sergeant and former tanker himself.

Matt was “learning about the M1 tank before he ever went into the Army,” Mr. Gill says.

When the M1 Abrams tank was still new in the early 1980s, Mr. Gill would receive the tank's training manuals. Young Matt often borrowed them to read. He borrowed them so often that when Mr. Gill couldn't find one of his manuals, he knew right where to look.

Matt grew up in Elizabethtown, and he also spent several years of his childhood at Fort Knox, KY, where his stepfather was stationed. A “normal country boy,” as his stepfather describes him, he grew up hunting, fishing and learning to work on cars.

Matt graduated from Elizabethtown High School in 1994, and in December of that year married his high school sweetheart, Angela. Then in January 1995, Matt fulfilled his lifelong goal and joined the U.S. Army.

Matt took his training at Fort Knox, did a tour of duty in South Korea, and was assigned to the 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, GA.

Matt and Angela were blessed with three children, and Matt's family was the pride of his life. Daughter Makayla was his “princess,” elder son Matthew Noah his “little man,” and younger son Austin the baby of the family. Matt loved to take his kids fishing or to the beach.

Family came first whenever Matt had time away from work. “We had date nights, just me and him,” says his wife, Angela. “We had movie nights with the kids. When he came home for R&R, or just any time he came home from work, he would just jump for joy that they were right there with him. It made his night, every night.”

Matt was deployed to Iraq twice. The first time, he was originally sent to Kuwait in November 2002, later moving into Iraq and staying there until Au-

gust 2003. He was among the first American troops to enter Baghdad in the liberation of that country from dictatorship in 2003.

Matt's second Iraq deployment began in January 2005. An experienced soldier with 10 years of service, he spent his time where he had always wanted to—around tanks. He served as a driver, gunner, and loader.

“Matt was in the Army as a career soldier and to make a better life for his family,” Mr. Gill says. “Definitely, he loved it. . . . That was his ambition.”

The family he left behind is in my thoughts and prayers today as I recount Matt's story. I wish to recognize his wife, Angela, his mother and stepfather, Cassie and Glenn Gill, his daughter, Makayla, his sons, Matthew Noah and Austin, his brother, Michael Deckard, his sister, Michelle Best, and other beloved family members and friends.

Today, in the Elizabethtown Memorial Gardens cemetery in Elizabethtown, KY, there is a monument to Sergeant Deckard. His family designed it, had it built, and with help from friends, paid for it to be erected in tribute to their lost husband, son, brother, and father.

Matt's family held a dedication ceremony for this monument on February 3 of this year. A color guard team from Fort Knox raised the flags, and the local American Legion post performed the wreath-laying ceremony.

Flying underneath the American flag, Matt's stepfather, Glenn, has raised the Armed Forces Memorial Tribute flag, so we will never forget the brave men and women in uniform who have given their lives for this Nation.

On the monument, Matt's face is boldly etched into a slab of black granite. Next to that perches a bronze eagle. Underneath the eagle are the words, “Freedom is not free.”

The loss of Sergeant Deckard proves that true. His family and friends all have paid a very heavy price.

Nothing we can say here today can ease their terrible loss. But we can remind them that Matt lived to fulfill—in the words of his stepfather, whose career path he followed—his life's ambition.

And we can reassure them that America will forever honor and remember SGT Matthew L. Deckard's sacrifice.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to a period of morning business for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to

10 minutes, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. FEINGOLD, recognized first for 15 minutes and with Republicans controlling the next 30 minutes, and the majority controlling the final 15 minutes.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

IRAQ

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to notify me when I have 1 minute left on my time, and I thank the Chair; and I, of course, join the Republican leader in paying tribute to all the members of our Armed Forces, those who continue to serve, those who have completed their service, and particularly those whom we have lost and their families.

But the Senate still needs to address Iraq. The American people voted a year ago to end the war and we haven't followed through. We need to address this issue and to end this misguided war now, before more Americans are injured and killed.

