

Mr. President, the administration and Republicans in Congress owe our troops, their families, and our veterans a lot more.

I am not going to sit idly by and wait for them to act, and I am not going to wait for another commission. I am going to continue to be out here on almost a daily basis to talk about it, to fight for our troops, for our veterans, and their families. They deserve nothing less.

I thank the Chair. 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. THOMAS. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I wanted to talk a little bit about the bill that we are on, the State homeland security formula and the security bill. Certainly, I am hopeful that we will be able to complete that soon. I hope that we can continue to move forward at a little faster pace, perhaps, and do some of the things that need to be done. I understand the complication of many of these bills and the importance of them, but I think we do need to consider some of the things that are ahead of us—immigration, for example, and health care, and some of those kinds of issues that are before us.

This morning, I would like to spend a few minutes on one concern I have in the pending bill which has to do with rural America. During last week's debate, the Senate effectively voted a significant cut for rural States. Now, of course, I understand we have to consider the impact of homeland security, but the idea that rural States are not impacted I certainly don't think is completely true. Under the bill, my State stands to receive roughly \$10 million out of \$3 billion—\$10 million in Wyoming. Some people think all we have is cows and sheep and maybe an oil well or two, but the fact is that we do have a base of energy. As a matter of fact, in some ways that may be one of the most susceptible risks to security. So I do think there needs to be a little more discussion in that respect.

For years now, the States of New York and California have used Wyoming as a poster child for wasteful homeland security because Wyoming receives a per capita amount. The per capita amount is relatively high. Why? Because we have a very small population, half a million compared to 30 or 35 million. So the per capita formula is not an indication of the need for the State. It is easy for New York and California to play with the numbers and sort of mislead the audience by leaving out the actual amount of money that

Wyoming generally receives. We also rarely hear mentioned that their States, these large States, receive hundreds of millions of dollars through the same program, the homeland security grant program. But that is not even half the story. These same large States conveniently fail to disclose the fact that their States also qualify for funding from the urban grant program, a program that excludes my State and other rural States.

So this is one of those times when you have to take a look at all the States and realize this idea just of population does not work. As we can see on the floor of the Senate, population is not the only condition for having two Senators here, fortunately. In any event, from fiscal year 2003 through 2006, homeland security funding for California has been \$1.1 billion and New York received \$932 million, compared to Wyoming receiving approximately \$20 million its first year. In 4 years that figure has fallen to \$10 million.

At any rate, as I am suggesting, there is a certain amount of inequity in terms of the funding formula in this bill. When we do receive Federal assistance, that money goes a long way, of course. Unlike many of our urban counterparts, we make the best use of it and always have, but that doesn't mean that rural areas are not at risk. In fact, as I said, in many ways you can say it might be easier to attack the rural areas than some of the others.

Most people don't know that Wyoming is the largest net exporter of energy in the United States. Our energy powers the Nation and is critical to maintaining our strong national security. So rail lines and transmission lines and refineries are very important not only to our State but to the Nation.

There is no question that the economy favors dense areas. We have debated this, as a system, and I suppose we will continue to do that. As a matter of fact, we had a vote where I think we lost by only one in terms of increasing the basic amount States would receive. Hopefully, we can take another look at this as we go about working with the House.

I would like to also comment on a pending amendment which is inconsistent with the majority's will to prohibit nongermane amendments. I don't recall the 9/11 Commission making this recommendation, but we have an amendment pending that would reroute hazardous materials through our Nation's small towns instead of through big cities. I don't in any way want to infer that it is the intention of this amendment to put small towns in harm's way. Unfortunately, the amendment has been filed and, indeed, will put individuals in rural areas at more risk than those in urban areas.

There is no question that we need to secure the rails. Coming from a State where the economy relies to a large extent on railroads, I know all too well that security is critical to this infrastruc-

ture. It certainly is important to us, and we are making significant progress in that regard. The Federal Government and the railroads have agreements targeted at reducing the risk of hazardous materials that are in high-threat urban areas around the Nation, and these arguments didn't happen overnight. I understand that, and that is proper. They are well thought out, with the input from security and industry professionals and all of the experts in Congress. Mandatory rerouting would not eliminate the risks. Instead, it shifts them from one population to another.

