

the Government's intention to debar the employer from the receipt of new Federal contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements for a period of 10 years.

"(iii) WAIVER.—

"(I) AUTHORITY.—After consideration of the views of any agency or department that holds a contract, grant, or cooperative agreement with the employer, the Administrator of General Services, in consultation with the Secretary of Homeland Security and the Attorney General, may waive operation of clause (i) or may limit the duration or scope of the debarment under clause (i) if such waiver or limitation is necessary to the national defense or in the interest of national security.

"(II) NOTIFICATION TO CONGRESS.—If the Administrator grants a waiver or limitation described in subclause (I), the Administrator shall submit to each member of the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate and of the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives immediate notice of such waiver or limitation.

"(III) PROHIBITION ON JUDICIAL REVIEW.—The decision of whether to debar or take alternate action under this clause shall not be judicially reviewed.

"(C) EXEMPTION FROM PENALTY FOR EMPLOYERS PARTICIPATING IN THE BASIC PILOT PROGRAM.—In the case of imposition on an employer of a debarment from the receipt of a Federal contract, grant, or cooperative agreement under subparagraph (A) or (B), that penalty shall be waived if the employer establishes that the employer was voluntarily participating in the basic pilot program under section 403(a) of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (8 U.S.C. 1324a; note) at the time of the violations of this section that resulted in the debarment.”.

SEC. 570. DISABILITY PREFERENCE PROGRAM FOR TAX COLLECTION CONTRACTS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 6306 (relating to qualified tax collection contracts) is amended—

(1) by striking “Nothing” in subsection (a) and inserting “Except as provided in subsection (c), nothing”;

(2) by redesignating subsections (c), (d), (e), and (f) as subsections (d), (e), (f), and (g), respectively, and

(3) by inserting after subsection (b) the following new subsection:

"(c) DISABILITY PREFERENCE PROGRAM FOR TAX COLLECTION CONTRACTS.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide a qualifying disability preference to any program under which any qualified tax collection contract is awarded on or after the effective date of this subsection and shall ensure compliance with the requirements of paragraph (3).

"(2) QUALIFYING DISABILITY PREFERENCE.—

"(A) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this subsection, the term ‘qualifying disability preference’ means a preference pursuant to which at least 10 percent (in both number and aggregate dollar amount) of the accounts covered by qualified tax collection contracts are awarded to persons satisfying the following criteria:

"(i) Such person employs within the United States at least 50 severely disabled individuals.

"(ii) Such person shall agree as an enforceable condition of its bid for a qualified tax collection contract that within 90 days after the date such contract is awarded, not less than 35 percent of the employees of such person employed in connection with providing services under such contract shall—

"(I) be hired after the date such contract is awarded, and

"(II) be severely disabled individuals.

"(B) DETERMINATION OF SATISFACTION OF CRITERIA.—Within 60 days after the end of the period specified in subparagraph (A)(ii), the Secretary shall determine whether such person has met the 35 percent requirement specified in such subparagraph, and if such requirement has not been met, shall terminate the contract for non-performance. For purposes of determining

whether such 35 percent requirement has been satisfied, severely disabled individuals providing services under such contract shall not include any severely disabled individuals who were counted toward satisfaction of the 50-employee requirement specified in subparagraph (A)(i), unless such person replaced such individuals by hiring additional severely disabled individuals who do not perform services under such contract.

"(3) PROGRAM-WIDE EMPLOYMENT OF SEVERELY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS.—Not less than 15 percent of all individuals hired by all persons to whom tax collection contracts are issued by the Secretary under this section, to perform work under such tax collection contracts, shall qualify as severely disabled individuals.

"(4) SEVERELY DISABLED INDIVIDUAL.—For purposes of this subsection, the term ‘severely disabled individual’ means any one of the following:

"(A) Any veteran of the United States Armed Forces with—

"(i) a disability determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to be service-connected, or

"(ii) a disability deemed by statute to be service-connected.

"(B) Any individual who is a disabled beneficiary (as defined in section 1148(k)(2) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1320b-19(k)(2)) or who would be considered to be such a disabled beneficiary but for having income or assets in excess of the income or asset eligibility limits established under title II or XVI of the Social Security Act, respectively.”.

(b) REPORT BY GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study of the effectiveness and efficiency of the use of private contractors for Internal Revenue Service debt collection. The study required by this paragraph shall be completed in time to be taken into account by Congress before any new contracting is carried out under section 6306 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 in years following 2008.

