

best job we can do. We don't often express our thanks to our staffs, to our pages, but this is surely the appropriate time of year to pause for a moment to express that gratitude to them. Without their support, without their assistance, it would not be possible for us to function. They make it possible for us to do a lot better than we otherwise would and even to make it possible for us to do some important things once in a while.

I wish to also express my thanks to the Presiding Officer. General Salazar I almost called Senator SALAZAR—Senator SALAZAR has been of invaluable assistance to me on so many matters, and I know that feeling exists with other Members of the Senate. As I talk about Iraq this afternoon, looking at our Presiding Officer, Senator SALAZAR, I am reminded of the countless numbers of times and the efforts Senator SALAZAR has made to try to pull this body together to see if we couldn't make a difference in terms of Iraq policy. That effort to achieve a bridge across the aisle, to bring Senators together, is something which Senator SALAZAR does as well as any Member of this body. Even though we don't often or always succeed in achieving bipartisan results, we would achieve them far fewer times but for the assistance and help of our Presiding Officer. So I wish to add my thanks to him as well.

I yield the floor. I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SENATE

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor this evening, in the closing hours of the year 2007, to make a few comments.

First, at the beginning of this year, the beginning of this Congress and the first year, I believe, we have been a Congress of robust achievement, which has made significant change, and that we must also continue to be agents of change in the future because additional change is needed. We have done some good things for this country. There is much more change we need to do.

We have made change in moving forward and seeking a new direction in Iraq and holding the administration accountable on that issue. There is more we have to do in achieving that new direction in Iraq.

We have made significant change in terms of moving forward toward energy independence. There is more work we need to do to achieve real energy independence.

We moved forward in crafting the best farm bill, in my view, in several

decades. We need to get that farm bill across the finish line.

We made progress in the Senate dealing with health care issues, including passage of the Children's Health Insurance Program. But we somehow need to get that over the President's veto pen and start addressing the other issues relating to health care and health care reform.

We have made progress in the arena of education, with passage of the Higher Education Authorization Act and providing financial aid to students across the country and the passage of the Head Start Program. But we now know we still need to move ahead and make more progress and be agents of change with respect to No Child Left Behind.

We have made significant progress in the Wounded Warriors Act, providing the resources we need to take care of our nearly 25 million veterans in America. We need to make sure we stay on top of those issues with 1½ million veterans returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. It is important that we not lose sight of the Nation's promise to take care of our veterans.

There has been a lot of good work done, but there is still more work ahead. We must, in this Senate Chamber, figure out a way to continue to be agents of change to bring about change in the direction of America.

I want to comment on a couple of the subjects I touched on.

First, Iraq. Iraq remains the major national/international foreign policy issue of the United States. The Presiding Officer, the senior Senator from Michigan, has helped lead us from the wilderness in which we found ourselves with respect to the war in Iraq to move forward to what I consider to be a different level of debate today in America.

For the first 6 years of this administration, they essentially controlled all of the cards. It was only with the change in leadership in the Senate and in the House of Representatives that, today, there is accountability that is occurring with respect to the war in Iraq.

The senior Senator from Michigan, the very distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, has really led us in the search for trying to find that new direction for Iraq. It was the Senator from Michigan who conceived of the fact that we needed to move away from having our troops in a combat mission over to the more limited missions of counterterrorism, force protection, border security, and moving forward in the more limited presence in Iraq, and sending, as he has so often said on the floor of the Senate, an unmistakable message to the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people that it is they who have to get Iraq together. It is not up to us in America or to our troops on the ground to resolve the political problems Iraq faces today. That unmistakable message the Iraqis

have received would not have been received had it not been for the leadership of Senator LEVIN, Senator REID, and others in this Chamber who stood up and said we need to have a new direction in Iraq.

There may be some around the country who are saying: Well, what has happened, because we are still in Iraq and the money is still being provided to our troops? But there has been a significant change that has occurred. We know last night, for example, on the vote that occurred with respect to the funding of our troops in Iraq, the \$70 billion provided to our troops was provided to make sure our troops are not without money as they carry out the mandate of the Commander in Chief. But it was not the \$196 billion that was requested by the President of the United States. It was an installment. It is the first time we get to a point where there is this kind of sequential funding. That will allow the Congress and the Senate, under the leadership of Senator LEVIN, the Presiding Officer, to continue to move forward to try to seek a new direction in Iraq and to continue to hold the administration accountable with respect to its efforts on the ground in Iraq.

