

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

year, how can you resist the notion that you are going to leave troops there to complete the training, chase al-Qaida, protect American forces, but bring the bulk of our combat forces home so they, indeed, will be standing up for their own security?

The President has said it. The Iraq Study Group has said it. The generals have said it. Now it is time for the Senate to put it on record as part of our effort to support this objective. It is long since time for the Iraqis to assume responsibility for their country. We need this deadline to leverage the Iraqis into making the hard compromises that are necessary.

I might add, no young soldier from the United States or Great Britain ought to be dying so that Iraqi politicians can get more time to squabble, more time to try to strike a better deal for themselves. We ought to be working overtime in order to bring about a compromise that is ultimately the only solution to what is happening in Iraq today.

Even now, we keep hearing the Iraqis are close to a deal on sharing oil revenues. But we still have not seen the final agreement ratified. Without a real deadline to force a deal, there is no telling how long it will take. But we do know that as long as there is no deadline, the Iraqis will believe they can take as long as they want.

We also know American soldiers and Iraqi civilians will continue to die and be maimed while those politicians continue to use the presence of American forces as a cover for their other objectives. We saw that again last weekend, when Iraq's neighbors and key players from the international community finally got together at a conference in Baghdad. The conference was a welcome development. We have been calling for it for several years. It was long overdue. But nothing tangible came out of it because, of course, no preparations and no diplomacy had been carried out leading up to it in order to get something substantive to come out of it. That is precisely why a deadline is so critical and essential, to force everyone to focus on the urgent need to reach a political solution.

The debate—this debate, a debate the Senate needs to have—offers a very clear choice, a choice between a new way forward and the old way that has taken us backward.

I might add, yesterday we saw a little more of that old way as the rhetoric escalated. The Vice President said yesterday, "When Members speak not of victory but of time limits, deadlines, and other arbitrary measures, they are telling the enemy simply to watch the clock and wait us out."

First of all, there is nothing arbitrary about a date for next year. The Iraq Study Group put it forward, the President said security responsibility could be transferred by the end of this year, and the generals put it forward. But more importantly, the Vice President of the United States must be the

last person in America who believes the enemy is waiting or watching the clock. It is Iraqi politicians who are watching the clock. They are the ones who are delaying and squabbling. The enemy is busy doing what the enemy has been doing.

Moreover, the Vice President lumps things together in the word "enemy" here in a very strange way. Yes, the enemy is al-Qaida, and we are focused on al-Qaida. But the fact is that this war in Iraq is fundamentally a civil war now. It is a struggle between Sunni and Shia, and the last I knew, they are Iraqis and they are not our enemy. They are fighting amongst each other for the power and the future of Iraq.

With each day, this administration becomes more detached from the realities.

I believe if you look at the figures, this is not a temporary surge. This weekend, we learned that the President's escalation is going to involve nearly 5,000 more troops than the 21,500 that was initially announced and the Congressional Budget Office estimates that the total could eventually reach 48,000 additional troops total. The original cost estimate was about \$5.6 billion but the CBO tell us the final amount could reach nearly five times that much. And it looks more and more like the troop increase could last well into next year.

We also see that most people understand that when the Vice President talks about undermining the troops, there is not one of us here who is not outraged by what has happened to the troops with respect to the lack of adequate armor, the lack of adequate support, numbers of personnel and planning, and, most importantly, the treatment of those soldiers when they have come home—a VA budget that is inadequate, a disability system that is dysfunctional, and obviously the treatment we saw recently at Walter Reed.

The Vice President needs to focus on how you really support the troops. The way you really support the troops is to get the policy in Iraq right. We have a policy for success. They have had a 4-year policy of failure that has made Iran stronger, North Korea stronger, Hamas stronger, Hezbollah stronger, weakened our relations in the region, and has certainly not served the interests of our national security.

It is time for the Senate to do what this administration has stubbornly refused to do to recognize that we should honor lives lost with lives saved. That starts by putting aside the hollow rhetoric and straw men that have undermined a real debate for far too long and support a strategy that preserves our core interests in Iraq, in the region, and throughout the world. That is how we support the troops.

