

25 amendments in a row probably every 3 minutes and have no idea what we are voting on. We will finish it up, and what effect does it have? None. The President doesn't sign it. We treat our own budgets about the same as we treat the President's budgets: We ignore them. We trash them a while and then throw them out in the street and do what we want to do.

I do think the budget is going to be the beginning of an opportunity for the American people to have buyer's remorse about what they have done with the Congress. This is going to be sort of a typical budget debate. The headline again in the New York Times is: "Senate Democrats offer spending plan but no way to pay for it."

I think in theory you can say Republicans always want to cut taxes, and they don't want to worry a whole lot about the effect that has on the deficit, although I believe if we cut taxes in the right way, we get more revenue.

I also think we all better take a look at what has been the effects of our tax policy and our budgets on the economy. The economy is good. Do we have some problems in the energy area and health care? Yes. We ought to do something about those issues. But overall, we have had economic growth. Revenues are pouring in.

So what is the budget I am looking at going to do? I think Senator CONRAD is a very serious chairman of the Budget Committee. I know he would like to do more than he is going to be able to do. I know he would like to do entitlement reform. We know it has to come. We will not belly up to that bar this year or next year. Maybe something will occur and we will do it in 2009.

This is going to be a budget where there is more domestic spending, less defense spending, and tax increases. That is what is going to happen. That is what always happens. We may not be a whole lot more responsible with a Republican budget, but this is your basic Democratic budget, and we are going to see it next week. We are going to describe it as one of smoke and mirrors. It assumes the tax cuts are going to be extended into the future, but it doesn't come up with any way to pay for them. Under the new rules, we are going to have pay-fors. If you increase spending, you are going to have to pay for it, or if you have tax cuts, you are going to have to pay for them, but it doesn't say how that is going to occur.

I do think we are at a critical juncture. We have gone through the opening, trying to get used to how we run the institution with new management. We haven't done it well. I am going to mark it off as the early phases of a new Congress and feeling our way forward. But when we get through positioning, I hope we are going to find a way to do some things together. We should have immigration reform. We need it. I know "comprehensive immigration reform" has gotten to be a dirty word, but I do think we have to deal with it in a broad way. It has to deal with

legal immigration, illegal immigration, and we are going to have to have a temporary worker program. We have to find some way for people to have a pathway to citizenship.

We have to address health care in America. Health care has become so expensive and, in many cases, not accessible. Why can't we work together on that issue?

Energy—the energy situation in America is a national security risk and an economic risk. Some people say: Oh, we can fix it by raising mileage standards for automobiles, CAFE standards. Some of us—I am in that group—think we don't have to produce less or get along with not having more oil and gas and nuclear power and everything else. I think we can have more of everything. Let's see if we can't find a way to come together and maybe do both in a responsible way.

I appreciate the opportunity to talk about these issues this morning. I hope we can come to an agreement on how to proceed on Iraq, and I hope we can finish it by sundown tonight and then move on to the obligatory vote on the budget, which will be a waste of time, next week, and then maybe we can get serious about what we do in the Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OBAMA). The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, what is the floor situation?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in a period for morning business. Democrats control the next 30 minutes.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I thank the Chair. Mr. President, I yield myself approximately 10 minutes.

First, I wish to respond for a few minutes to my colleague, the Senator from Mississippi, the Republican whip. We have been in session less than 70 days. We have already been spending more time on legislation than the Congress led by the other party last year. Last year, we were in session less time than the Maryland General Assembly. We only voted 108 days.

Now we have been in session 70 days. We have had a robust work schedule. Our colleagues in the House have passed significant legislation. What takes them 1 day takes us 2 weeks. It takes us 2 weeks not only because parliamentarily and constitutionally we are the more deliberative body, but at the same time it has been the obstructionist tactics of the other party that has prevented us from being able to move our legislation.

Nevertheless, thanks to the determination of our majority leader, the Senator from Nevada, Mr. REID, we have been able to pass ethics reform. The American people wanted us to clean up our own act before we cleaned up Government and, man, have the Republicans left us a lot to clean up: the Walter Reed scandal, the Attorney General scandal, the national security letter scandal—scandal after scandal after scandal. We came saying we

weren't going to be seeking investigations, but now their reckless incompetency is forcing us to do that.