The bridge fund passed yesterday by the House isn't good enough. The goal for redeployment doesn't cut it. We need a binding deadline, which means we need to pass the Feingold-Reid bill.

Despite recent reports of a downturn in violence in Iraq, violence remains at unacceptable levels. 2007 has already been declared the bloodiest year since the war in Iraq started, and that is with almost 2 months still to go. Those counts don't bring in the number of Iraqis killed. On a relatively quiet day earlier this week, with no reported coalition tragedies, at least 33 Iraqis were killed and an equal number wounded in violence around the country. We can't say violence is down when violence around the country remains so high, when so many Americans are being killed and when so many Iraqis are afraid to walk the streets.

The underlying reality is we are working with both sides of the Iraqi civil war and deepening our dependence on former insurgents and militia-infiltrated security forces.

Meanwhile, the situation in the North and South is precarious at best. Unrest in these areas threatens the security of our supply lines.

The most recent National Intelligence Estimate largely attributed the decline in violence—particularly in Baghdad—to population displacements. Baghdad is now predominantly Shi'ite. While the purpose of the surge was to foster reconciliation, the reality is that the number of Iraqis displaced by the conflict doubled since the start of the surge, adding to millions already pushed out of their homes from 2003 to 2006.

Meanwhile, we have put our troops outside the forward operating bases in more dangerous territory for the purpose of policing the Iraqi civil war. When they are out in those joint security stations, they have to spend half

their time watching their backs because our “allies” are former Sunni insurgents and Iraqi Security Forces, neither of whom can be trusted.

We continue to supposedly “train” Iraqi Security Forces despite the fact that we finished training over 300,000 of them over a year ago. Of course, we may well be simply contributing to the Iraqi civil war by “training” and arming forces that are infiltrated by militias. We can’t even account for the guns we have given them.

The “al Anbar” strategy—signing cease fires I with insurgents who were attacking our guys not too long ago—does not have the support of the Iraqi government. It is a poor substitute for meaningful reconciliation, which supposedly the surge is going to foster. Now the administration is shifting the goal posts and talking about “bottom-up” reconciliation.

We have seen the levels of violence in Iraq shift before—this is nothing new. If my colleagues think the surge is working and violence is down—let’s get out while the getting is good. Without meaningful reconciliation, the violence will spike up again, that’s for sure. So let’s not wait around for that to happen.

Many U.S. troops currently in Iraq are now in their second or third tours of duty. Approximately 95 percent of the Army National Guard’s combat battalions and special operations units have been mobilized since 9/11.

Mr. President, 1.4 million Americans have served in Iraq, and over 400,000 have served multiple tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly 4,000 have been killed in Iraq and over 27,000 have been wounded.

The Army cannot maintain its current pace of operations in Iraq without seriously damaging the military. Young officers are leaving the service at an alarming rate.

Readiness levels for the Army are at lows not seen since Vietnam. Every active Army brigade currently not deployed is unprepared to perform its wartime mission.

More than two-thirds of active duty Army brigades are unready for missions because of manpower and equipment shortages—most of which can be attributed to Iraq.

There are insufficient Reserves to respond to additional conflicts or crises around the world, of which there are, of course, potentially many.

This failure to prioritize correctly has left vital missions unattended. Natural disaster response, U.S. border security, and international efforts to combat al Qaida are all suffering due to the strain on military forces caused by poor strategy and failed leadership in Iraq.

Thousands of our troops have returned home with invisible wounds; such as PTSD and TBI—traumatic brain injury, which will have a long-term impact on veterans and their families. These invisible wounds are not counted in the casualty numbers, but

we will be struggling with them for a generation or more.

The cost of the War? America has been in Iraq longer than it was in World War II.

Secretary Rumsfeld said the war would cost less than \$50 billion. The administration has now requested over \$600 billion for the war.