Forced rerouting could also foreclose routes that are top performers in terms of overall safety and security and result in increased risk in exposure and reduced safety and security. If we force these trains to reroute, imagine the cost of the goods that will be passed along to the consumer. Railroads are required by the Federal Government to transport hazardous materials. They cannot pick up and abandon a line that is not profitable.

Under this measure, railroads are going to have to build a new track and acquire a lot of land that bypasses major metropolitan areas. Imagine the demand for the use of eminent domain, which is one of the difficulties that we have, of course, and is necessary when you talk about this kind of infrastructure.

Finally, I would like to respond a little bit to some of the arguments that the other side has made with respect to keeping this bill clear of extraneous and nongermane amendments.

Last week, the minority leader requested that the Senate vote on a package of security-related amendments. The majority declined and decided to filibuster the package instead and block consideration. Instead of having these honest debates on amendments to improve the bill, the majority sent out a conflicting message. On the one hand, they argued the amendment to strengthen the security of the country was nongermane and partisan. On the other hand, they argued that a union-backed elective bargaining provision was relevant to our Nation's security and wasn't partisan.

Mr. President, I am very troubled by the inconsistency, particularly on this bill. I know many Members feel the same way. In fact, I would like to reference the comments made on the floor of the Senate last week by the Senator from Michigan, who came to the floor expressing frustration with the lack of progress on the bill. The Senator was concerned about amendments being offered by the Republicans that would strengthen our national security but were not relevant to the 9/11 Commission recommendations. It was stated, and I quote:

I find myself needing to express concern about the place in which we find ourselves at this point—unable to move forward with the final bill and the relevant 9/11 Commission amendments that have been offered because

of an effort by the Senate Republican leader to offer a wide-ranging number of unrelated amendments to the bill.

Unfortunately, this frustration was directed at the wrong side of the aisle. Union collective bargaining is not an issue recommended by the 9/11 Commission and should not be in this bill. It seems to me we are hearing mixed messages from the other side. It appears that they are willing to include provisions backed by the unions but not willing to debate and vote on tough security-related measures such as those contained in the Cornyn amendment.

The amendment offered by the Senator from Texas would do so much more to strengthen our national security than the labor measure, but Members on the other side have aggressively defended that amendment of last week. Of these two measures, there can be no debate as to which provision does more to protect our Nation. The other side of the aisle has it wrong.

I generally agree with what the Senator from Michigan said last week, but you cannot have it both ways when it comes to securing our Nation. If we want to limit this bill to debating and implementing the 9/11 recommendations, let's not compromise national security at the same time by allowing collective bargaining of the TSA screeners. Setting this policy would greatly hinder TSA's flexibility to respond to terrorism threats, flesh intelligence, and emergencies as they arise. TSA needs to have the ability to move the screeners around as schedules and threats change.

TSA was created to be a nimble agency. Let me give some examples of how TSA has proven its ability to quickly respond.

During the August 2006 United Kingdom air bombing threat, TSA screeners were briefed and deployed where they were needed to respond to the threat.

TSA has employed its flexibility to evacuate patients at the Texas VA Hospital in the path of Hurricane Rita and helped with the evacuation of people in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

Last year, when Lebanon erupted into violence and fighting broke out, TSA was able to rapidly respond to expedite the evacuation of thousands of Americans in Lebanon and thousands of legitimate refugees.

TSA deployed 27 of its officers to Cyprus when fighting broke out. TSA was able to quickly respond, assisting airport authorities with verifying passenger identification documents and screening the large volume of evacuees.

This labor-backed provision has nothing to do with enhancing our homeland security, and the President has repeatedly said he will veto the bill if collective bargaining is included. If we are going to be sincere in improving homeland security, that is one thing, but moving forward with collective bargaining for TSA is unexplainable. The 9/11 Commission made a lot of recommendations, most of which I sup-

port, but a collective bargaining provision didn't even make the list.