Then we pushed to implement the 9/11 Commission recommendations. It has been 5½ years since the dastardly attack on the World Trade Center, and it has taken us forever to implement these recommendations.

So when the other party criticizes us for not doing the people's business, maybe if they get out of the way with their obstructionist tactics and let us move ahead with an agenda that is bipartisan, we can get the job done.

Too often, when all is said and done within the Senate, more gets said than gets done. So before people throw rocks, remember those who live in a glass house might end up being shattered to bits themselves.

Let us do our work. Every time we turn around, HARRY REID has to file another cloture motion. Why? Because they threaten filibuster. So, hello, don't criticize us.

IRAQ

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, let's get on with this micromanaging the war business. Maybe if the administration was micromanaging the war, we wouldn't be here today. They said there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Maybe if they had micromanaged the intelligence community, we wouldn't even have gone into Iraq in the first place.

No. 2, they said, We are ready to go. If Mr. Rumsfeld had micromanaged the U.S. military, maybe we would have had enough troops. Maybe if they had micromanaged the war, they would have had enough body armor. Maybe if they had micromanaged the system, we wouldn't have the scandal at Walter Reed. Maybe if they had micromanaged, we wouldn't have this horrific backlog at VA. They are the ones who should have been micromanaging the war, and if they can't do it, they need to get out of the way and let us pass our resolution.

The distinguished whip from the other party said he wants us to finish by sundown. We would like to sunset the war. That is what we would like to do. It is time for our troops to come home, and it is time for us to bring them home swiftly. But we have a moral obligation and a constitutional obligation to bring them home safely. This is why I support the Reid resolution. This resolution states clearly that the Congress and the American people support our troops. Yet, at the same time, we are saying bring the troops home by March 31, 2008. Unlike the reckless incompetency that got us into the war, we are following the guidelines of the Iraq Study Group, wise heads who pondered some of the best ways to a new way forward.

The Reid resolution sets a framework and a time line for doing what needs to be done and assuring our troops that we honor their service, and we are

going to protect them on the battlefield. We are going to make sure they have the resources to do the job, and when they come back home, we want to be sure they have health care and they have jobs and they have job training.

I know the distinguished Presiding Officer has been a leader in making sure that when our troops come home, they have job training, and I thank him for that.

I am not new to this position on the war. I never wanted to go to war in the first place, not because I am a pacifist—and I respect those who are—but I read that national intelligence report; I am on the Intelligence Committee. I had very grave suspicions about the level of weapons of mass destruction Saddam had. But I also believed it was the U.N.'s job to go to Iraq and do the work that the U.N. was supposed to do.

I opposed giving the President unilateral authority to engage in a preemptive attack just because he said we were in imminent danger. I wish he had micromanaged that a bit. Maybe we wouldn't have had to go. I said the United States had to exhaust our diplomatic options, and I encouraged the administration at that time: Please, stick with the U.N. so the U.N. can meet its responsibility to deal with the Saddam threat. I said we shouldn't go on our own and we should work with the U.N. and the international community.

The day of the vote when I spoke, I said I didn't know what lies ahead. I didn't know if our troops would be greeted with flowers or with landmines. Go to Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Hospital and talk to those coming home from Iraq. You know what we got. When we got there, there were no weapons of mass destruction, but destruction sure happened.

After 4 years of fighting, are we better off in Iraq? The United States went to war with Iraq, now we are at war within Iraq. Saddam is gone, we are still there, and now we are in a civil war. It is time for us to come home, and it is time for us to come home following the Iraq Study Group recommendations.

We need a new way forward in Iraq. The Iraq Study Group gave us 79 recommendations. Surely, we could agree on 50. If the administration wasn't being so isolated and so rigid, they would know it is time to engage in the international community, that it is always better to send in the diplomats before we send in the troops. Let's send in the diplomats so we can bring our troops back home.

The Iraq Study Group calls for enhanced diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq and outside Iraq. It provides a direction for the U.S. Government and the Iraqi Government to follow that would bring our forces home by the first quarter of 2008. That is what the Reid resolution calls for.