If we don’t change course in Iraq, the cost of the war is likely to balloon to \$3.5 trillion.

If we keep a “Korea-like presence” in Iraq, as Secretary Gates has predicted, this means we will have 55,000 troops in Iraq by 2013—a level that remains constant until 2017. And while this drop would certainly be cheaper, it would still mean an additional \$690 billion. CBO has estimated that, just paying the interest on the money we have borrowed to pay for the war to date, will cost another \$415 billion.

We are currently spending nearly \$9 billion a month in Iraq. In 3 months in Iraq, we spend nearly the same amount that we spend on foreign relations and aid worldwide in 1 year.

The fiscal year total spending of the war—\$150 billion—is greater than the combination of spending on our national transportation infrastructure, health research, customs and border protection, higher education assistance, environmental protection, Head Start, and the CHIP program. Our national programs are being neglected because of this disastrous war and future generations will bear the brunt of our misguided policy.

The costs are only rising. We spent twice as much this year in Iraq as we did in 2004.

The President continues to mislead the country about al-Qaida and Iraq. Contrary to the President’s assertions, Pakistan and Afghanistan, not Iraq, are the key theater in this global conflict. While the administration has focused on Iraq, al-Qaida has reconstituted itself along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

The President also presents a false choice between fighting al-Qaida in Iraq and doing nothing. Every single redeployment proposal includes the option of targeted operations against al-Qaida within Iraq. The difference is that the President seems to think that 160,000 or 180,000 troops, sent to Iraq for an entirely different purpose, need to stay.

We cannot ignore the rest of the world to focus solely on Iraq. Al-Qaida is and will continue to be a global terrorist organization with dangerous affiliates around the world. Contrary to what the administration has implied, al-Qaida is not abandoning its efforts to fight us globally so that it can fight us in Iraq. That is absurd.

We need a robust military presence and effective reconstruction program in Afghanistan. We need to build strong partnerships where AQ and its affiliates are operating—across North Africa, in Southeast Asia, and along the border between Afghanistan and

Pakistan. And we need to address the root causes of the terrorist threat, not just rely on military power to get the job done.

For example, right now, Iran’s strategic position continues to improve and the situation on the Turkish border is explosive. We are bogged down in Iraq and exposed to attack from all sides, and our ability to promote regional stability from a position of strength is undermined.

Maintaining a huge, open-ended presence is igniting tensions in the region, and playing into the hands of the Iranian regime. Iran is able to expand their influence while we take the hits, in terms of casualties and finances. Our open-ended presence in Iraq is a blessing for Iran because it provides them with a buffer and mitigates any potential conflict between those two countries. It also removes any incentive for Iran to engage in a constructive manner.

Maintaining a significant U.S. troop presence in Iraq is undermining our ability to deter Iran as it increases its influence in Iraq, becomes bolder in its nuclear aspirations, and continues to support Hezbollah.

The American people want us out of Iraq. The administration’s policy is clearly untenable. The American people know that, which is why they voted the way they did in November. More than 60 percent of Americans are in favor of a phased withdrawal. They do not want to pass this problem off to another President, and another Congress. And they sure don’t want another American servicemember to die, or lose a limb, while elected representatives put their own political comfort over the wishes of their constituents.

The Feingold-Reid amendment requires the President to safely redeploy U.S. troops from Iraq by June 30, 2008. At that point, funding for military operations in Iraq is terminated, with narrow exceptions for targeted operations against al-Qaida and its affiliates; providing security for U.S. Government personnel and infrastructure; and training Iraqis.

We have narrowed the training exception to prevent training of Iraqi Security Forces—ISF—who took part in sectarian violence or attacks against U.S. troops. The exception also prohibits U.S. troops training Iraqis from being embedded with or taking part in combat operations with the ISF. These changes are intended to address concerns about the performance of the ISF—which has been infiltrated by Shia militias and accused of attacks upon U.S. troops—and to make sure that “training” is not used as a loophole to allow substantial numbers of U.S. troops to remain in Iraq for combat purposes.

