

IRAQ

should be done in the right way and that is to have hearings.

I believe we need extensive hearings on these matters. And both Senator BENNETT and Senator FEINSTEIN have agreed to do that. So if there are other campaign finance matters, we would approach those in the same manner as we did these.

It is very important we finish this legislation. We are going to do the very best we can to do that, and we are going to finish it next week.

Now, I told the Republican leader, late last night, that I am thinking of filing cloture tomorrow or Tuesday on this matter. I think people have had every opportunity to offer amendments, to debate those amendments. I am sure there will be others that will be offered and debated, I hope, today. It is an important piece of legislation. But I hope people would do their best to direct it toward what we are trying to do; that is, ethics and lobbying reform.

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the distinguished Republican leader, with me and a few others, met with the President yesterday. I told the President how much I thought of him, personally. I told him, even though my fondness for him is significant, I disagree with a number of his policies, not the least of which is what is going on in Iraq.

He announced his new plan last night, and it was basically what he told us there at the White House yesterday. The President admitted he had made some mistakes, and I think that is commendable, the right thing to do, because there have been mistakes made in the waging of that war. But by calling for escalation of this conflict, I think he is on the verge of making another mistake.

As I made clear in a letter to the President last Friday, along with Speaker of the House PELOSI, I oppose his new plan because it sends the wrong signal to the Iraqis, to the Americans, and to the rest of the world. President Bush is Commander in Chief, and his proposal deserves serious consideration by this body, and we will give it serious consideration.

In the days ahead, we will give his proposal and the overall situation in Iraq a thorough review. I received a call late last night from one Democratic Senator who has a proposal, early this morning from another Senator, a Democratic Senator, who has some ideas. We heard, yesterday, from Senator COLEMAN. He opposes the surge. Senator BROWNBACH is in Iraq and issued a press release saying he opposed the surge.

But we are going to have hearings. Those hearings are starting today on the war that is raging in Iraq. Tomorrow, there will be further hearings by the Armed Services Committee. In those hearings, experts will be asked about his proposal. And when the proc-

ess is complete, we will have a vote in the Senate. As to when that will be, under Senate schedules, sometimes it is difficult to determine, but we will have one. I will not prejudice the outcome of the vote on the President's plan, but I will say this: Putting more U.S. combat forces in the middle of an Iraqi civil war is a mistake.

In November, voters all across the country spoke loudly for change in Iraq. That was the issue. In overwhelming numbers, they delivered a vote of no confidence on the President's opened-ended commitment and demanded we begin to bring this war to a close.

Last December, the Baker-Hamilton Commission—a respected panel of foreign policy experts who studied the law, patriots all—echoed the voters' call for change. The Commission, which included both Democrats and Republicans, determined the time has come to transition our forces out of Iraq, while launching a diplomatic and regional strategy to try to hold together this destabilized region.

But last night, the President—in choosing escalation—ignored the will of the people, the advice of the Baker-Hamilton Commission, and a significant number of top generals, two of whom were commanders in the field.

In choosing to escalate the war, the President virtually stands alone.

Mr. President, we have lost more than a score of soldiers from Nevada. The same applies to every State in the Union. From the State of Pennsylvania—I was speaking to the junior Senator from Pennsylvania—they lost more than 140. So many have sacrificed so much. They have done their job, these brave men and women. It is time for a policy, I believe, that honors their service by putting the future of Iraq in the hands of the Iraqis.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

ETHICS AND LOBBYING REFORM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, let me echo the comments of the majority leader about the underlying bill. The Senate passed, essentially, this bill 90 to 8 last year. Because of difficulties in dealing with the other body, we were not able to complete the job. But the Senate is ready to act. Members on this side of the aisle are ready to act. I share the majority leader's view that we ought to wrap this important lobby and ethics reform bill up sometime next week, and we will be cooperating toward that end.

We made good progress yesterday. There are a number of other amendments to be dealt with. We expect to deal with many of them today and in the morning.

