programs, tend to portray this as a political tug of war. It is deadly serious, much more serious than a political tug of war. It is about trying to get this right for our country's future.

I hope that in the coming several weeks, we can come to a conclusion about this very important issue—yes, the war in Iraq, the larger war on terrorism, deal with some of these issues, such as homeland security—and then move on to begin to address the issues I just talked about as well; that is, the issue of energy security, health care costs, jobs, trade, and a series of issues that are important for this country's future.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be given 10 minutes to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, this morning I rise to discuss the terrible situation we see in Iraq. While home in New Jersey over these last few days, I was often approached by constituents on the street and there was one topic that would come into the conversation almost immediately, when people said: Senator, when are we going to get our troops out of the crossfire in Iraq?

It is a great question, but the answer is certainly not clear.

Our constituents back home understand that President Bush has totally mishandled the diplomatic and strategic parts of the Iraq mission and our troops are the ones who are caught in the middle—caught in the middle of an ethnic civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. From my home State of New Jersey, we have already lost 74 people in Iraq; nationwide the total is quite clear—over 3,000 have lost their lives, and there are over 23,000 wounded with injuries that could disable them for the rest of their lives.

To make matters worse, a disproportionate amount of the burden of this conflict has fallen to Guard and Reserve troops. In fact, in early 2005, the National Guard and the Reserves made up nearly half of the fighting force in Iraq, people who were to be called up when emergencies arose. The Reserves were not there primarily to be a replacement for long-term combat duty. This administration decided early on that their agenda for the military was to shrink the size of our Active Forces. We all heard that. ''We will get it down to being lean and mean, and increase reliance on contractors for support.'' If it were not so tragic, it would be a joke.

Now we see, in practice, the Bush long-term military plan has been a disaster. We do not have enough active troops. We are relying way too much on the Guard and Reserve. And contractors such as Halliburton have been wasting taxpayer dollars right and left.

The proof of this waste was a fine, levied against Halliburton, of $60 million at one time for overcharges for the care and feeding of our troops. We continue to hear of irresponsible behavior of contractors serving our needs in Iraq. Mismanagement of all forms has been a hallmark of Defense Department supervision.

At every turn, this President has made terrible judgments. Tomorrow we are going to hear another decision by President Bush. Why should the American people trust him to understand what he is getting us into? We heard the President say, ''Bring 'em on,'' one of the most disingenuous statements ever made by a President. I served in Europe during World War II, and I can tell you that we never wanted to hear a Commander in Chief taunting the enemy from the comforts of the White House. Asking more of the enemy to show their faces? We didn't want to see them at all.

We saw the President's foolish display of bravado on the Aircraft Carrier *Abraham Lincoln* when he declared, ''Mission accomplished.'' What a careless statement the President of the United States made that day, over 3½ years ago. Mission accomplished? That meant the job was finished, as far as most people were concerned. But it was not through.

While the President was performing in 2003, leaders were warning of a military crisis. General Shinseki, Army Chief of Staff, told a Senate Armed Services Committee that we would need to keep a large force in Iraq even after a war to curb ethnic tensions and provide humanitarian aid. General Shinseki, distinguished military leader, said we needed several hundred thousand troops there. His assessment was harshly dismissed quickly by the President and by Secretary Rumsfeld. The General's reality-based opinion got in the way of their ideologically based mission of a smaller Active-Duty Force.

In the aftermath of the initial invasion, President Bush has made the wrong move almost every time. Now we have walked so deep into the swamp in Iraq that just adding more guns is not going to work. This so-called surge is another bad idea—slogans, such as ''cut and run'' have to be matched against the reality of ''stay and die.''

President Bush likes to say: I do what the generals tell me to. But now we know that is not the case. The generals have been extremely candid about their view of the surge idea. They think it is wrong. Now we are hearing that the President intends to give another $1 billion to Iraqi reconstruction projects. We want to fund every cent that our troops need for their safety, for their return, for their health care, for their well-being, but sending more money down the rat hole is not going to do it. It is being diverted from programs at home, such as education, stem cell research, health care for all our people, to name a few, and the taxpayers of New Jersey do not want their money used to build another civilian project in Iraq that is going to get blown up the next day. Before we look to spend more money on civil projects in Iraq, let's get the diplomatic situation straightened out.