Mr. President, we can do better. This resolution we have submitted is a way to do better.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise, first, to offer strong words of support for the statement that was just offered by the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts. I also rise today to speak in support of the Iraq resolution the Senate will consider tomorrow.

The news from Iraq is very bad. Last week, a suicide bomber stood outside a bookstore and killed 20 people. Other attacks killed 118 Shia pilgrims. On Sunday, a car bomb went off in central Baghdad, and more than 30 people died. The road from the airport into Baghdad is littered with smoldering debris, craters from improvised explosive devices, and the memories of our sons and daughters.

The civil war in Iraq rages on. The insurgents have started to change their tactics. They hide in buildings and along the streets and wait for our helicopters. They have shot down at least 8 U.S. helicopters in the last month. More of our soldiers are dying or coming home with their bodies broken and their nerves shattered to a VA system completely unprepared for what they need to rebuild their lives.

It is not enough for the President to tell us victory in this war is simply a matter of American resolve. The American people have been extraordinarily resolved. They have seen their sons and daughters killed or wounded in the streets of Fallujah. They have spent hundreds of billions of dollars on this effort—money they know could have been devoted to strengthening our homeland security and our competitive standing as a nation. The failure has not been a failure of resolve. That is not what has led us into chaos. It has been a failure of strategy, and it is time that the strategy change. There is no military solution to the civil war that rages on in Iraq, and it is time for us to redeploy so that a political solution becomes possible.

The news from Iraq is very bad, and it has been that way for at least 4 years. We all wish the land the President and the Vice President speak of exists. We wish there were an Iraq where the insurgency was in its last throes, where the people work with security, where children play outside, where a vibrant new democracy lights up the nighttime sky. We wish for those things, but there is no alternative reality to what we see and read about in the news, to what we have experienced these long 4 years.

I repeat, there is no military solution to this war. At this point, no amount of soldiers can solve the grievances at the heart of someone else's civil war. The Iraqi people—Shia, Sunni, and Kurd—must come to the table and reach a political settlement themselves. If they want peace, they must do the hard work necessary to achieve it.

Our failed strategy in Iraq has strengthened Iran's strategic position, reduced U.S. credibility and influence around the world, and placed Israel and other nations in the region that are friendly to the United States in greater

peril. These are not signs of a well-laid plan. It is time for a profound change.

This is what we are trying to do here today. We are saying it is time to start making plans to redeploy our troops so they can focus on the wider struggle against terrorism, win the war in Afghanistan, strengthen our position in the Middle East, and pressure the Iraqis to reach a political settlement. Even if this effort falls short, we will continue to try to accomplish what the American people asked for last November.

I am glad to see, though, that this new effort is gaining consensus. I commend Senator REID for his efforts. He took the time to listen to so many of us from both Chambers of Congress to help develop this plan.

The decision in particular to again begin a phased redeployment, with the goal of redeploying all our combat forces by March 30, 2008, is the right step. It is a measure the Iraq Study Group spoke of, an idea I borrowed from them, an idea that, in a bill I introduced, now has more than 60 cosponsors from the House and Senate and from both sides of the aisle. They have supported this plan since I announced a similar plan in January.

The decision to allow some U.S. forces to remain in Iraq with a clear mission to protect U.S. and coalition personnel, conduct counterterrorism operations, and to train and equip Iraqi forces is a smart decision. President al-Maliki spoke at a conference and warned that the violence in Iraq could spread throughout the region if it goes unchecked. By maintaining a strong presence in Iraq and the Middle East, as both my bill and the leadership bill does, we can ensure that the chaos does not spread.

I should also add that the decision to begin this phased redeployment within 120 days is a practical one. Our military options have been exhausted. It is time to seek a political solution to this war, and with this decision we send a clear signal to the parties involved that they need to arrive at an accommodation.

While I strongly believe this war never should have been authorized, I believe we must be as careful in ending the war as we were careless getting in. While I prefer my approach as reflected in my bill, I believe this resolution does begin to point U.S. policy and Iraq in the right direction. An end to the war and achieving a political solution to Iraq's civil war will not happen unless we demand it. Peace with stability does not just happen because we wish for it.

It comes when we never give in and never give up and never tire of working toward a life on Earth worthy of our human dignity. The decisions that have been made have led us to this crossroad, in a moment of great peril.