Mr. McCONNELL. Briefly, Mr. President, with regard to the President's remarks last night, I think the American people would like to see us prevail in Iraq, succeed in Iraq. And the definition of "success," obviously, would be a stable government and an ally in the war on terror. What prevents that is violence in Baghdad.

This plan announced last night to clear and hold Baghdad neighborhoods gives the capital city a chance to quiet down, to create the kind of secure environment that will allow this fledgling democracy to begin to function.

I think the President should be given a chance to carry this out. Rather than condemn it before it even starts, it seems to me it would be appropriate to give it a chance to succeed. If it could succeed, it would be an enormous step forward in the war on terror.

Finally, let me say, it is no accident we have not been attacked again here for the last 5 years. I hope no one believes that is a quirk of fate. The reason we have not been attacked again here at home for the last 5 years is because we have been on offense in Afghanistan and Iraq. Many of the terrorists are now dead, many are incarcerated, others are hiding and on the run.

The policy of being on offense has been 100 percent successful in protecting our homeland, and we are grateful for that, that no Americans have been attacked for 5 years.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business for up to 90 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the minority and the second half of the time under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Iowa.

IRAQ

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, following the other two speakers in regard to Iraq, I want to say a couple things. No. 1, anybody who criticizes what the President is proposing or anybody else is proposing or what has been done cannot get away with criticizing. There has to be another plan. I want to hear plans from people who think that what the President is doing is wrong. What would they do?

The second thing is that even the Iraq Study Group, which is very bipartisan, said there should not be a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq.

In regard to what my distinguished leader of the Republican caucus had to

say, that there has not been any attack on Americans in the 5 years since 9/11, those who are criticizing our efforts on the war against terror would be the first ones, if we had an attack this very day, of criticizing the President of the United States: Why wasn't he on top to prevent some sort of attack? And because America has not been attacked, there tends to be a short memory about the fact that we did lose 3,000 Americans. And we know it can happen again.

We know that terrorists came into O'Hare with the idea of a dirty bomb in America. We know there were people who were going to blow up bridges in New York City who were caught and the plans known. We individual Senators have been told by the CIA and by the FBI about many instances of where terrorist attacks against Americans have been stopped, and American lives have not been lost because of that. But they cannot talk about it because we do not want the terrorists to know what we know about them.

Too much attention on Iraq detracts from the fact that there are terrorists in 60 different countries around the world waiting to kill Americans. Evidence of that was American military people working with the Filipinos over the weekend to kill two terrorists connected with radical religious groups.

We finally were able to get at some of the people who should have been arrested in the previous administration, if a proper relations with Saudi Arabia had brought it about, who thought up the bombing of the embassies in east Africa when 12 Americans were killed and 200 other people were killed. We believe one of those persons was killed in a strike we were making in Somalia over the weekend. So we are involved in more than just Iraq in the war on terror.

People who forget what happened to America on 9/11, and if it happened again, some of the people who are criticizing what the President is doing would be there saying, as they were soon after September 11: Why wasn't the President on top of what happened on September 11 so it wouldn't happen again, when there were five instances of Americans being killed: 1993, 1995, 1997, 1999, before 2001, and this body passed the Iraqi Liberation Act unanimously in 1998 because President Clinton was saying what a threat Saddam Hussein was to the United States or to the world as well and that he had to go.

When you have that bipartisan support at a time when Americans are being attacked and killed—in 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1999, before 9/11 somewhere around the world—you have to stop to think, it isn't just Iraq. It isn't just Afghanistan. It isn't just 9/11. These religious radicals have been out to kill Americans going way back to 250 marines being killed in Lebanon in 1983. And there are individual instances of terrorism before that.

The war on terrorism isn't something new. What is going on in Iraq is not the

war on terrorism. What is going on in Afghanistan is not the war on terrorism. The war on terrorism covers many nations, many threats to American people. The life of every one of us in this Chamber right now, if we were to go over to some parts of the world, would be threatened. We expect the President of the United States to protect us because he is Commander in Chief and because the responsibility of the Federal Government under the Constitution, No. 1, is the protection of the American people.