The American people want to see us leave Iraq with some hope for stability in our absence. That will require President Bush to use all of the diplomatic tools at his disposal to force a dramatic change of course for the Iraqi Government. The current Government in Iraq has to take real steps to disarm the Shiite militias and show the Sunnis that they will actually be empowered in the Iraqi Government. If we do not do that, we could send a million troops to Iraq tomorrow, but it would not make a difference. If the Sunnis feel the Iraqi Government has nothing to offer and Prime Minister al-Maliki doesn't stop the Shiite militias, the bloodbath will continue.

I hope the leaks about the President's plan are wrong and that he will announce tomorrow a better course, a course that will allow us to exit Iraq but with real hope of a more stable society left behind.

I conclude that with the history of planning for this war and the statements coming from the White House and the leadership of the Defense Department I ask: How can we trust their judgment with a new plan to put more people in harm's way without some idea of when this will end? It is not a good idea and we ought to get a better explanation from the President and the Defense Department as to what might the outcome be if their plan succeeds.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, the Oxford English Dictionary defines the word ''surge''—s-u-r-g-e—as ''a sudden large temporary increase.'' Note in particular the word ''temporary.'' President Bush's rumored new strategy on Iraq—a surge of U.S. troops intended to quell the violence in Baghdad—is both wrongheaded and headed for failure.

As outlined, the surge envisions clearing all violent factions out of Baghdad in an effort which is to be led by Iraqi security forces. Apparently, U.S. forces will provide indiscriminate firepower in another attempt to establish democracy by brute force. This does not seem to me to be the way to win hearts and minds in Iraq.

I oppose any surge in Iraq. Only days ago, just days ago, we passed the grim milestone of 3,000 American dead in Iraq. There are few firm numbers on Iraqi lives lost, but estimates are in the tens of thousands. I am reminded of one definition of ''insanity'': making the same mistake over and over while continuing to expect a different result. We have surged before. Still the violence in Iraq worsens.

We are close to the beginning of the fifth year—the fifth year—of a war which should never have been started by an administration that fed the Congress and the public false information. This is an administration which has learned nothing—nothing, zilch—nothing more about the country of Iraq than it knew before it launched an unprovoked U.S. attack.

Our stated purpose for continuing to occupy Iraq is to help the Iraqi people build a stable democracy. But the difficulty of that task should have been clear before we invaded. It was clear to me. Iraq is a country that was only held together by a brutal strongman, Saddam Hussein. And without the strongman to force cohesion, it is a country with deep ethnic and religious divisions and no central loyalties. There is no tradition of constitutions or equal rights, no unifying common beliefs about individual freedoms or governing with the consent of the governed—none of that commonality of thought that reinforces governing principles in the society at large.

The al-Maliki Government would never survive on its own outside the Green Zone in Baghdad, and indeed the point of a surge is to secure only the capital. But what then? After accelerating the violence, even if we are able to lock down Baghdad, what will transpire to keep the insurgency from regrouping elsewhere, possibly fed by Iran or by Syria? How will we then establish the legitimacy of a shaky Iraqi Government?

In my view, we may be about to make a critical mistake by moving in exactly the wrong direction in Iraq. Instead of a surge, we ought to be looking at a way to begin orderly troop reduction. The folly of the surge idea is apparent. The insurrection in Iraq is a civil war. The conflict is among warring factions battling for some measure of control over the others. U.S. involvement on one side simply further energizes all the other sides. This surge will only energize them, further provoking a likely countersurge of violence. If it is a true surge—in other words, temporary—the insurrection factions will only work harder to maim and kill our troops and claim victory if we reduce forces. So, in fact, there will probably be no surge but, rather, a permanent escalation of the U.S. presence, which is simply being sold to the American public as a surge. Once again, we get obfuscation and spin from a White House that seems incapable of careful thought and analysis.

Any plan to increase troops in President Bush's new strategy is simply a plan to intensify violence, put more American troops in harm's way, risk the lives of more innocent Iraqis, engender more hatred of U.S. forces, and embroil U.S. forces deeper in a civil war.

