

House that emphasized Member-to-Member contacts and outreach that are so important in building relationships, election to the Senate in 1988, Senate majority leader in 1996, and then Republican whip earlier this year. We don't want to lament the loss of a tremendous asset, but we need to always remember to celebrate those accomplishments, learn from them.

I learned that if there was a problem that needed to be resolved, you could go to TRENT to resolve it. When there was a compromise that needed to be brokered, TRENT could figure out how to make that happen.

I learned that when there was a shortage of tomatoes at the Lott household, TRENT knew he could just go a couple doors down the street and find some tomatoes in a friendly neighbor's yard. My husband and I have been neighbors with TRENT and Tricia these past 5 years. As neighbors, we share a lot of things. We share a lot of leaves. He blows the leaves down the sidewalk to my house, and my husband will blow the leaves back down to his house—good, friendly neighbors. I have always appreciated that.

Truly, whether it is the quick conversation between Members during votes or whether it is the closed-door sitdown when he comes to the office and says: LISA, I want to talk to you about this, TRENT knows the pulse of the Senate.

I would watch him on the floor. He was like a butterfly. He would come over and alight next to somebody, have a quick conversation, a talk, and then he would move over to another area and do the same thing, kind of going from person to person, always working but always friendly and always working to find a path forward. His ability to develop those relationships and work out a deal to everyone's satisfaction is a skill I certainly look to as a model for how the Senate should operate.

It is with great fondness that I wish my friend, my colleague, my neighbor well in his future endeavors.

I wish him and Tricia well and truly love as they embark on their next adventure. We do know there will be adventures. I thank him for his friendship, his service to this Nation and to this institution.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1498

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of Calendar No. 455, S. 1498; that the committee-reported amendments be considered and agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time, passed, and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, without further intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, on behalf of Senator COBURN, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mrs. BOXER. Madam President, the Captive Primate Safety Act, S. 1498, is an important, bipartisan bill promoting the humane treatment of animals and protecting public health and safety from the considerable risks associated with primate pet ownership and trade.

On May 24, 2007, I introduced S. 1498, with Senators VITTER, LAUTENBERG, LIEBERMAN, and MENENDEZ. Senator ENSIGN is also a cosponsor.

Nonhuman primates are susceptible to many biological agents that infect human beings, including tuberculosis, Ebola/Marburg, and poxviruses. Because of the serious health risk, importing nonhuman primates into the United States for the pet trade has been banned by Federal regulation since 1975. In addition, many States already prohibit these animals as pets. Still, there is an active trade in these animals. Estimates are that 15,000 are in private hands; however, as the trade is largely unregulated, the number may be much higher. Because many of these animals move in interstate commerce, Federal legislation is needed.

This legislation amends the Lacey Act to prohibit transporting monkeys, great apes, lemurs, and other nonhuman primates across State lines for the pet trade. The bill has no impact on trade or transportation of animals for zoos, medical and other licensed research facilities, or certain other licensed and regulated entities.

The Captive Primate Safety Act is supported by the Humane Society of the United States, the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, the American Veterinary Medical Association, Defenders of Wildlife and the Wildlife Conservation Society and many other environmental organizations and animal welfare groups.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, thank you. I appreciate your attention in presiding today, on a day when people are headed home. We are grateful for your presence here.

I join so many others—I do not want to be too redundant, but it is important to repeat expressions of gratitude—like a lot of people here, I have a lot of gratitude in my heart: gratitude for my wife Terese and my family for supporting me in my first year in the Senate; certainly for my staff—like so many Senators here could say of their own staff—I know it is true of mine; I have a great staff, and I am grateful for their help and their support and professionalism for almost a full year now; for the staff here in the Senate—I could go to any Senate office, but especially in the Chamber itself, all those who work so hard, day in and day out, year

in and year out, to make this place work, and to guide even those veteran Members on parliamentary questions, but especially some of the first-year Senators.

We are grateful for your skill, your knowledge, and your professionalism, and we wish you and your families a happy holiday season at this time.

The same goes for my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, who have been so supportive of me as a first-year Senator. I will mention two in the interest of time: Senator REID, our majority leader, the majority leader of the entire Senate, and also, of course, the leader of the Democratic side of the aisle—a great leader for our party, but even beyond that, a great leader for the Senate. He is a man of great compassion and decency, someone who cares about changing the direction of the country, to move us in the right direction. He has done that very well. I am honored to serve with him.

Senator LOTT is going to be leaving us. I had the privilege of presiding yesterday when I heard all of the testimonials to his service. I was honored to be a small part—a witness of that Senate history. We wish Senator LOTT and his family all of God's blessings at this holiday season. But also beyond the season, we wish him the best of luck in his new life outside of the Senate. We are grateful for his service.