The other two exceptions are appropriately narrow: the counterterrorism exception applies to operations against al-Qaida and affiliated international terrorist organizations, while force protection applies to protecting U.S.

Government personnel and infrastructure.

The time has come for the Senate to seriously engage on this issue. The costs and the tragedy of this war are plainly unacceptable and contrary to the will of the American people.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST—S. 1077

Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that S. 1077 be discharged from the Foreign Relations Committee, be placed on the calendar, and at a time to be determined by the majority leader following consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate may proceed to consideration of S. 1077 and it be considered under the following limitations: that the only amendment in order be a Feingold-Reid amendment which is the text of the amendment offered on the DOD authorization measure; that there be a total time limitation of 2 hours of debate on the bill and the amendment, with the time divided and controlled in the usual form, and upon the use of that time the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the amendment; that upon disposition of the amendment, the bill, as amended, if amended, be read a third time and the Senate then proceed to vote on passage of the bill, without further intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. BOND. I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I am, of course, disappointed Republicans have again blocked us from debating and voting on legislation to end the war in Iraq. S. 1077 is the bill I introduced with the majority leader, HARRY REID, and eight other Senators earlier this year to safely redeploy troops from Iraq. The substitute amendment is the amendment we offered to the Defense authorization bill in September. It is, in effect, just a tweaked version of S. 1077. The majority leader joins me in these efforts.

There is simply no good reason to block a vote on this important bill. I assure my colleagues I am not going to go away, and this issue will not go away either, much as they might prefer it. Until Congress brings a halt to the President's open-ended, misguided war in Iraq, we will have debates and votes on this issue again and again and again.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, here we go again. We have had an effort to take another vote on whether we should pull out of Iraq. Apparently, it is based on public opinion polls. Some think it would be popular, and certainly the moveon.org and Code Pink wing of the majority party would be very happy if we could have crammed down a measure to make a substantial change in our policy without even allowing an

amendment. It is absolutely unacceptable on its face.

I object not only on behalf of myself and many of my colleagues but for the brave men and women from America who volunteered to go into harm's way for our security and to promote security in the world. Retreat and defeat may be politically popular with some, but this kind of poison pill does great injustice to what our American volunteers have done. From the people on the ground, when we first started considering these retreat-and-defeat measures, I heard a very heartfelt plea: We have made too many contributions and made too many sacrifices to see it all go for naught because of political maneuvering on Capitol Hill. That comes from people who have seen their comrades fall in battle.

This year alone, the Democrats have attempted at least nine times to force the President to change the military strategy and tactics in Iraq, on the misbegotten notion that somehow we, in this comfortable setting of Congress, can make better military, tactical, and strategic decisions than our commanders on the ground. I find that deplorable.

It used to be the tradition of this body, of America, that we supported our troops when they were going in harm's way. Now some are doing everything possible to undermine their efforts. Nine times they have tried to change the policy. After 77 of us voted to send troops into Iraq because we knew it was a dangerous place, we found out—by the Iraq Survey Group—that it was even more dangerous.

Make no mistake, while some in this body may not think Iraq is important, two people whose activities I try to follow fairly closely in intelligence, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, his No. 2 man, think Iraq should be the headquarters of their caliphate, the headquarters of their vicious terrorist empire that wants to subjugate the region and threaten the United States.

Now, however, there is a key difference from earlier because we are seeing dramatic improvements in the security situation in Iraq, in particular in Al Anbar Province, which a year ago was a deadly place, a deadly place into which American troops could only go under heavy fire.

My son and several thousand marines are coming home because they have succeeded. Yes, there is a strategy for drawing down our troops. The President has announced it. It is called "return on success." We bring the troops back when they have succeeded in their mission.