I would like to see a clear defining—a clear defining—of our immediate challenges in Iraq; a realistic discussion about short-term achievable goals; an admission that we cannot remain in Iraq for much longer because the American public will not tolerate it; and benchmarks for beginning an orderly withdrawal conditioned on actions by the Iraqi Government.

So, Mr. President, the al-Maliki Government has been duly elected by the people of Iraq. It is time we let them take charge. Let them, Mr. President. Let them take charge. As long as we prop them up and inflame hatred, they will never have the legitimacy they need to make the political decisions that may ultimately save Iraq. In short, it is time to take the training wheels off the bike. Do you know what that means? It is time to take the training wheels off the bike.

Our blundering—and it is nothing less—our blundering has inflamed and destabilized a critical region of the world, and yet we continue to single-mindedly pursue the half-baked goal of forcing democracy on a country which is now embroiled in a civil war. Our blinders keep us from seeing the regional problems which are bubbling and which soon may boil. The real damage to the United States is not only the loss of life and the billions of dollars expended, it is also the diminution of our credibility around the world as a country with the will and the vision to lead effectively.

Serious diplomacy is clearly in order on the matters of Lebanon, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and on Iran. Multinational talks were part of the Iraq Study Group's recommendations, but diplomacy usually ends up at the bottom of the administration's option list, and that is where it has landed again.

If the ''shoot first'' crowd in the White House continues to stick its chin out and believe that bullets and bombast will carry the day, soon—very soon—our ability to mediate the morass of difficulties in the Mideast and elsewhere may be permanently damaged. Pariahs do not usually carry much weight at negotiating tables. If the lesson in Iraq teaches anything, it is that military might has very great limitations. But then that is a lesson we should have learned many years ago from Vietnam—many years ago from Vietnam.

LEGISLATIVE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 11 a.m. having arrived, the Senate will proceed to consideration of S. 1, for debate only, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1) to provide greater transparency in the legislative process.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 2:15 p.m. shall be equally divided between the leaders or their designees.

The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I have discussed with Senator BENNETT a proposal for a unanimous consent agreement on a speaking order. I would like quickly to move it as a request for unanimous consent that I be given 15 minutes; Senator BENNETT, as ranking member, 15 minutes; Senator TESTER, 10 minutes; Senator LOTT, if he cares to come down, 10 or 15 minutes which, if it is 15, will balance with 15 on the Democratic side; Senator NELSON, 15; the next open slot for a Republican, 15 minutes; and Senator SALAZAR, 15 minutes.

I ask that at 2:15, for 15 minutes each, the majority leader be recognized, followed by the minority leader if he requests time.

Mr. President, let me vitiate that last part because we would like to have Senators LIEBERMAN and COLLINS recognized at 2:15 for 15 minutes each and then Senators REID and MCCONNELL, if they so desire. That is the unanimous consent request.

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, it is an honor to take the floor today as the new chairman of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee to help lead the battle for meaningful and credible ethics reform. In the last election, the message was loud and clear: It is time to change the way business is done in the Nation's Capitol. Passage of this ethics reform package is the most direct action we can take to show the American people that tighter rules and procedures are in place and that the corrupt practices of the few will no longer be permitted. Strong criminal sanctions for these practices will henceforth be in place.

Passage of this bill will demonstrate once and for all that we care more about representing the American people than the perks of power.

I am especially pleased to be joined in this effort by my new ranking member, Senator BENNETT, with whom I look to work very closely in this new Congress. I am also pleased that Senator LIEBERMAN, the new chairman of Homeland Security and Government Affairs, and Senator COLLINS, the ranking member of that committee, have agreed to join us on the floor as comanagers of this bill.

On March 29, 2006, by a 90-to-8 vote, the Senate passed S. 2349, the Legislative Transparency and Accountability Act, which has now been introduced by the majority and minority leaders as S. 1. This legislation was a combination of separate bills reported by the Rules Committee and the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. It came to the floor early last year, at a time when Americans were becoming increasingly concerned about corrupt and criminal practices by a group of lobbyists, administration officials, congressional staff and, yes, even Members of Congress.

Also, various questions were raised about the K Street Project, in which lobbyist firms, trade associations, and other business groups were told they