I have one more note of gratitude and best wishes, and that is to those who are serving our country in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world—those men and women in our military the world over who are doing that brave and noble service every day. We are thinking of them. We pray for them at this time, as we try to throughout the year. But especially we are thinking of them and their families at this holiday season.

(Mr. SALAZAR assumed the Chair.)

AMERICAN FAMILIES IN CRISIS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I am going to try to be about 5 minutes. I want to highlight a couple of issues, not only because it is this season but I think especially because it is this season, the holiday season.

When we think about families coming together, we think about hope, and we think about caring for people. We think about exchanging gifts. It is a time of happiness. But for some families it is not so. It is a very difficult time for a lot of families—not only during the holiday season but the winter season.

I was struck, unfortunately, in a very negative way the other day. I think it was yesterday. I picked up the Washington Post and read a story about President Bush's speech about the economy. We can go through that and debate what he said, but one of the first sentences in that article quoted him as follows—when he was talking about the economy:

There's definitely some storm clouds and concerns.

"There's definitely some storm clouds and concerns." That is a quotation from that article from the President of the United States. I have to say, I have never seen a crisis in the lives of a lot of families so understated, and I think irresponsibly so. I hate to say that, but there is no other way to say that in any other way.

It is not, Mr. President, just some "concerns" and some "storm clouds." We are way beyond storm clouds for a lot of Americans. There are so many Americans who face the crisis of not having enough to eat this season. This Government can do something about it. We know that. We all know that if we are honest with ourselves. There are families who do not have enough resources or enough power in their own lives to be able to access the resources to heat their homes, so they are cold at this time.

There are a lot of other families who are facing other crises—health care costs and others, the subprime crisis. We could go down the list: the price of fuel, gasoline, and home heating oil. We could go down the list. But it is a crisis, and for a lot of hard-working Americans, they are bracing for a winter storm that has nothing to do with snow and ice. Many of these same working families are one emergency away from financial disaster.

In light of that challenge they face, I sent a letter to the President just over a week ago—actually before he made the statement about the storm clouds and some "concerns." It is lot worse than that, I would respectfully submit to the President. I am not going to go through the letter. I ask unanimous consent that my letter to the President dated December 10, 2007, be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, December 10, 2007.

THE PRESIDENT,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: Hardworking Americans are bracing for a winter storm that has nothing to do with snow and ice. Many working families are just one emergency away from financial disaster. Escalating costs of home heating, gasoline, food, and health care threaten to leave these families hungry and in the cold. In light of these circumstances, I urge you to provide emergency assistance to help local food banks and other programs meet the rising need this holiday season.

This winter, home energy prices are projected to reach record levels, increasing by more than 15 percent over last year. At the same time, the U.S. Department of Energy is predicting higher demand for home heating because the upcoming winter is expected to be colder than the last. The states' energy assistance directors estimate that with this combination of higher prices and higher usage, the average family will pay \$2,157 for home heating oil this winter, \$693 more than last winter.

Meanwhile, family hunger and food insecurity is on the rise. Last year alone, the

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported that 35.5 million Americans did not have enough money or resources to get food for at least some period during the year. This was an increase of 400,000 over 2005 and an increase of 2.3 million since 2000.

Families in states like Pennsylvania, particularly families with children, increasingly face difficulty meeting the needs to heat their homes and feed their loved ones. This kind of family crisis can have both immediate and longstanding effects. Research shows that babies and toddlers in families struggling to keep up with their home energy needs are more likely to be in poor health, have a higher risk of developmental problems, and have greater food insecurity.

Faced with the choice of eating or heating, many of these families are seeking help from food banks and emergency heating assistance programs. Yet America's food banks are facing critical shortages. Rising demand coupled with sharp drops in federal supplies of excess farm commodities and declining donations have forced food banks to cut back on rations, distribute supplies usually reserved for disaster relief, and in some cases, close their doors because of the lack of federal assistance.

Similarly, rising food costs and limited funding are placing great strain on the Women Infants and Children Nutrition Program (WIC), threatening service to some of the 8.5 million low-income pregnant and postpartum women and young children who participate in the program.

Under your proposed budget for the fiscal year 2008, more than 500,000 low-income women, infants, and children would lose access to food and nutrition services.

I was proud to join the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee in unanimously approving a 2007 Farm Bill that includes over \$5 billion in additional funds for federal food assistance programs. Passage of this bill will provide extra funding for food banks, increase food assistance to working families with high child care costs, and increase food assistance for low-income seniors. While the full Senate continues to work on this important legislation, we must take steps to immediately address the hunger-relief needs of millions of Americans across this nation.