In Iraq, in Al Anbar, I have heard from people who are imbedded with Iraqi security forces that times have changed. There now are Iraqi citizen groups, citizen watch groups, who look for IEDs, who will identify foreign terrorists—al-Qaida types—who come into the area, and who will point out factories designed to build explosive vehi-

cles. They turn that over to the Iraqi police in the area, and they clean it up. I have heard from a guy on the ground who is responsible for maintaining stability and security from the terrorists that the marines were no longer needed. So they are coming back. This is being replicated in places throughout Iraq.

Have we finished? We have not finished the job. There are still other areas, but it means we are succeeding. Iraqis are going about their normal business. Unfortunately for our fighting men and women and the Iraqi people who put their trust in us to see this mission through, too rarely are their successes being reported. They are ignored, although the New York Times, on the back page, I think, this past weekend, pointed out that we had routed al-Qaida in Iraq. Surprise. That wasn't on the front page, did not make headlines, because it has indicated a major change. Have you heard much about the success of General Petraeus and the counterinsurgency strategy after he testified on Capitol Hill? If you are like most Americans, the answer is you have heard very little, because it has fundamentally changed. While the media has always been quick to report bombings and failures in Iraq, it is simply not providing all of the good news.

They have been remarkably successful in 2007 in reducing violence. Yes, with the surge, with the new strategy, there was violence. But, according to General Odierno, the operational commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, enemy attacks are now at their lowest level since January 2006 and continue to drop. There has been a 60-percent decrease in IED attacks.

The reduction in violence is partly as a result of the presence of additional American forces and their adoption of the sound counterinsurgency strategy—go in and clear an area, work with the Iraqi security forces, and help them build an economy, a neighborhood, a safe place. It is also because the leaders on the ground in Iraq, the Sunni sheiks, have said—they have seen what continued terrorist attacks do to their country, to their people. The most frequent victims are Iraqis, good Muslim Iraqis who are being killed by the terrorists. They want to cooperate with us, and they are building, from the ground up, a stable, reliable, peaceful control over the area with the Iraqi security forces. Yes, some of them fought against us in the past, but they are now on our side because we are on their side and we are helping them. And when they take over, we will move back.

Now, I am fully aware of and concerned about the lack of political reconciliation. But, again, from boots on the ground, I hear: How do you expect them to establish a perfect democracy when this country is still not secure? Our goal in Iraq must be to work with the Iraqis, the Iraqi security forces, and responsible leaders to establish relative peace and security in the area.

What would happen if we withdrew precipitously for a political goal? We learned in an open hearing of the Intelligence Committee in January that if we pull out before we have stabilized this area and left in place Iraqi security forces, there would be chaos, and three bad things would happen: No. 1, there would be greatly increased violence among Sunni and Shia; there would likely be intervention by other states coming into Iraq to protect their coreligionists, potentially a civil war spreading into a region-wide war in a vital security and energy part of the world; but most dangerous for United States, and this is something my colleagues who want to cut and run seem to refuse to acknowledge, is that al-Qaida would be able to establish a safe haven. Yes, they have been driven off to the hills, the mountainous regions somewhere in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but they cannot mobilize and exercise their command and control. If they had a place for command and control, had access to the oil riches of Iraq to fund their deeds, we would be significantly at greater risk to weapons of mass destruction attacks by terrorist groups funded and supported by al-Qaida.

We need to be realistic in defining what reconciliation is. It is a long process. To this day, for example, not all outstanding political tensions have been reconciled in Northern Ireland, in Bosnia, or Kosovo. Yet the civil wars and the terrorist campaigns that once threatened to engulf those areas have ended, and competing factions are pursuing their agendas primarily by peaceful political means.

Our men and women in uniform are fighting in Iraq to bring violence under control, to destroy al-Qaida, to drive out destabilizing Iranian meddling, and to establish a relatively stable and secure structure in Iraq, and they are making progress to those goals.

