

This is an awesome responsibility to discuss this war, to debate it on the floor of the Senate, and to do it in a constructive and positive way. I sincerely hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, those who are loyal to the President and those who are loyal to the President's policy, will encourage this debate, that they won't stop us with procedural obstacles, that they will allow the Senate to speak, to debate, and to express its will. We have tried before unsuccessfully, but we are going to try again. I believe this is an extremely important priority, perhaps the highest we face.

Having said that, the first bill that is likely to come up tomorrow, maybe later today, is on the 9/11 Commission recommendations. The 9/11 Commission, my colleagues will recall, was an effort to assess America's vulnerabilities after the attack on 9/11. That commission published a report that was widely read and applauded because of the leadership of Republican Governor Kean of New Jersey and Congressman Lee Hamilton, a Democrat of Indiana. They cochaired a panel, a very distinguished bipartisan panel, which came up with recommendations to make America safer.

Some several years later, we have not lived up to their recommendations and we haven't carried out their agenda. There is much we can do to make this country safer and we want to move immediately to considering their recommendations and implementing them, whether it is port security, whether it is a communication system in Illinois or other States that allows the police, firefighters, first responders, and the medical community to communicate quickly in the midst of an emergency, whether it is a matter of mass evacuation drills, which I have been asking for and which are included in this legislation. There are many things we can do, and specific things.

There are many who think we should move immediately to the debate on the war. We are only going to postpone it long enough to discuss these 9/11 Commission recommendations. The families of the survivors of 9/11 have appealed to us to make this a high priority. For that reason, and for that reason only, we may set aside the Iraq debate for a few days but not indefinitely. This debate needs to take place for the very simple reason that as we debate on the floor of the Senate, unfortunately, our sons and daughters are still in peril in Iraq. They are still caught in the crossfire of a civil war, and we are still losing too many good American lives every single day because of this confrontation taking place in Iraq.

In the meantime, we will be stepping forward to do something about Walter Reed Hospital, but we won't stop there. Walter Reed has to meet its obligation not just for inpatients, where they do a magnificent, an excellent job, but for those who are outpatients as well. We have to take this issue to the veterans

hospitals and we have to ask the hard questions about whether the veterans of this war and all of our wars are being treated with the dignity and respect and care they deserve.

I salute the Washington Post and those who wrote these articles. I am sure they will receive recognition for bringing this to our attention. This will be a clear example and a clear opportunity for those of us who stand on the floor and give speeches about supporting our troops to prove we mean it.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

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

SENATOR KENNEDY'S 75TH BIRTHDAY

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to join many of our colleagues in honoring one of our colleagues who celebrated a very special birthday last week; Senator KENNEDY from Massachusetts turned 75. He was congratulated and applauded and heralded throughout these last few days on that milestone. I have come to the floor to give a few brief remarks in honor of this tremendous achievement because it has been 75 years well lived, in dedication to this country.

He has been an inspiration to me and to many of us in the Senate. His energy, his commitment to his work, his constant thinking about new approaches and innovation is a testament to his presence and his service in the Senate.

I also wish to acknowledge that, at first, coming to the Senate I felt very close to the Senator. Mr. President, you would appreciate this because you are from a large Catholic family yourself. Senator KENNEDY was raised some years before I was but in a similar kind of situation, in a large and loving Catholic family, with strong parents and a real focus on community service and service to the family. That is apparent in his work. His Catholic upbringing and his deep religious beliefs are reflected in the teachings of the Catholic Church, about thinking not of yourself but of others, of service, of sacrifice. Many people talk about religious values, and I am getting somewhat skeptical the more I hear people talk. I am never skeptical of Senator KENNEDY because he actually lives the values he preaches. Sometimes some of the greatest things I see him do are not evident to the camera. I would like to

share one of them. I could give plenty of examples.

Many people might be surprised to know that not only is Senator KENNEDY a champion of education, but he actually, for over 2 years, took time out of what is an extraordinarily busy and hectic Senate schedule to tutor a child, teaching him how to read. How would I know this? Because, on occasion, I had the great honor of sitting next to him in the library down the street, where I was trying to keep up with him and thinking if Senator KENNEDY can carve an hour out of his schedule, certainly I could try to do that as a freshman Senator. Needless to say, I could never keep up with the schedule. But I watched him and observed him one-on-one with a child no more than 10 years old, patiently teaching him how to read. The next year it was a little girl.

One particular day, he even had the foresight or kindness to bring his pet bunny from home. He has many pets—Splash the dog, being one, and Sonny. He brought his pet rabbit to the school, to the joy of the children perhaps to encourage them to read about animals, which is a good way to get kids interested in reading, to actually show them. He knew this instinctively. Maybe that is because of the family he is from or because of the kind of guy he is. He is an extraordinary and a very different kind of Senator. I have been inspired by him, and I am confident our colleagues have been as well.

I also wish to acknowledge the tremendous partner he has in Victoria Reggie Kennedy, a daughter of Louisiana. I have watched this couple grow in love and support of one another. I think they are a model for couples who are in public office. We could not find a better couple, in terms of their commitment to each other, to this body, to the Nation, and to the State of Massachusetts and, when they have extra time, to Louisiana. That was brought home when we experienced the last two hurricanes, Katrina and Rita. As you know, they struck our State in the latter part of the year 2005.

These storms were of historic proportion. It was hard to describe the damage—which I still struggle with trying to describe to this body. But there was one Senator to whom I did not have to take too long to describe the damage, and that was Senator KENNEDY, who got it immediately, perhaps because he has walked through south Louisiana with Vicki Reggie, his wife; perhaps he just has a big heart and great mind that can grasp situations fairly quickly; and perhaps because he leans forward always in his ability and his desire to help people in need. He didn't need the situation to be explained to him. He understood.