Compounding matters, states report that they have insufficient resources to meet expected demands for home energy assistance. That is why Congress rejected your funding proposal for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which would have cut the number of households assisted by 1.1 million, from 5.6 million to 4.5 million. Instead, we passed a bill to maintain the LIHEAP block grant at its current level of \$1.98 billion and increase emergency contingency funding by \$250 million to \$431.7 million to meet the expected higher demand in the upcoming winter. Unfortunately, your veto of this bill stopped that relief in its tracks.

America's working men and women, seniors, and children desperately need your immediate help this holiday season. Specifically, I urge you to provide emergency assistance to help local food banks and other programs meet the rising need this winter season. While optimally The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) needs an infusion of \$27 million, I strongly urge you to transfer as much funding as is feasible to shore up America's emergency food supplies throughout the upcoming winter months. I also urge you to approve an appropriation that includes no less than \$5.96 billion to fully fund the WIC program for FY08 and to approve the Farm Bill nutrition funding, including funding for TEFAP and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP),

when approved by Congress. Finally, I urge that you use your authority to release the remaining \$20 million in the contingency fund for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

As a nation, we must do all we can to bring light to families facing the darkness of hunger and cold during the holidays and throughout the winter. As we count our blessings in this season of hope, let us bring comfort to those who are vulnerable and need our help.

Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Respectfully,

ROBERT P. CASEY, Jr.,

U.S. Senator.

Mr. CASEY. I will not read the letter, but I outlined some of these challenges people have in their lives. I asked him to do a couple of things. These things are not difficult to do. These things, literally, require his signature on either legislation that has just been passed or using his discretionary power as the most powerful elected official in the world to release small sums of money in the scheme of our entire Federal budget.

I will wrap up with this, four things I have asked him to do basically in this letter. First of all, No. 1, provide emergency assistance to help local food banks and other programs meet the rising need this winter season. There is story after story. I say to the Presiding Officer, you know it from your home State of Colorado. We know it all over the country. There is article after article about food banks stretched in a way they have not been. It seems as if the same story has been written across the country. Never before, in 20 years, some would assert, have we seen this. We have not seen this in years. They do not have enough resources to meet the demand of those who are hungry.

So I would ask the President to use his power—his power to provide that emergency assistance to those who are hungry. He has the power to do that.

Secondly, I ask the President to use his power to give full meaning to a great program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, known here in Washington, like everything else, with an acronym, EFAP, the Emergency Food Assistance Program. It needs an infusion. This would be the optimal situation, if the President would do this for the American people. It needs an infusion, right now, of at least \$27 million. I ask the President to get that done. And I think he could if he wanted to do this.

I urge him also to approve the bill we just passed, that massive piece of legislation last night. A lot of good things are in that bill. I will mention one or two. One is the Women, Infants, and Children Program—a tremendous program that helps pregnant women and postpartum women, as well as young children, with nutrition and other assistance. Thank goodness the bill we passed has \$6 billion for it. I am told that is full funding.

I ask the President to sign that legislation for a lot of reasons—hundreds of reasons—but if he has no other reason,

to look at that part of that bill, the Women, Infants, and Children's Program during this holiday season; to sign the farm bill because of a lot of reasons, but in this context because of the nutrition funding which is included in it that I mentioned, as well as other nutrition increases. There are billions of dollars more for nutrition in the farm bill. So I ask the President, No. 3, to sign the farm bill.

And No. 4, and finally, to release the remaining \$20 million in contingency funding for the so-called LIHEAP program—another acronym, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. A lot of people know about it and depend on it. Just \$20 million; a tiny eyedrop worth of money in terms of a Federal budget into the trillions.

I ask the President not only to read a letter and not only to respond to it, but, most importantly, to take action which is asked for in this letter and the pleas for help from families across America. U.S. Senators, Members of Congress, and others have asked this President to do his part in this holiday season because the President, just like the Congress, has power—power to help people, power to improve their lives, and power to do all he can to help them every time throughout the year but especially at this time of the year.

I conclude with this: In this season of hope, let it be said of those who have power—real power—let it be said of those who have power that they helped those who are hungry, those who are cold, and those who will live through yet another season of despair. Let it be said of us, and let it be said of the President, that he fulfilled and met his obligation to help those Americans who need it, especially in this season.

Mr. President, I thank you and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR CASEY

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, first, while the Senator from Pennsylvania is on the floor, let me congratulate him for an extraordinary first year in the Senate. He has made a real difference in his first year. We all are grateful he is present here to assist this Senate and hopefully achieving some very important results. I congratulate him on his freshman year.

Mr. CASEY. I thank the Senator.