(2) STUDY OF COMPARABLE EFFORTS.—As part of the study required under paragraph (1), the Comptroller General shall—

(A) make every effort to determine the relative effectiveness and efficiency of debt collection contracting by Federal staff compared to private contractors, using a cost calculation for both Federal staff and private contractors which includes all benefits and overhead costs,

(B) compare the cost effectiveness of the contracting approach of the Department of the Treasury to that of the Department of Education’s Office of Student Financial Assistance, and

(C) survey State tax debt collection experiences for lessons that may be applicable to the Internal Revenue Service collection efforts.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply to any tax collection contract awarded on or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

This Act may be cited as the “U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans’ Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007”.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. COCHRAN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there will be no more votes today. I express my appreciation to the managers of the bill. Senator BYRD, because of his other responsibilities, couldn’t be here. The Senator from Washington, Mrs. MURRAY, worked hard on this bill. She has done a wonderful job. We are all indebted to her. Senator THAD COCHRAN

is always very good, thorough, direct, and to the point. We appreciate very much his being the person he is.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate insist on its amendments, request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees with a ratio of 15 to 14.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, let me also congratulate Senator MURRAY for her work and particularly my good friend, the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, Senator COCHRAN, for his usual flawless effort in moving legislation across the floor. This was a challenging bill with a lot of interesting issues that divide the Senate in many ways. I express my gratitude and appreciation for the fine work of Senator COCHRAN.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, on behalf of the majority, I know conferees will be all of the Democratic members of the Appropriations Committee.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I will also be sending a list of conferees to the Chair.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, today, just a few minutes ago, we voted on the emergency supplemental appropriations bill. I voted against the bill.

From the beginning, I have tried to support our troops both morally and materially. It has always been my goal to ensure that our Armed Forces have a clearly defined mission, realistic military objectives, and the best equipment available. Yet, today, I believe we have reached a point where political infighting has led to bartering for bullets. We have tied vital military funding for our troops to an arbitrary date of withdrawal.

The Senate, with this vote today—passing this supplemental spending bill with a date of withdrawal—has named the date for defeat in Iraq, if it were to stand. We have taken a step backward. We have put an arbitrary deadline on our military. It is the wrong message at the wrong time. Surely, this will embolden the enemy and will not help our troops in any way. It is a big mistake.

I hope the President will veto this bill as soon as he gets it to his desk. I

did not support this supplemental because I remain committed to our troops, first and foremost.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, the Senate has just made a tremendous effort in moving forward to make sure we support our troops in every sense of the word. I thank all of my colleagues who voted “aye” in moving this forward.

It is important to remember that this is an emergency supplemental bill. I have heard others on the other side call it a war supplemental. It is true, indeed, that over the last several years, the President has insisted that we pay for the war in Iraq on an emergency supplemental. But I remind everyone that there are countless emergencies across this country, and we, as Democrats, believe it is critical that we address those concerns—whether it is our agricultural industry, which has faced drought, severe weather, family farms which have been inundated and unable to continue to provide the crops all of us rely on to feed our families; whether it is our veterans who, as the occupant of the chair well knows as a member of the Veterans’ Committee, have been left behind time and time again.

We all know of the Walter Reed issue that hit the papers several weeks ago. But this is not a new issue for many of us who have been following this issue for some time. We have men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan who are coming home and have severe traumatic brain injuries. They have been lost in the system. We are now starting the fifth year of this war, and to date this President has not planned and supported funding to make sure those men and women—whether it is traumatic brain injury or whether they lost a limb or whether they have post-traumatic stress syndrome or whether it is just coming home and being able to find another job—have been paid attention to.

In this supplemental, we say we are going to pay for all costs of the war and certainly pay for those men and women who paid the ultimate price, along with their families, and taking care of them is part of that cost of war. In this critical bill which the Democrats voted for, we make sure they are a part of this.

So we provide funding to repair the facilities at Walter Reed and also to make sure that across the country the Walter Reed syndrome is paid attention to. Those veterans facilities we have gotten the reports from—the 1,100 sightings of mold on the walls, of bats that have not been gotten rid of in the Oregon VA facility, of peeling paint on the walls—these kinds of conditions are not ones we as Americans should allow to continue.

In the supplemental bill, we say we are going to take care of those issues,

and we require specifically that the VA come back to us in 60 days and identify every one of those 1,100 sightings and say whether they have fixed those facilities. If they have not, we want to know the exact cost, because we are not going to let those men and women sit in those deplorable conditions.

Under this bill, we address the issue that has faced many of our soldiers who have returned home with traumatic brain injury. Many of us saw the Bob Woodruff special several weeks ago, a reporter who was in Iraq and who suffered a traumatic brain injury. We saw how he struggled with his recovery and now has presented an amazing news story to let all of us know what is happening not just with him but to men and women across this country as they come home. It is true when a soldier is in a vehicle that is immediately affected by a blast, they often know they have traumatic brain injury. It is also true soldiers who may be 100 or 150 yards away from that blast may also receive an injury but may not know it.