Not only did he help us pass one of the most extraordinary pieces of legislation in that whole confusing time of the first 6 months when we didn't know what levees had broken, where they had broken, whose they were, whose

fault it was, and everyone was blaming everyone, but Senator KENNEDY focused on getting 330,000 children into school, and he focused on getting them into the best school, any school, that would take them.

He passed legislation I think will serve this country significantly and powerfully in the decades to come. If any major catastrophe, whether man-made or natural, hits our country again, at least the families with children from K through 12 and the children who are in those grades will know they have a champion in Senator KENNEDY, who was not in the majority, but with Senator ENZI as chairman of the Education Committee and with a group of us who were committed to being their helpers, we passed an extraordinary piece of legislation that, with 1 million people having been evacuated from their homes, 250,000 homes destroyed, hundreds of schools, hospitals closed, literally within a few weeks, children were, for the most part, safely ensconced. Even those who found themselves in shelters for weeks and months at times were allowed and encouraged and welcomed into schools because of legislation that Senator KENNEDY passed.

In addition to showing up on this floor day after day fighting for that legislation and fighting against the extremes who wanted to turn it into a political football and vouchers, he held steady to allow children to go to public schools or Catholic schools—to allow children from Catholic schools to go to public schools and children from public schools to Catholic schools, which seems simple, but at the time it wasn't—he personally delivered to our office some nourishment and encouragement to my staff who were overworked and under tremendous stress and didn't call me to let me know he was coming, didn't call the news media to make sure they saw him bringing these things, but just showed up. To me and to my staff, that meant the world.

I thank him for his great service to this country on his 75th birthday. I will submit a lot more for the public record because his legislative achievements are quite long. Since they are well known, I thought I would add some points people might not know about this extraordinary public servant and Senator who turned 75. I only wish medicine would keep up with us so that he could serve another 75. That is unlikely, but I am sure in the final years, in the final chapters of his life, he will continue extraordinary service and will probably go down in history as one of the finest Senators to ever serve in this body.

TRIBUTE TO DR. CECIL J. PICARD

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, my remarks about Senator KENNEDY were for a happy occasion, but this is on a sad occasion. Last week—very close, actually, around the Senator's birthday—we lost our superintendent of edu-

cation, Dr. Cecil Picard. Cecil Picard died prematurely of Lou Gehrig's disease, but he died in the arms of his loving wife of many years, surrounded by his children and his grandchildren.

We knew for a time—and he knew, of course—that the disease that he had been diagnosed with 2 years earlier was going to be fatal. Although he fought it bravely and courageously, it took his life last week.

My husband, Frank Snellings, served on the board of elementary and secondary education, and I want to say publicly what an inspiration Dr. Picard was to us, to our family but, more importantly, what an outstanding leader he was in the area of education reform in a State that he loved, a community which he loved and in which he served as a teacher, principal, superintendent, and then as superintendent of education of our State.

His passion and commitment to early childhood education was contagious. In fact, in the last several years of my knowing Dr. Picard, I never had a conversation with him when he did not mention this subject to me. He would say: Senator, when is the next meeting with the Department of Education? Senator, do the other Senators understand how important early childhood is to this country? Do they really understand that without this, our children will never be ready to learn and will never be able to access the great benefits of the education infrastructure that we put together for them? Don't they understand?

I would say to him: Cecil, unfortunately, they don't understand it the way you do. If everybody in this country had your passion and intellectual grasp of early childhood education, we would not be so grossly underfunded. Because of his work in Louisiana, we now have—and it is his legacy—LA4, Louisiana 4, which the majority—not all, not because of his lack of trying—our 4-year-olds in Louisiana are almost covered for early childhood opportunities. So when they show up and knock at that kindergarten door and that teacher welcomes them with open arms, those children can sit down at that desk or at that table and open a book and begin to really grasp and understand the letters and the meanings of words because they have been taught up to that point how to get their education started.

Of course, learning those early language symbols and numbers and social interaction is so important in those early years. Cecil knew this. His life was committed to education, to being a leader and an advocate for children, a champion for the profession of teaching, with his enthusiasm and ability as a legislator, which is where I met him as a State senator and as a legislator before he was a superintendent.

So as a father, a grandfather, a coach, a teacher, a principal, a senator, and as an education advocate, we cannot say strongly enough in Louisiana that we have truly lost a champion. We

have truly lost someone who, in my lifetime, probably cannot be replaced. Hopefully, another Cecil Picard will come along, but they are few and far between.

So I wanted to say on behalf of the 4.5 million people I represent—and I can say this without fear of being contradicted—that he will be missed, but his legacy will be long remembered, not only in our hearts and minds but in the way people live. His legacy will be reflected in their life, in their productivity, and their contributions to our State and to our Nation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will stand in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m. today.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:24 p.m., recessed until 2:18 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 184

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the request to proceed to S. 184.

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

IMPROVING AMERICA'S SECURITY BY IMPLEMENTING UNFINISHED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 9/11 COMMISSION ACT OF 2007—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to S. 4 and send a cloture motion to the desk for consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close the debate on the motion to proceed to S. 4, a bill to implement recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

Joe Lieberman, Russell D. Feingold, Ben Cardin, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Byron L. Dorgan, Amy Klobuchar, Daniel K. Akaka, Maria Cantwell, John Kerry, Ken Salazar, Ben Nelson, Carl Levin,