Getting a perfect democracy—we thought we had a perfect Jeffersonian democracy; then we had to have a Lincolnian republic after the Civil War. We are continuing to see the democracy. While it is the best of all the other bad situations, it is not perfect and does not work in a clear upward path; it takes time. And now we are seeing the questions being worked out at the local level on revenue sharing, oil revenue sharing. But to push a retreat-and-defeat, a delay-and-deny battle for the funds for our troops on the ground is unthinkable. This unanimous consent agreement to which I objected would be the ultimate cut and run: declare defeat, and hope to be rewarded in 2008 at the polls—a very regrettable effort by our colleagues on the other side.

The 2008 Defense appropriations bill recently passed by Congress includes no funding for our current operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the global war on terror. For 3 years prior to this, we included emergency funding for the regular Defense appropriations bill to

cover the cost of military operations until a full supplemental could be adopted. We are now seeing, coming over from the House, a pittance of what is needed, encapsulated in all kinds of restrictions that tie the hands of the troops on the ground and put unreasonable restrictions on them that are likely to cause much greater danger to American personnel, military and civilian, over there. What we need to provide—and I hope we will be able to put an alternative emergency funding bill on the floor—are funds for force protection initiatives, body armor, helmets, ballistic eye protection, even knee and elbow pads, flares, and armor. The 2008 Defense spending bill did include funding for MRAPs, but why did the Democrats insist on omitting other critical items?

Now that DOD will be forced to continue robbing Peter to pay Paul in order to fund operations, it has a tremendously negative impact, not only on the way we conduct the war but how the Department of Defense operates. Important equipment reset and other procurement programs have to be slowed down. It will impact the availability of equipment, including critical equipment for the National Guard needed to respond to domestic emergencies. Without this funding, the Pentagon is forced to divert money from their regular accounts to fund overseas operations, about \$13 billion a month.

I have a letter that has just been sent by Gordon England. He has pointed out what this would mean to the Defense Department. It means, among other things, the Deputy Secretary of Defense said, they will have no choice but to deplete appropriations accounts, and it will result in a profoundly negative impact on the defense civilian working force, depot maintenance, base operations, and training activities, and within a few weeks they will be required by law to issue notices of termination to civilian employees.

In addition, a lack of any funding for the Iraqi security forces and the Afghanistan national security forces directly undermines the ability of the United States to continue training and equipping Iraqi and Afghanistan troops who are needed to take over. This makes absolutely no sense in a time of war. We deny the needed funding that will keep our troops—not only keep the troops in the field but support those who are working to assure that we can turn over the responsibility to them.

This is absolutely the wrong message to send to our deployed troops. We must provide emergency funding without political timetables to win votes at home but undermine our troops.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter from Deputy Secretary of Defense England to House Defense Subcommittee chairman JOHN MURTHA and an article in today's Washington Times called "War Funds Under Attack."

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE,
Washington, DC, November 8, 2007.

Hon. JOHN MURTHA,

Chairman, Subcommittee on Defense, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN. I am deeply concerned that the Fiscal Year 2008 Appropriations Conference Report currently under consideration does not provide necessary funding for military operations and will result in having to shut down significant portions of the Defense Department by early next year. Last week, Secretary Gates reiterated the Department's request that Congress pass the Fiscal Year 2008 Defense budget request promptly and in its entirety, including for Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) operations. Lacking complete funding, the Department requested that sufficient funds be provided to continue global operations and to allow equipment reset.

Without this critical funding, the Department will have no choice but to deplete key appropriations accounts by early next year. In particular, the Army's Operation and Maintenance account will be completely exhausted in mid-to-late-January, and the limited general transfer authority available can only provide three additional weeks of relief. This situation will result in a profoundly negative impact on the defense civilian workforce, depot maintenance, base operations, and training activities. Specifically, the Department would have to begin notifications as early as next month to properly carry out the resultant closure of military facilities, furloughing of civilian workers and deferral of contract activity.