GOVERNMENT NEGOTIATION OF DRUG PRICES

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I did not come to the floor to talk about Iraq. I am not on too many of the committees that deal with foreign relations and military issues. I am on the Finance Committee, serving as a team player with the capable chairman of that committee, Senator BAUCUS, to deal with health issues, tax issues, and trade issues.

One of the health issues I have been speaking on for the last several days is the issue of Medicare and prescription drugs. For 3 days you have heard this Senator say why Democratic efforts to ruin the Medicare prescription drug program by doing away with the non-intervention clause is bad for senior citizens. I will take this fourth day of speaking to quote from other experts because I don't presume that any of the other 99 Senators care what I say. I have said it anyway. But I want to back up what I have said over the last 3 days by quoting from other people whom other Senators may be listening to in the period of time between now and a couple of weeks from now when this issue of prescription drugs is going to come up.

On Monday I spoke about how the benefit uses prescription drug plans and competition to keep costs down and how well that is working. I backed that up statistically. I said it then, and I say it again: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

I presented findings from the chief actuary at the Center for Medicare Services. And for the benefit of a new Senator chairing, this chief actuary is the one people on his side of the aisle were quoting so extensively, that there was a much higher figure coming out of the administration than what the CBO had, and there was an effort to keep that hidden—what the chief actuary said it would cost—from the Congress so that we would pass a bill that was more expensive than we said it was. And if he could be quoted then, I want people to listen to him now.

I also quoted experts from the Congressional Budget Office, explicitly rejecting opponents' claims that giving the Secretary of Health and Human Services the authority to negotiate with drug companies would produce savings.

Today I will let the words of others from across the political spectrum and

from the news media do the talking. I will begin with Secretary Michael Leavitt, head of the Department of Health and Human Services, who said:

Government negotiation of prices does not work unless you have a program completely run by the government. Federal price negotiations would unravel the whole structure of the Medicare drug benefit, which relies on competing private plans.

Just today, the Secretary wrote an op-ed in the Washington Post that if the Government was required to negotiate—I am quoting the Secretary—"one government official would set more than 4,400 prices for different drugs, making decisions that would be better made by millions of individual consumers."

The Secretary went on to say:

There are many ways the administration and Congress can work together to make health care more affordable and accessible. But undermining the Medicare prescription drug benefit, which has improved the lives and health of millions of seniors and people with disabilities, is not one of them.

The next person I would like to quote is Dan Mendelson, a former Clinton administration official, who now is president of a health care consulting firm that tracks Medicare prescription drug programs. Mr. Mendelson, a former Clinton administration official, said:

From a rhetorical perspective, Democrats may feel like they gain a lot with this issue, but there are many substantive hurdles that the government faces in trying to negotiate prices. If you look historically at the government's experience in trying to regulate prices, it's poor.

That was an official from the Clinton administration. As supporting evidence, a Chicago Tribune editorial said the following:

Richard S. Foster, the chief actuary for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, studied whether direct government negotiation would yield bigger discounts. His answer: Not likely.

One reason, he said, was Medicare's unassuring record on price negotiations, even before this new benefit was passed.

I made the point the other day that over the last 40 years, we have seen CMS, HHS, price health care, wasting a lot of taxpayers' dollars, because the Government has overpriced things, overreimbursed things. Mobile wheelchairs is just the most recent example I have used in some of my hearings in my committee while I was chairing it.

Medicare has a history, following on what I said, of paying for some drugs "at rates that, in many instances, were substantially greater than the prevailing price levels. Translation: The feds got fleeced."

That is the chief actuary that people on the other side of the aisle were quoting so liberally 3 years ago. I hope they will take his analysis of what is going on now in Medicare, working well for seniors, into consideration before they screw everything up with an amendment to do away with the non-interference clause.

Now I want to show you a chart. I guess this will be the first chart. I