Yes, when I look at the issue of Iraq, from my perspective and involvement, I believe we have made significant progress in terms of creating a new direction and a new momentum in Iraq. I appreciate the effort of the chairman of the Armed Services Committees in that debate. I appreciate his leadership and for inviting me and others to go with him to Iraq a year or so ago, along with Senator WARNER. We were on the ground meeting with Iraqi officials, as well as our military leadership, to make sure we had the best information as we move forward with the issue on Iraq.

Secondly, I wish to comment on energy. For me, the issue of energy is one of the most important signature issues of the 21st century. I don't think we can do anything that is any less important. This is of monumental importance not only to the people of America but to our entire globe and all of civilization.

The legislation we passed this year, which the President signed today, is legislation that is important because it moves us forward in terms of getting a higher level of efficiency with respect to how we use oil, with respect to how we use electricity in our homes and buildings, and with respect to how we deal with carbon sequestration, to begin dealing with global warming. But there is more work we must do to move forward with an energy package that is something that is doable here among all of us in this Congress. We need to make sure the jet engine powers this clean energy economy into the 21st century, created out of the Finance Committee, which lost by 1 vote—we had 59 votes in the Senate to get that

package adopted—and that we get that across the finish line in the years ahead.

The automobile companies in our country need to have that financial assistance included in that finance package for them to be able to make the transition that is so important to get the higher efficiencies we are asking them to make. There is still a significant amount of work we must move forward with when we deal with energy.

In my view, the inescapable force that ought to bring us together, Democrats and Republicans, progressives and conservatives, ought to be the issue of national security. It ought to be the issue of the environmental security and the economic opportunity we have for our Nation. I hope our successes on energy this year are the beginning of a foundation that will continue to build in the years ahead.

Thirdly, on the farm bill, I am very proud of the work Senators HARKIN, CONRAD, CHAMBLISS, GRASSLEY, BAUCUS, and others accomplished in that effort. It is interesting to note that 78 Senators voted for that farm bill just last week. That is more U.S. Senators voting for that farm bill than any farm bill in the last quarter century. If the Presidential candidates had been here, we would have had 82 or 83 votes for that farm bill. It is a very good bill on what we do in our investments in nutrition and conservation and renewable energy, in all of those things which are important to making sure we have food security in America.

It is my hope that, as we move forward into a conference with the House of Representatives, that legislation can move forward to the President so it can be signed into law so that we can make sure we maintain the food security of America and that we also open a new chapter for American agriculture as rural communities and agriculture help us grow our way to energy independence.

On health care, it is a tougher issue, it is a tough issue, where there has not been significant concern or any concern, frankly, from this administration with respect to dealing with this crisis bankrupting so many American businesses and causing pain to so many American families. When we think about the statistics, the fact is almost 50 million Americans today don't have health insurance. In Colorado, almost 20 percent of the population of the State doesn't have health insurance. It is a crisis in America.

Yes, the White House has not seemed to really want to move forward with any kind of change with respect to health care that will address the pain occurring across America. We tried to make some movement in that direction by providing health insurance to 10 million children in America. If we are going to deal with health insurance, it seems we need to start providing that insurance to the most vulnerable, the children of our country. Yet twice the

President vetoed the bills passed out of this Chamber and out of the House. It is my hope that we can return to deal not only with children's health insurance but other health insurance issues that are on the table.

Fifth, I come from a family—just like the Presiding Officer's family—who very much has recognized the importance of education. We very much see that the American dream is made possible through opening up those opportunities to come about through education.

I remember growing up on our farm, where my father would come around the table, and as we were gathered around the table with the kerosene lamp—because we didn't have electricity and a telephone at the ranch—he would say he was a poor man and there was not much he could leave us in terms of a legacy of wealth or a very large ranch. But the one thing he would say to those eight children gathered around that table was that he wanted them to get a good education. He would say: If you get a good education, which you will get because I will insist on it, that is something I prefer to give you over anything else in life in terms of riches because an education is something no one can ever take away from you.

Mr. President, until this year, there had been, in the last 6 years, a policy of disinvestment in education in America. Through the leadership of Senator KENNEDY and Senator ENZI, the higher education programs we reauthorized and funded will provide financial aid and educational opportunity to millions in America. To my own small State of Colorado, about \$560 million of additional financial aid will be made possible to the young people who are seeking a higher education.