In addition, the lack of any funding for the Iraqi Security Forces and the Afghanistan National Security Forces directly undermines the United States' ability to continue training and equipping Iraqi and Afghani security forces, thereby lengthening the time until they can assume full security responsibilities. Further, the conference report provides only \$120 million for the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), which is a small fraction of what is required to sustain ongoing efforts to protect our forces against this deadly threat.

I urge you to take whatever steps are necessary to promptly pass legislation that properly supports and sustains our troops in the field. The successes they have achieved in recent months will be short lived without appropriate resources to continue their good work. I ask that you provide them complete and unencumbered GWOT funding as soon as possible.

GORDON ENGLAND.

[From the Washington Times, Nov. 15, 2007]

WAR FUNDS UNDER ATTACK

(By S.A. Miller and Sara A. Carter)

The Pentagon yesterday warned that money was already running out for combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as congressional Democrats dismissed recent security gains and threatened to stall emergency war funds.

"The Army is in a particularly precarious situation," Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said. "Absent extraordinary measures, it would run out of money by mid-February—so quick congressional action is needed as quickly as possible."

The Defense Department had to start shuffling funds to cover war costs Tuesday after the president signed the department's \$471 billion spending bill that did not include war funds but allowed account transfers, he said.

Nevertheless, House Democrats passed a \$50 billion war-spending bill last night with a 218-203 vote that President Bush promises to veto because it mandates a U.S. pullout from Iraq start immediately with a goal of a nearly complete withdrawal by December 2008.

The bill mimics Democrats' previous challenges to Iraq policy and likely will stall emergency funds, which would pay for about three months of warfare while lawmakers debate the rest of the \$196.4 billion war-funds request for 2008.

The top Democrats—House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada—say they will withhold troop funds for at least the rest of the year if Mr. Bush does not accept the pull-out timetable.

"There is a growing sense within our caucus that it is time to play hardball," said Rep. Jim McGovern, Massachusetts Democrat and outspoken war critic. "This is George Bush's war. He started it. He's got to finish it."

White House press secretary Dana Perino said Democrats used the pullout bill "for political posturing and to appease radical groups."

"Once again, the Democratic leadership is starting this debate with a flawed strategy, including a withdrawal date for Iraq despite the gains our military has made over the past year, despite having dozens of similar votes in the past that have failed and despite their pledge to support the troops," she said.

"The president put forward this funding request based on the recommendation of our commanders in the field," Mrs. Perino said. "The Democrats believe that these votes will somehow punish the president, but it actually punishes the troops."

House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer, Maryland Democrat, said recent progress in Iraq—a sharp decline in U.S. casualties, fewer Iraqi civilian deaths and fewer mortar rocket attacks and "indirect fire" attacks—were temporary improvements from the troop surge this summer.

"What has not happened is what the administration predicted would happen, [that] an environment would be created where political reconciliation would occur," Mr. Hoyer told reporters on Capitol Hill.

"Violence is down. I am happy that violence is down," he said. "What is not up is, this year, we've lost more people than any other year in this war. This year, more refugees were created than any other year in this war."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Oklahoma.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I wanted to spend a few moments this morning talking about the business as usual in Washington.

As a nearly 60-year-old male baby boomer, I believe we face some of the most serious challenges we have ever faced as a nation, and certainly in my lifetime. The challenges are going to continue to grow unless Congress changes how it works, how it does business, and starts setting priorities. The last election was about change. We heard a lot of great promises, and I think they were well-intentioned. But let's look at what has happened.

After the last election, we were told we would have an earmark moratorium until we had a real reform process that was in place. We do not have a reform process; we have a faint claim for a reform process. Instead, we have seen thousands—the average is 2,000 earmarks per bill. The American people were told that the earmark process

would be more transparent. Yet we have seen Congress backtrack on that at every opportunity.