We have all talked to these men and women when we go home, and their wives normally say to us, my husband can’t remember where he put a piece of paper I just handed to him, not realizing he had been a victim of a blast and that his injury had caused brain damage. We need to make sure those soldiers are treated and are treated well, and that we have the research and the capability to make sure they are not lost when they come home from service to this country. That funding is in this bill, and that funding was voted on by a majority of Senators in this body. We are going to keep working to make sure it is there.

We also have in this bill money for Katrina. It seems a long time ago now that our country was stunned by the impact of Katrina and other hurricanes in the gulf coast. Americans across the country said, what are we going to do? We know since that time there have been major stumbles. As Democrats, we are not stepping back. We believe that is as much an emergency as what the President has asked for in this emergency supplemental focusing only on Iraq, the war, and the reconstruction efforts there.

We have a reconstruction effort that is absolutely critical here in this country. Democrats are standing up and saying we are going to take responsibility and pay for it. There is \$6.7 billion in here for the victims of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. I believe that is as much a critical emergency spending item as the reconstruction dollars the President has asked for in the supplemental, and that is why we are supporting this bill.

This bill also addresses the issue of homeland security. We have heard a lot of rhetoric about homeland security and protecting our own. That is an emergency because that funding has

not been there. Rhetoric protects no one here at home. We provide \$2 billion, critical infrastructure dollars, for port security, mass transit security, and explosive detection equipment at our airports. We are putting it into this bill because it has not yet been funded, and across this country Americans are at risk without that funding.

We have heard a lot of talk on this floor over the last several days about extra porkbarrel spending. Well, I would say to all of my colleagues there is \$4.2 billion that is provided for Americans here at home—not for reconstruction efforts out in the world but for right here at home, \$4.2 billion.

Senator BOXER from California was out here yesterday showing tremendous pictures of the agricultural disasters that have occurred in California. These are farmers whom we rely on as Americans when we go to our grocery stores to be able to buy food to feed our families. If their farms are lost because they do not have the support after a disaster that has affected them, every one of us suffers. As Democrats, we say that is as much an emergency as what we are putting into this bill for reconstruction in Iraq. We need to reconstruct here at home.

On this side we are playing catchup. For a number of years now we have seen emergency supplementals that were just war supplementals. We are saying that, as Democrats, we know we have to invest in ourselves across the country. We have to invest in our future. We will only be as strong abroad as we are at home. If we abandon our farmers, if we abandon our children because they do not have health care—and there is SCHIP funding in this bill—if we abandon our gulf coast residents, who have not yet been able to rebuild their homes and their infrastructure, if we abandon our veterans when they come home and don’t take care of them, if we abandon our military personnel without the proper equipment and supplies, then we are not doing the job we have been sent here to do.

We are proud of this supplemental we are putting forward because, in addition to everything else, we are taking a major step forward and saying we are no longer going to idly stand by without any debate, without any consequences, and move continuously to increase the war in Iraq. We have said it is time for us as a nation to tell the Iraqi people they need to stand up for themselves. That language is critical in this bill.

We have worked with colleagues on all sides to put together what I think is a very important, very critical bill for us here in America—here at home. We are going to work very hard now in conference with our House colleagues to come together with a bill to bring back to the Senate and then to send to the President. I understand the President is saying he is going to veto the

bill, but I ask the President to listen to us, to sit down in the way we are supposed to here in Congress, and work with us to find agreement so we can move this bill forward. That is my hope for us here, and it is my hope for Americans across this country.

I am proud of the bill we have put forward in addressing the critical infrastructure investments here at home, and I hope as we move forward in this process in a few weeks we will be able to have a conference committee bill that will be sent to the President and that he will agree to so we can then move on to the other issues facing this Nation.

I also take this opportunity to thank a number of people who worked on this bill, but particularly Chairman BYRD, who led us throughout this debate. I thank Senator COCHRAN, my ranking member, who has been out here on the floor late nights working with us to help keep an orderly process.

I also thank all of our full committee staff, Terry Sauvain and Bruce Evans, all of their staff, who have worked countless hours. I am not sure they even went home last night before they came in this morning to help us get to the point we are today, and I thank all the staff of all the Appropriations subcommittees, who have worked very hard on this bill.

I also thank our floor staff, because without their work and their support, none of us would be able to complete the work we do. They are the silent workers who sit in front of us and who have done such a tremendous job to help us get through this process.