I can only hope that when the bill passes and it goes to conference that conferees will do the right thing and drop the provision. Failure to do so will only delay our effort to strengthen this Nation's security.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the remainder of the time be controlled by this side of the aisle, that I be permitted to speak for 8 minutes, that the Senator from Illinois, Mr. OBAMA, be permitted to speak for 8 minutes, and then we will see how much time we have remaining.

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

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended until the hour of 11:15 in order to accommodate folks on the other side of the aisle.

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

IRAQ

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, 9 months ago, 13 Senators cast their vote for a 1-year deadline for redeployment of most U.S. troops from Iraq. Our country has been waiting impatiently for Washington to find the right way forward for Iraq and the right policy for our troops. It seemed then, when those 13 votes were cast, as it does now, that was the only way to help Iraq and the Middle East to emerge from a nightmarish war that has delivered chaos where it sought order, fear where it promised freedom, and open-ended escalation where the President promised us mission accomplished. This is a war which has cost us dearly in just about every possible measure of American interest and power.

Today, Democrats stand nearly united behind a strategy for success, a strategy for success that includes a deadline needed to force the Iraqis to stand up for Iraq. A lot has changed in the last 9 months, but I am more convinced than ever that a combination of serious, sustained diplomacy, real diplomacy, leveraged by a 1-year deadline for the redeployment of U.S. troops, is the best way to achieve our goal of stability in Iraq and security in the region.

I listened to administration spokespeople in the last few days as they went on television blasting the Democratic proposal. It is interesting how they continue their habit of just setting up a straw man, putting something out there that has nothing to do with the reality of the program, and then knocking it down. They are fond of saying: a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq would be just terrible to our

interests in the region. Let's make it clear. A 1-year date from now, with discretion to the President to leave troops there to finish the training, with discretion to the President to leave troops there to chase al-Qaida, with discretion to the President to leave troops there to protect American facilities and forces, with the ability to have an over-the-horizon presence—a 1-year deadline from today, which would be entering the 6th year of this war, is not a precipitous withdrawal of any kind whatsoever. In fact, there are many people in the country who think that is not soon enough.

The fact is, this administration wants to sow fear in Americans, so they choose to debate something that is not the proposal of those of us who have put this proposal forward. What we propose to do is change the strategy of our mission so we can achieve success.

What we have seen is that this open-endedness you just kind of say we need to do this and we need to do that and we want the Iraqis to stand up and we want the police to do better and Prime Minister Maliki said he is going to deliver—none of that delivers anything. The Iraqi politicians know that as long as there is no deadline, they can take as long as they want to work out whatever power struggles and differences they have. So they are using the presence of American forces as cover for their own goals, for their own desires, until we in the United States say to them: Hey, folks, get serious. Our young people are prepared—obviously, because we have been doing it for 4 years—to put their lives on the line in order to help you have democracy, but you have to grab that democracy, you have to make decisions, and you have to go in and police your neighborhoods.

The only way you are going to change that is by being responsible and demanding something.

It provides the President the discretion to be able to complete the training. What else, after 5 years, would we want to be in Iraq besides finishing the training and standing up the Iraqi forces and chasing al-Qaida and fighting the legitimate war on terror?

This 1-year deadline is sound policy. It is based on the Iraq Study Group's goal of redeploying U.S. combat forces from Iraq by the first quarter of 2008. It is consistent with the timeframe for transferring control to the Iraqis that was set forth by General Casey and the schedule agreed upon by the Iraqi Government itself.

Even the President has said, under his new strategy, responsibility for security would be transferred to Iraqis before the end of this year. If the President is telling us that responsibility for security can be transferred to the Iraqis by the end of this year, don't we have a right to hold the President accountable for that goal? Don't we have a right to hold the Iraqis accountable for that goal? If the goal is to transfer security to them by the end of this