The earmark reform has really been a triumph of "business as usual." The original Senate version of S. 1 required Senators to publicly disclose the following within 48 hours of the committee receiving the information: the earmark recipient, the earmark's purpose, certification that neither they nor their spouse would directly benefit from the earmark. Now, what is in the real language? The real language was secretly changed. It no longer requires public disclosure of who is going to get the earmark or the earmark's purpose. That is the Senate's rules.

You know, there is a foundational principle; that is, you cannot have accountability in anything unless you have transparency. What we have is obfuscation of transparency.

We don't want the American people to see who is going to get an earmark or what its purpose is. Thankfully, we passed the transparency and accountability act that starts this January so the American people are going to see it anyway, except they are going to unfortunately have to see it after the fact.

Yesterday my office learned of another attack against transparency. The just-released conference report for the Transportation-HUD spending bill contains an earmark provision that attempts to prohibit the White House from releasing publicly its budget justifications. When they send up their budget, they send the reasons for why they want that money spent in certain ways. I worked last year to make sure that OMB agreed that the American people were entitled to see the justification for why they would want to spend money in certain areas. The appropriations process doesn't want that to be public. Why should it not be public? Why should we not want to know why the administration wants to spend certain money in certain ways and their reasoning and justification?

There is a reason why this was added. This was added so the authorizing committees won't have the same information the appropriations committees have. We are not supposed to be appropriating anything that isn't authorized, yet we continue to do so. This is a commonsense approach to make transparent to the American public as well as the rest of the Members of this body the justification and reasoning of the administration.

I agree, the broken promises we have seen have contributed to the 11-percent favorability rating of Congress. It isn't a Republican or Democratic issue. No Americans want their leaders to say one thing and then do another. The American people are tired of hearing the same defenses of the earmark favor factor. They didn't work when Republicans were in control, and they will not work today.

Let's talk about that for a minute. The earmark system exists to serve

politicians, not local communities. Members earmark funds rather than advocate for grants because they want the political credit for spending money. Earmarks oftentimes are worthwhile, but the system under which they are propagated is not. Earmarks are the gateway drug to overspending, one of the No. 1 issues for which the American people have a problem with Congress. Our problem is, we refuse to make the tough choices families have to make every day, every week within their own budgets. Consequently, we now have this last week surpassed \$9 trillion on the debt. We have \$79 trillion worth of unfunded liability which is going to cause us to break the chain of heritage of this country. That heritage is one of sacrifice where one generation works hard, makes sacrifices to create at least the same or hopefully better opportunities for those generations to come.

We have heard complaints that it is illegitimate to single out or strike an earmark with an amendment. It is not our money. It is the American people's money. What is scandalous is how few of the special interest projects are ever challenged on the floor. Only one-tenth of 1 percent of the more than 60,000 earmarks passed since 1998 have ever received a vote. Where is the accountability with that? Where is the transparency?

Finally, we hear Senators complain that it is partisan to strike individual earmarks. I can't speak for anyone else, but I have been going after this process for a decade. No one has gone after more Republican earmarks than I. Plus, if you don't like my amendments, I ask the body to offer some of their own. I would appreciate the help. In spite of a lot of grand talk about earmark reform, we haven't seen anyone on the other side of the aisle attempt to strike an individual earmark. Does that mean all these projects are worthwhile? Is there not a single earmark in the 32,000 requests this year that should not be debated on the floor of the Senate?

The conference report on the Transportation-HUD bill includes a number of questionable earmarks, some of which I will try to eliminate when the bill comes through the Senate.

We developed a new rule that one can't earmark in conference. Yet in the new conference report on the Transportation-HUD bill, 18 new earmarks were air dropped, new earmarks violating the rules the Senate just set up. We can't help ourselves. Such earmarks as an international resource center, the Coffeyville Community Enhancement Foundation, Minnehaha Park development, buses, upgrades to airports, may be good things to do, but are they good things to do when the projected budget deficit is around \$300 billion? Are these the priorities we should have?

I won't spend a whole lot more time on this issue today, but I can tell my colleagues that the American people