The passage of the Head Start Reauthorization Act is another investment in our young people. I come from a background of having served my State as attorney general. During the time I was attorney general, I was one of the participants and cochair of an organization called Fight Crime: Invest in Children. We had a simple agenda. We were crime fighters, law enforcement, and attorneys general, but we realized it was important for us to keep kids out of trouble in the first place. So, as a consequence, our agenda was simple: invest in early childhood education and in afterschool programs. I think the investment we are making in Head Start and the reauthorization of that program is part of that agenda, and I very much appreciate the leadership of the Senate in getting that done.

Finally, returning to an issue in which Senator LEVIN, Senator AKAKA, Senator MURRAY, and others have been so much at the point of the spirit in leading us to a new level of investment and protection of our veterans, this bill, which we approved last night, which is now being considered in the House, which will move forward to the President, will, for the first time, in-

vest in veterans health care at a level that the independent budget of the veterans service organizations have recommended. It is the first time that we have met those funding levels.

The Wounded Warriors Act, which is included in that legislation, will open up a whole new chapter of taking care of those who serve our country. I appreciate the leadership, again, of those who have been involved in that effort.

When I look back at what we have done in 2007 in the Senate and the Congress, yes, it has been a year of robust achievement, but it is also a fact that there is much change that is still needed. I look forward to working with the Presiding Officer and with the rest of my colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, in achieving that change that is so much needed.

Let me quickly, also, as we move forward to this holiday season, say thank you to the troops who are overseas and to their families for their service and for their sacrifice. As we think about that service and that sacrifice, it is important for us to take stock that this is a real sacrifice.

The statistics today, December 19, 2007, do not gloss over the reality of war and the horrors and sacrifice of war: Total Americans killed in Iraq, 3,896; total Coloradans from my State killed in Iraq, 54; total soldiers from Fort Carson in Colorado Springs who have been killed in Iraq, 226; total Americans killed in Afghanistan, 468; total Coloradans killed in Afghanistan, 8; and the number of wounded over 30,000; the number of wounded in Iraq alone 28,711; the number wounded in Afghanistan, 1,840.

For those of us who have visited Walter Reed, as most of us have, we see the horrors of war with our wounded warriors. It is important that we honor them. It is important that we remember them. It is important that we pray for them in these times and we pray for their families as well.

Mr. President, finally, I say thank you to the leadership in the Senate, especially to majority leader HARRY REID, the man from Searchlight, NV. As he said earlier, even today in some of our meetings, he was a Capitol policeman. He never, frankly, thought someday he would be elected to Congress and then be elected to the Senate and much less to serving as the majority leader essentially in charge of this institution, and yet he is there today.

I am very proud of his work, as are all the rest of my colleagues. Through some very difficult times and difficult procedures, he has led us to have the robust achievements we have been able to accomplish in 2007. I am very proud of the fact that he is in charge as the leader of the agent of change as we move forward into the new year.

Mr. President, I thank you for your time. I thank you for your leadership and example in the Senate.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 5:53 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 6:22 p.m., when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. LEVIN).

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when we come back in January—we are coming back on the 22nd—we are going to immediately move to the Indian Health Care Reauthorization Act. I have spoken to the chairman of the committee, Senator DORGAN. We are going to do everything we can to finish that legislation on January 22. If we can't finish it January 22 or early on January 23, we are going to move immediately to FISA. I have had a meeting today, for example, with General Hayden and Admiral McConnell, to talk about FISA. I have told them it is going to be very difficult to get this done. It expires on February 1. It is something we need to do. It would be in the interests of everyone to have that legislation extended for a year. I offered to do that earlier yesterday, and the White House said, no, that wasn't a good idea.

We are going to do everything we can to complete that legislation quickly when we get back, after we do the Indian Health Care Reauthorization Act.

Also, one of the things we are going to do is, there is one Senator who has held up scores of pieces of legislation that have already passed the House. These bills have all been reported out of the committee by Senators BINGAMAN and DOMENICI. They are very important pieces of legislation dealing with the jurisdiction of that committee. What we are going to do, and what we have done, is all those bills that have passed the House of Representatives, we put them into one vehicle over here so we will have one vote.