MESSAGE TO THE IRAQI POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I want to review the outcome of last evening's debate and vote on the Iraq amendment that I offered along with Senators REED, VOINOVICH, HAGEL, SNOWE, REID, SMITH, and SALAZAR.

The amendment expressed the sense of the Congress that the missions of the U.S. forces in Iraq should transition to counterterrorism operations,

and training, equipping, and supporting Iraqi forces, as well as force protection, and that—and this is, perhaps, the most critical, the important part of the amendment we voted on—that it should be the goal to complete that transition by the end of 2008.

The vote on our amendment was 50 yeas and 45 nays.

Legislating on Iraq is a difficult matter because of the need to gain 60 votes in order to overcome a filibuster, and it was made perhaps even more difficult last night because the Republican leader stated that the President would veto the Consolidated Appropriations Act if it contained our amendment.

Now, imagine that. The President of the United States would veto funds for the troops if 60 or more Senators simply expressed their nonbinding opinion that a goal should be to bring most of our troops home by the end of next year. I would hope the President would welcome at least the nonbinding advice of the Congress and not threaten funding for the troops if that advice were forthcoming.

Despite a great deal of pressure, including the veto threat, our amendment secured six Republican votes—more Republican votes than amendments to change course in Iraq have secured to date. Senators VOINOVICH, HAGEL, SNOWE, SMITH, COLLINS, and DOLE joined 44 of the 46 Democrats who were present to produce a 50-vote majority in favor of our amendment.

I am confident that at least four of the five absent Senators would have supported our amendment, as they have done in the past. So we would have had 54 votes in favor of our amendment, which would have been the most votes thus far for this type of a policy change in Iraq.

Now, what does that majority Senate vote mean, last night's majority vote? What message does it send to the White House, the American people, the Iraqi political leadership, and the Iraqi people?

I believe the message is that more and more Senators are embracing the view that the American people reflected during the last election a little over a year ago; namely, that we want to change course in Iraq, and we want to have a reasonable timetable for the return of most of our troops, and that we have reached the limits of our patience with the Iraqi political leadership. I hope the President takes full notice of last night's majority vote, although the majority will was thwarted by a filibuster. I am sure he is aware of the vote, since the Republican leader said the President would veto the legislation if it contained our amendment.

I hope the American people understand a growing majority of the Senate agrees with their view that we need to establish a goal for the reduction of most of our forces in Iraq and the goal should be most should leave Iraq by the end of next year.

I hope the Iraqi political leaders understand a growing majority of the

Senate is willing to vote to change course in Iraq as a way to bring pressure on them to make the long-promised political compromises that virtually everyone agrees are required to end the violence in Iraq.

I hope Prime Minister Maliki, in particular, understands what the U.S. Department of State said on November 21 about him and the other political leaders in Iraq. This is an extraordinary finding by the Department of State. I hope it gets somehow or other through to Prime Minister Maliki. Here is what the Department of State report said:

Senior U.S. military commanders now portray the intransigence of Iraq's Shiite-dominated government as the key threat facing the U.S. effort in Iraq, rather than al-Qaida terrorists, Sunni insurgents, or Iranian-backed militias.

I wish the President of the United States would read his own State Department report so that not only would the majority of the Senate adopt resolutions intending to put pressure on the Iraqi leadership by telling them the open-ended commitment of American forces is over, but that the President of the United States would tell the Iraqi leaders what his own State Department said in that November 21 report. It is so important that I am going to repeat it:

Senior U.S. military commanders now portray the intransigence of Iraq's Shiite-dominated government as the key threat facing the U.S. effort in Iraq, rather than al-Qaida terrorists, Sunni insurgents, or Iranian-backed militias.

I hope the members of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, the Iraqi Parliament, understand they must find a way to bring about reconciliation or face the consequences of squandering that window of opportunity provided by the military successes of the surge that, as General Odierno notes, will not be open forever. As I did after my trip to Iraq last August, I once again express my personal hope that the Iraqi Parliament will replace Prime Minister Maliki with someone who is willing to strongly push national reconciliation and to replace that Prime Minister with someone less connected to a sectarian group.

Finally, I wish to note that while last night's vote relative to Iraq was the last such vote this year, it is not the last vote the Senate is likely to hold on our policy in Iraq. The \$70 billion approved last night is only about one-third the amount the administration has sought for Iraq and Afghanistan. The next time the Congress considers funding for the war in Iraq, of the many factors that Members will no doubt consider, none will be more important than whether Iraqi political leaders have compromised with each other and assumed responsibility for the future of their own country.

THANKING STAFF AND SENATOR SALAZAR

As others of my colleagues, let me add my thanks to our staffs, the Senate staff, our pages, all the people who make it possible for us to try to do the