At the end of the day, I want my colleagues and I want America to know we in the majority here in the Senate believe an emergency spending bill should be just that. There are numerous emergencies across this country, investing in Americans who have suffered tremendously, and we are working hard to make sure their issues are finally addressed. Importantly, we are telling the President that our veterans and those who serve us in Iraq and Afghanistan, when they come home, their issues are going to be addressed as part of the cost of the war and as part of this emergency supplemental.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, the emergency supplemental appropriations legislation which passed the Senate today, the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Health, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007, provides \$625 million in security funding to better protect the millions of Americans who ride public transportation. I thank Senator SHELBY, who as both the ranking member on the Banking Committee and a member of the Appropriations Committee has been a tireless advocate on behalf of mass transit and specifically on the issue of transit security. I commend Senators BYRD and COCHRAN who serve, respectively, as both chairman and ranking member of the full Appropriations Committee and the Homeland Security Subcommittee. They were instru-

mental in deciding to increase our investment in securing our public transportation systems. The issue of transit security requires coordination between both homeland security agencies and committees and those transportation agencies and committees. Thus, I also commend Senators MURRAY and BOND who serve as chair and ranking member on the Appropriations Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Subcommittee.

Our Nation's public transit systems are inadequately prepared to minimize the threat and impact of potential terrorist attacks. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Federal Government has invested nearly \$24 billion in aviation security—protecting the 1.8 million people who fly on an average day. At the same time, our National Government has invested only \$386 million, before the 110th Congress began, in transit security to protect the 14 million people who ride transit on an average workday. Put another way, since 2001, our Nation has spent over \$7.50 per passenger on aviation security, but less than one penny per transit rider on transit security. I am not suggesting that we ought to be investing equally, but clearly this is not the appropriate balance.

As chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, I have made improving our national security a top priority. The very first hearing that I held as chairman focused on increasing the security of our Nation's 14 million daily transit passengers. The very first legislation that the committee considered during my Chairmanship was the Public Transit Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007, which was passed by the Banking Committee unanimously on February 8. The legislation authorizes the distribution of \$3.5 billion in security funds, over the next 3 fiscal years, on the basis of risk directly to transit agencies.

The Public Transit Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007 was included as title XV of the 9/11 bill, which the Senate passed on March 13. Senator SHELBY and I worked with Senator BYRD and Senator COCHRAN to include language in the legislation to allow for such sums as necessary to be appropriated in this fiscal year to address the critical needs of our Nation's transit systems. The \$625 million included in this appropriations act is a significant investment towards our goal of better securing our Nation's rail and transit systems. This investment builds on the \$175 million that was included in the fiscal year 2007 continuing resolution. Combined, these investments are greater than all of the investments that were made between the terrorist attacks of September 11 and the beginning of this new Congress.

We must make sure that we use these funds wisely. It is my desire that the Congress quickly reconcile both the transit security legislation and the

supplemental funding that has passed each Chamber so that this supplemental funding will be distributed in accordance with the new authorization. I once again thank all of the members of the Banking and Appropriations Committees who have worked so hard to advance us to where we are today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUESTS— S. 1022 AND S. 1023

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise today to delineate exactly why I voted against this supplemental. We are in some very difficult and complex times in the world today, and certainly the situation in Iraq is right at the forefront.

Americans have always stood tall when someone tries to interrupt our ability to exercise our rights of freedom, and right now we are fighting a global war on terrorism, with Iraq being at the center of it. For individuals in this body to think we can micromanage a military conflict from the floor of the Senate or the House of Representatives is simply wrong.

We have military leadership on the ground in Iraq. That leadership is recommending against imposing timelines. We have civilian leaders who have significant military experience, both from the State Department level as well as the Pentagon level. These leaders have testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, and every single one of those individuals, whether they were Republican or Democrat, has said imposing timelines is not the way to go. Every military officer who has come to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee has said imposing timelines for withdrawal from Iraq will simply embolden the enemy. The enemy will lay in wait until we remove ourselves from Iraq and then all genocide will break loose in Iraq.

The Baker-Hamilton commission—which so many people have relied upon—clearly stated that imposing timelines for withdrawal in Iraq is not the way to go. This vote today is simply the wrong signal to send to an enemy. The message needs to be that we are going to take you out; that we are not going to let you impose yourself on freedom and democracy. This vote today simply does not do that.

I very strongly disagree with the provisions in this supplemental relative to the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, and that is the reason I did vote against this supplemental we so desperately need to fund our troops, to fund the operation in Iraq, as well as to take care of some other measures. One of those other measures included in this supplemental is critically important to my State, and it has to do with the SCHIP program, the State Children's Health