I have offered to Senator COBURN, who is holding these up—I said, I am willing to let you have two or three votes on these. We have been more than reasonable waiting to work through this, in my opinion. I think it is unreasonable that he has held these up. We are going to complete this legislation one way or the other as soon as we complete these other items I mentioned.

I will have more to say about this in a little while, but I spoke to the Repub-

lican leader today, and we both have a good feeling about how we have ended the session. Both of us didn't get exactly what we wanted, but there was a feeling of cooperation and bipartisanship. I hope that spills over into next year—I certainly hope so, and I know Senator MCCONNELL feels that way.

I would like to spend a minute on nominations.

My staff, Ron Weich, who does such a wonderful job for me, indicates I said FISA should be extended for 1 year. It should be extended for 30 days, so we have an opportunity to legislate that during that period of time. I appreciate my staff correcting that statement I made.

We have been working with the White House for the last several days in an effort to reach an agreement that works for both sides regarding nominations. We were unable to reach such an agreement before the Thanksgiving holiday. That led to my calling the Senate into pro forma sessions to avoid the President's very objectionable recess appointments. My hope was I could avoid that prospect for the coming holiday. I tried very hard to work with the President. But he indicated he would still use the period of time that we would be in recess to appoint objectionable nominees.

I said go ahead—here are some. We will give you these—for example, the head of the Federal Aviation Agency, somebody on the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve Board, the Chemical Safety Board. Go ahead and do those recess appointments.

He wanted a person who cannot get through the Judiciary Committee to be Assistant Counsel to the Attorney General, a man by the name of Bradbury. I talked to various members of the Judiciary Committee yesterday. They don't think the man is somebody who should be confirmed by the Senate. I would say, without a lot of hesitation, there is no chance he would be confirmed. It is my understanding he has already been recess appointed. I can't understand why the President wouldn't do what we have suggested.

My only solution is to prevent this and call a pro forma session again. I thought these jobs—there are more than 50 of them, career-ending opportunities for a lot of these people. These are very important jobs. All of them have to be confirmed by the Senate. I could be a Grinch. I could tell the President I will not move any nominations given his demand to make controversial recess appointments. That would mean more than 50 Republican nominees would not move forward today. So during the holidays it would be: Well, maybe when we come back in a month we can do something.

The Republicans would get about 60 nominations. We would get eight.

But I am not going to do that. I am not going to be the Grinch. We are going to go into pro forma sessions so the President cannot appoint people we think are objectionable, but I am not

going to meet stubbornness with stubbornness. It is not good for the body politic; just because someone is being unreasonable means we have to be unreasonable.

Think about this. Because the President wants one person whom we cannot get out of the Judiciary Committee, he is willing to hold everything up. It doesn't sound like much of a compromise to me. I can't understand the rationale behind this.

I have spoken with Josh Bolton. Josh Bolton is a very pleasant person to deal with. He has a boss, and that is the President of the United States. So I called Josh Bolton and told him, as unreasonable as I think our President is being, I am not going to be unreasonable. We are going to confirm these appointments this evening; as I said, about 60 for the Republicans, 8 for the Democrats. And I will keep the Senate in pro forma session to block the President from doing an end run around the Senate and the Constitution with his controversial nominations.

I hope this is a Christmas present for these people. These are important jobs, and I wish them well in their jobs. I wish them all a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year with their new positions.

PROVIDING FOR A CONDITIONAL ADJOURNMENT OR RECESS OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. REID. I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate a message from the House of Representatives on S. Con. Res. 61.

The Presiding Officer (Mr. SALAZAR) laid before the Senate the message from the House of Representatives:

S. CON. RES. 61

Resolved, That the resolution from the Senate (S. Con. Res. 61) entitled "Concurrent resolution providing for a conditional adjournment or recess of the Senate, and a conditional adjournment of the House of Representatives", do pass with amendments:

(1) Page 1, line 2, of the Senate engrossed amendment, strike "adjourns" and insert: *recesses or adjourns*

(2) Page 1, beginning on line 6, of the Senate engrossed amendment, strike "or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 3 of this concurrent resolution" and insert: *or until such day and time as may be specified in the motion to recess or adjourn, or until the time of any reassembly pursuant to section 3 of this concurrent resolution, whichever occurs first*"

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate concur in the House amendment to the concurrent resolution and the motion to reconsider be laid on the table.

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

MAKING FURTHER CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed