

their jobs for months to go over and police an Iraqi civil war. For the President's escalation plan, now we are seeing many of them being forced to go back a second, third time—and I even talked to one soldier who is going back the fourth time—without the necessary break. These brave men and women accepted these realities without complaint. Two to one, they say to me: I am honored to serve my country.

Despite all that has been asked of them and all they have given, this administration is not providing the mental health care they need.

However disturbing these findings are—and they are horribly disturbing—the worst aspect is that there has been report after report after report, year after year after year, detailing the lack of mental health care.

Last year, as I have said on the floor before, the Government Accountability Office found similar problems. Last spring, in an unusually candid interview—almost a year ago now—the VA's Under Secretary for Health Policy Coordination, Dr. Frances Murphy, said mental health care services are inadequate and that when services are available, "waiting lists render that care virtually inaccessible."

This is the President's administration, his Veterans' Administration and Under Secretary there, who has been telling us for almost a year now that waiting lists render mental health care services virtually inaccessible. What has this President's response been? Total silence. I ask: How does that fall on the ears of these soldiers and their families?

This administration has known about these problems for years. But we have seen no changes and no improvements.

With minimal amounts of sleep, our service men and women work longer days than you and I can imagine. They see things none of us should ever witness: bodies blown to pieces, mutilation, the blood of their fellow soldiers on the streets of a country we have no place being.

All of this is for a war we were misled into supporting. There were no weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein was never connected to al-Qaida, and nobody can say we are spreading democracy to Iraq today. In truth, we are fighting a war with no cause.

These stresses and images from a pointless conflict take a toll on our troops. It takes a toll on their families. They suffer mental stress, which is no surprise to anybody; it ought to be expected. As Americans across this country—but especially Senators—it is our solemn duty, as those who have not seen the horrors of battle, to care for those who have. Even more so, as the one who sent Americans to Iraq, it is the duty of the President.

Providing mental health care for our children falls under this duty—a duty that, sadly, this President has failed to fulfill.

So I came to the floor this morning to remind my colleagues—my Repub-

lican colleagues and this President—actions speak louder than words. Talk does not improve the quality of the living conditions, and it doesn't make adequate mental health care available. Talk is cheap. Eventually, after a lot of talk and no action, words catch up with you. That is what we are seeing today. The Bush administration says they have provided for our Active-Duty warriors and our veterans, but story after story, report after report proves otherwise.

Unfortunately, it is pretty clear to all of us now that from enlistment to retirement, this administration has failed our troops. It is time for us to take action. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues on this floor to have action and not just words. I don't want to see report after report, all this year long and a year from now, stories that continue. We have a responsibility, when we send men and women overseas to fight for us, that we are on this floor fighting for them.

This Congress, so far, has failed to do that in many ways. This White House has done it day after day. I call on all of my colleagues to step up at every step of the way as we approve bill after bill, supplemental budgets, authorization bills, to stand up and speak out for our troops and no longer ignore the reality of this war.

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 assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to address the Senate in morning business and the time be discounted from the minority's time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HONORING MARIO CHANES DE ARMAS

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a Cuban patriot—Mario Chanes de Armas.

When we speak of individuals who have spent their lives fighting for the fundamental right of people to live in freedom, we often think of individuals like Nelson Mandela and Natan Sharansky.

However, today I want to share with you the story of Mario Chanez de Armas. He spent 30 years as a prisoner of conscience in Castro's gulag. He was the longest serving political prisoner the world has known—30 years imprisoned for his political views.

Sadly, Mr. Chanes died last week at the age of 80 before his one true dream could be fulfilled—freedom for the people of Cuba.

I want to extend my condolences to the members of his family and his many friends.

He was a man of great conviction and held a true love for humanity. Mario Chanes was a freedom fighter in the truest sense of the words. Originally a labor leader, Chanes de Armas demonstrated leadership and charisma and was an early ally of the then perceived "reformer" Fidel Castro. They had worked together for democracy and against the Batista dictatorship. He and Castro shared a cell in Batista's prison until they were both released.

Shortly after the Castro take over Mario began to see the true nature of the individual that was his former cell mate. He realized that Castro did not care about civil liberties and human rights or democracy as he once claimed but rather Castro became what he remains today—irrational, a devoted communist, and an enemy of freedom, a brutal dictator. For pointing out the danger Castro posed to Cubans, Chanes de Armas was jailed as a counter-revolutionary.

He served for 30 years in deplorable conditions.

Human Rights Watch reports that Cuban political prisoners spend months in isolation cells, sometimes without light or ventilation. They are often provided no beds—no mattresses. Their rations of food and water are barely enough to sustain life. Sanitation and medical conditions are so bad that inmates often leave prison with serious ailments—if they are allowed to leave at all.

Chanes de Armas suffered these conditions. For his continued resistance against the dictatorship, he was put in tapiadas, steel isolation cells, and gavetas, "drawers" so narrow that he only had room to stand. And for what? For refusing to change his political beliefs and for rejecting communism. They never broke his spirit in spite of all the punishment.

Mr. President, Today I want us to take a moment to remember Mario Chanes de Armas—to honor him, his legacy, our continued battle for freedom and the ideals in which he believed and tried so hard to bring to Cuba—liberty, democracy, human rights, rules of law. His dream lives on and his legacy lights the way.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

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

TRANSPORTATION SECURITY OFFICERS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, there are 43,000 men and women working as transportation security officers, or TSOs, for the Transportation Security Administration. They deserve our respect, not our indifference.

The McCaskill amendment is straightforward. It provides TSOs basic rights and protections in the workplace.