The Reid resolution sets a goal of bringing all U.S. combat forces home

by March 31, 2008, except for limited numbers of troops for force protection, training of the Iraqi troops, and targeted counterterrorism operations. It would begin a phased redeployment within 4 months after the passage of this legislation. But it also develops a comprehensive diplomatic, political, and economic strategy. Finally, this resolution requires the President to report to Congress within 60 days.

That is why we support this resolution. Are we micromanaging? No, but I wish the administration, as I said, had micromanaged the war. We wouldn't be in the debate we are in now.

I support the Reid resolution because I believe what the Iraq Study Group said, that the Iraq problems cannot now be solved with a military solution, no matter how brave, no matter how smart. It requires a political solution by the Iraqis and a diplomatic solution with Iraq's neighbors. It says the Congress and the American people will not just support the troops, but protect them.

I want this war to end, and I believe this Reid resolution will do that. Yet, in ending the war, it is my responsibility to ensure our troops are brought home not only swiftly but safely.

Mr. President, I have had sit-ins in my office four times during the last 3 weeks. Four times, people have come to my office to sit in. Some come to protest, some come to get arrested, but all have a right to speak out. They want me to vote against the spending for the war. Well, there is no way a responsible Senator can vote against spending. There is no one line item that says: War, yes or no. That is not the way the supplemental works. That is not the way the defense budget works. That is not the way our entire budget works. There is no vote that says: War, yes or no.

So I won't vote for defunding the war. I say to the protestors—I say to those well-intentioned liberal activists—know that we are on your side, but what are you asking us to vote against? Do you want us to vote against the pay for the soldiers and for their spouses and for their children? I won't vote against their benefits. What do you want us to vote against—the bullets and what they need to fight? I won't vote against that. Do you want us to vote against the body armor and the armored humvees they need for survival? I won't vote against that.

What if they are injured? One of the things that save their lives on the battlefields is the tourniquet. I won't cut off the money for the tourniquets. I want them to have the tourniquets to cut off the hemorrhaging on the battlefields. When they come out of there, there is the jet fuel that gets them on the medevac from Baghdad to Germany to Walter Reed and Bethesda. We will clean up Walter Reed, and we will fix Bethesda Naval Hospital, but they have to get here. When they get here, they need medical care. Hats off to acute medical care.

Now we need outpatient care. Now we need long-term care for the 50 years or so these men and women will have the need for it. We have had 22,000 people receive Purple Hearts in Iraq, and more have been injured than we will ever know or we will know years from now. So I can't vote against funding.

I tell all who are listening that you can sit in every single day, you can follow me throughout my Senate career, you can follow me to my grave—I will not vote to in any way harm the U.S. men and women in the military, nor will I cut off the support for help to their families. If you want to picket, you want to protest, you want to disrupt my life, better my life is disrupted than the lives of these men and women in uniform.

I am going to support this Reid resolution because I believe it helps bring the war to an honorable end, but at the same time, we are going to support our troops. It is time to stop the finger-pointing, and it is time to pinpoint a new way forward.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

STATE CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, some years ago, the distinguished and late great Senator from the State of Minnesota, Hubert H. Humphrey, said the following when he was talking about how we should evaluate budgets in government. He said:

The moral test of a government is how it treats those in the dawn of life, those in the shadows of life, and those in the twilight of life.

I rise today to speak of those in the dawn of their lives—children across America and especially the children of working families, working families who have no health insurance.

Unfortunately, despite good intentions and despite a good program I will be speaking about this morning, there are 9 million American children with no health insurance at all—9 million children. That is a blot on the American conscience—or should be—that there are 9 million children who have no health insurance at all. Justice cannot abide 9 million children in America with no health insurance.

That is the bad news. The good news is that we have a way to bring some relief to those children, to their families, and to the American economy. It is called the State Children's Health Insurance Program, known by the acronym SCHIP. So when I refer to SCHIP by that acronym, I am speaking of that program, the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Here is what this program does, and it bears repeating because of the broad coverage that important program provides to children across America. It provides comprehensive health insurance coverage to up to 6 million American children. It is financed jointly by State governments and the Federal Government. Currently, that program