We have a choice. We can continue down the road that has weakened our credibility and damaged our strategic interests in the region or we can turn

toward the future. The road will not be smooth. I have to say there will be risks with any approach, but this approach is our last best hope to end this war so we can begin to bring our troops home and begin the hard work of securing our country and our world from the threats we face.

The President has said he will continue down the road toward more troops and more of the same failed policies. The President sought and won authorization from Congress to wage this war from the start. But he is now dismissing and ignoring the will of the American people who are tired of years of watching the human and financial tolls mount.

The news from Iraq is very bad, but it can change if we in this Chamber say "enough." Let this day be the day we begin the painful and difficult work of moving from the crossroad. Let this day be the day we begin pulling toward the future with a responsible conclusion to this painful chapter in our Nation's history. Let this be the day when we finally send a message that is so clear and so emphatic that it cannot be ignored.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Iowa.

TAX GAP

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the subject today is the tax gap. The tax gap is the difference between what is paid voluntarily in taxes by 85 percent of the American people and what is actually owed by people who do not pay all of the taxes that are legally owed.

The tax gap does not include things that are in the underground economy, nor does it include illegal earnings. The tax gap is certainly not a new issue. We have discussed it on the floor of the Senate many times. It has been an issue for previous administrations as well as this administration. In fact, I suspect the tax gap has been an issue for as long as there has been taxes. However, I would say in recent years the Finance Committee, on which I serve, has certainly brought a new focus to the issue of the tax gap. This has been very much a bipartisan effort. I believe the level of attention given to the tax gap certainly reflects the energy and focus of the new chairman of the committee, Senator MAX BAUCUS from Montana. Chairman BAUCUS should be commended for his work in this area.

I also want to praise the chairman of the Budget Committee, Senator CONRAD of North Dakota, for putting an additional spotlight on the tax gap topic. The Finance Committee has been doing the hard work in this area, encouraging greater research by the Internal Revenue Service, asking for detailed reports and recommendations from the Treasury Department as well as the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, investigating specific aspects of the tax gap, holding hearings to explore the details of the tax gap.

Finally, the Finance Committee has been doing the most difficult work of all, actually passing significant legislation that would reduce the money that is not coming in because of the tax gap. This has not been easy. I find the tax gap is one of those issues here in Congress that is a little bit like the weather: Everyone talks about it but no one is doing as much as should be done about it. But the way people talk around here, they view the tax gap as somehow a cure-all for all budget problems. The tax gap can be used to pay for the alternative minimum tax problem; if we want to expand spending on health care, tap into the tax gap; if we want to balance the budget, tap into the tax gap.

Given the amount of faith people have put into it, the tax gap has suddenly become one of those magic elixirs the peddlers used to sell in the Old West. You know how they said it will cure all that ails you. That was the slogan used by those slick salesmen 100 years ago. So the tax gap has become the elixir for all fiscal problems. I am surprised folks do not think the tax gap would cure baldness, as an example. So let's get behind the dreams and get to the real story of the tax gap.

I want to talk about three issues dealing with the tax gap. First, what is the estimate of the tax gap? Second, what are the elements of the tax gap? Finally, what do we actually do in addition to all of those things we have been doing to reduce the tax gap; in other words, to go after that final dollar we know is legally owed but not collected.

First, how is it the tax gap is estimated, and what is it? The Senate Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Taxation and Internal Revenue Service Oversight held a hearing 9 months ago, July 2006. It was chaired by the then-chairman of that subcommittee, Senator KYL. We heard extensive testimony from senior IRS officials about how the tax gap is estimated. The tax gap has been based on reporting compliance efforts known as the Taxpayer Compliance Measurement Program.

As many colleagues will recall, these efforts were viewed as too intrusive into the lives of the taxpayers. So the last taxpayer compliance measurement program that was done was back in 1988. Senator BAUCUS and I recognized the need for the updated research and encouraged the Internal Revenue Service to look at research that could provide useful data, useful information, without unduly burdening the honest taxpayer.

The Internal Revenue Service then responded with a national research program. It is important to realize that the national research program only dealt with a portion of the entire tax gap, primarily focusing on individual income taxes and not dealing with corporate tax. There are still significant portions of the tax gap that are then based on that very old material going