The DeMint amendment, however, strips away those rights and protections. Proponents have raised specious arguments about the consequences of providing worker protections to people whose job it is to protect us. In fact, the opposite is true.

The McCaskill amendment helps ensure that a screening system intended to prevent acts of terrorism actually prevents acts of terrorism. If we want TSOs to protect our health and safety, we should protect theirs. For the sake of screeners and travelers both, TSOs should not be overworked.

For the sake of screeners and travelers both, TSOs should not fear retaliation if they report security breaches.

For the sake of screeners and travelers both, TSOs should have somewhere to turn if they are being harassed or bullied at the workplace or if there are health and safety issues in the workplace.

Basic rights, basic common sense. That is what the McCaskill amendment is about. It doesn't give TSOs the right to strike. It does not compromise the public safety. Actually, it promotes the public safety.

I urge every Member of this body to allow TSOs the same basic rights and privileges and protections as other Federal employees. Vote yes on the McCaskill amendment because you care about these workers, and vote yes because you care about all of us, the people they are protecting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I take the floor today to speak on two subjects and very briefly to address my colleague from Ohio. Mr. President, I wish to make an important point about why these collective bargaining provisions are, in fact, harmful to the United States of America and to the American people. It is a pretty simple point.

Terrorists don't have collective bargaining agreements. I will say that again. Terrorists don't have collective bargaining agreements. Terrorists don't go on strike. Terrorists don't call their unions to negotiate before they attack. They are always plotting and, because of this, we must be always working vigilantly to protect our homeland.

Today we are debating how quickly we are going to respond to threats from terrorists who are eager to strike us, and some in this body are suggesting that we should give the ability of the people who are on the front lines to collectively bargain. It is absurd. It is absolutely absurd. But I assure my colleagues, if this collective bargaining language stays in, we risk doing exactly that—accepting something absurd.

(The remarks of Mr. BURR pertaining to the introduction of S. 765 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements

on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

RISK-BASED FUNDING

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I wish to speak this morning in favor of Feinstein-Cornyn amendment No. 335 and highlight how important it is that our homeland security grants be awarded on the basis of risk.

As we have debated and discussed on the floor of this Chamber on numerous occasions, the smartest and most pragmatic approach to funding for homeland security grants is based on the level of risk faced by communities, not by some arbitrary formula.

It is a simple approach. Places that face more risk and are more attractive targets to terrorist attacks should receive more funding. This was the approach articulated and supported by the 9/11 Commission, and it is one that this body should have approved.

As we all know, the way homeland security funds are distributed now reflects a political compromise. It does not reflect a realistic assessment of our Nation's security needs. Some money will be based on risk, but all States are guaranteed of receiving some funding.

It makes very good sense to create a structure whereby first responder funds are allocated based on risk of a terrorist attack. In my home State of Florida, we have ports, tourism, and population centers. We have major cities, such as Miami, Tampa, and Jacksonville, all with stadiums, professional sports franchises, and busy downtowns.

As a former mayor of Orange County, I recognize the critical need for risk-based funding of homeland security grants.

If you look at the population of Orlando, it appears to be a moderately sized city. However, if one considers the interests of the greater Orlando area with tourist attractions, amusement parks, and resorts, at any one time, there can be millions of Americans and foreign visitors in the Orlando area.

According to the Orlando County Visitors Bureau, roughly 45 million visitors come to central Florida each year—45 million visitors. There is no way our current funding system accounts for this reality. Across Florida, we have significant roadways, railroads, and some of the busiest ports in the world. We are told all are potential targets, but our current method of funding does not reflect the needs of my State or that of many other States. We need to correct this problem. The American people expect us to correct this problem. That is why I am supporting the Feinstein-Cornyn amendment.

Following the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, this amendment

would, first of all, ensure that homeland security grants are allocated on a risk-based formula built on assessment of threat, vulnerability, and consequence to the maximum extent practicable. Secondly, it would assure a guaranteed minimum funding for homeland security grants, without turning the program into another grant system for redistributing Federal funds arbitrarily. The amendment also directs the DHS Secretary to consider transient and tourist populations as risk targets for deciding the disbursement of funding for homeland security grants. Finally, it sets minimum performance requirements for homeland security grants and a 2-year audit cycle for grant recipients by the DHS inspector general.

Under this amendment, every State would continue to receive some funding; it is just that now the cities and States most at risk would receive most of the funding. This amendment certainly makes sense to Florida's new Governor, Charlie Crist, who believes it to be the best option for Florida. I feel the same way. I know other Senate colleagues of mine believe Senators FEINSTEIN and CORNYN have put together a commonsense amendment that helps the cities and States most at risk. I will vote in favor of this amendment, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Our Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, also thinks it a prudent move and said as much during a debate on the homeland security grants during 2005. Secretary Chertoff remarked then:

Funding our first responders based on risk and need gives us the flexibility to ensure our finite resources are allocated in a prioritized and objective manner.

What this means is communities across this Nation—whether they are large or small; whether or not they would appear to be high-risk terrorist targets—are receiving precious resources that are going to local law enforcement agencies so they can upgrade their equipment and other resources. We should not be allocating, in some formulaic method, the limited money set aside for first responders. We need to take a more direct approach.

There is a reason terrorists struck New York and Washington on September 11: They wanted to strike two of our most powerful cities. They wanted to cripple our Government and sabotage our economy. It is for these reasons that cities such as New York and Washington should receive homeland security grants that are commensurate with that risk. A spending formula does not speak to this basic reality.

I support the Feinstein-Cornyn amendment and ask my colleagues to support this amendment as well.

As we continue this important debate, the heart of our efforts should be on making America safer, not rewarding particular communities or interest groups. It is disheartening to me that