Let me remind my colleagues of the long road we have been down with this bill already.

The previous Republican-controlled Congress failed to pass an intelligence authorization bill in fiscal year 2006 and fiscal year 2007—2 years in a row.

That is an unprecedented and unacceptable record for this body: prior to that, Congress had passed this bill every single year for 27 years, often with the bipartisan support of every Senator.

As my colleagues know, the Intelligence authorization bill funds the operations of the 16 agencies of the U.S. intelligence community—including the CIA, the FBI, the NSA, the Defense Department—and all the critical work they do to keep Americans safe and fight the war on terror.

It includes essential initiatives that would improve our efforts to fight terrorism and control weapons of mass destruction, enhance our intelligence collection capabilities, and strengthen intelligence oversight.

Blocking the passage of this bill, as a handful of Senators on the other side of the aisle have done over the last couple of years, has left Congress silent on these important matters and made America less secure.

Most of us in the Senate recognize how important it is to pass this bill. We know it is not a partisan issue, that there are no political points to be scored on either side. But I am increasingly disappointed at the continued obstructionism by several Republicans on a matter of national security.

Earlier this year, Chairman ROCKEFELLER and Vice Chairman BOND attempted to bring this bill up for consideration. We were told the objections of a single Senator on the other side of the aisle blocked their efforts.

I have heard that some Senators on the other side of the aisle are interested in offering amendments, yet at this time none of these amendments have surfaced or seen the light of day.

I would certainly like to be reasonable and accommodate every Senator's interest in debating amendments offered in good faith, but I am increasingly concerned that we are seeing obstructionism and delay tactics, rather than productive debate.

Some may wonder what is behind the delay. At a time of war, why would a handful of Senators be willing to hold up a bill that is crucial to our national security?

Why would a group of Senators hold up a bill that has always passed quickly, with little debate or amendment?

Why would they hold up a bill that enjoys overwhelming bipartisan support?

It appears the answer lies not in the legislation before us now but the legislation the Senate will turn to next:

A Medicare bill that will lower drug costs for seniors and people with disabilities by giving the Federal Government the power to negotiate drug prices with some of this Nation's most powerful and profitable companies.

This is not good faith debate—it is a cynical effort by the drug companies—their lobbyists in Gucci shoes and chauffeured limousines—and their supporters—to hold this national security bill hostage and delay the Senate from acting on legislation to help society's most vulnerable.

So I ask my colleagues to consider this fair notice: unless I see some signs of good faith from the other side of the aisle toward a reasonable timeframe for considering a reasonable number of amendments, I will file cloture on this bill tomorrow.

The Senate has a lot of work ahead of it and it should begin with the swift consideration and passage of this bill.

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, early next week, Members of the House and Senate will meet to work on the final version of the emergency supplemental appropriations bill. The Senate's version of this legislation provides $123 billion primarily for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, for improving the health care for returning soldiers and veterans, for continued Hurricane Katrina recovery for the gulf coast, to fill major gaps in homeland security, and to provide emergency drought relief for farmers. The President has asserted that Congress is holding funding for the troops hostage for what he calls ''porkbarrel'' spending. What nonsense. Facts matter. Once again, the President does not seem to know the facts. This is legislation that meets some of the most critical needs of our troops and our Nation.

In the days since the Senate approved this legislation, the White House has taken on the regular practice of demonizing the Congress and attacking the bipartisan bill. On Tuesday, for instance, President Bush repeated his hollow claims that the Army will run out of money if Congress doesn't finish this legislation by the weekend. What nonsense.

The nonpartisan Congressional Research Service has reported that the Army can use the dollars that Congress has already appropriated—some $52 billion—to help the Pentagon reach the end of May. Fifty-two billion dollars. Unless the administration has a new military adventure up its sleeve that the country doesn't know about, that $52 billion will easily pay for continued operations in Iraq.

The White House is spinning an imaginary tale of doom and gloom to try to scare the Congress and the country. But the facts just don't support the administration claims.

To underscore this factfinding effort, the Army provided financial updates to the House of Representatives this week and told House officials that its current Army funding could last until the summer. Yet, to listen to the White House, one would think that our soldiers will be out of bullets by Sunday.

Another example of facts mattering. In remarks this week, before announcing that the troops would see their tours of duty extended for at least 3 months and that his escalation would take many months longer than he first planned, President Bush spoke of a reprogramming request for $1.6 billion from personnel accounts. That is Washington-speak for shifting funds around to pay the bills. Basically, the Pentagon is considering a shift of dollars from September's payroll budget to fund the President's surge plan. Yet, to hear the dire claims coming from the White House, this shift would wreak havoc on the Pentagon. The truth is that no havoc will ensue. This shift is one that the Pentagon has adopted on many occasions in years past, during times of war and peace. This is a simply accounting move, not a major blow to the Pentagon's war machine.

It is time for the White House to drop this trumped-up crisis talk and get down to the truth.

Let's take a look at what the House and Senate have actually approved. The House and the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, have each approved nearly $100 billion for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. The House and the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, approved funding to improve the health care of our troops and our veterans. The House and Senate, on a bipartisan basis, approved funding to speed long-delayed Hurricane Katrina reconstruction. The House and Senate, on a bipartisan basis, approved funding to close the major gaps in our homeland security that could be exploited at any moment.

These priorities, the White House claims, are extraneous and wasteful. On top of the $38 billion already approved by Congress for the reconstruction of Iraq, now the White House has requested $3.7 billion more to rebuild Iraq. I cannot understand how the White House can champion another $3.7 billion to rebuild Baghdad but object to $3.3 billion to rebuild the hurricane-ravaged gulf coast of America. I cannot understand how the White House can press Congress to build new hospitals in Iraq but object to $1.7 billion to provide first-class health care for our veterans and another $1.3 billion for our troops returning home from war.

When this legislation is finished, we will have a responsible plan that provides key resources for our troops, takes care of our veterans returning home from war, and rebuilds the communities laid to waste by Hurricane Katrina. And Congress will listen to the American people and craft a responsible framework for the Iraqis to

take control of their own nation. This is not legislation that should be vetoed by this President; this is legislation that he should sign into law.

We will announce a conference schedule soon and move forward quickly. Our goal is to have the final legislation to President Bush by the end of the month.

ASSEMBLED CHEMICAL WEAPONS ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the future of the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternative, ACWA, program, which is of vital importance to the people of Madison County, KY.

The people of Madison County are living right next door to over 500 tons of the deadliest material ever conceived by man. It is stored at the Blue Grass Army Depot, BGAD. Understandably, those in the nearby community would like to see these weapons disposed of as safely and quickly as possible. It is the mission of the ACWA program, as well as the Department of Defense, to do just that.

Recently, the program manager for ACWA, Mike Parker, decided to retire. Mike has left big shoes to fill. The question then is, who will take Mike's place? Whoever is picked to permanently fill his position will need to possess a number of qualifications. These traits include an appreciation for the unique culture at ACWA. Central to that culture is the willingness to work collaboratively and openly with the local community and with Congress. It would be unfortunate if the new program manager, whoever it may be, were to attempt to impose solutions unilaterally onto the community and to act without transparency and consultation with Congress. I also trust that the new program manager will understand the need to complete work at BGAD as soon as is safely possible; not as soon as the department finds it to be convenient.

Finally, the new program manager needs to be fully committed to chemical neutralization at BGAD as this approach has already been selected by the department, embraced by the community and endorsed by the state of Kentucky. Any variance from this path would only lead to additional delay in eliminating the risks associated with these stored weapons.

The job of disposing of chemical weapons at BGAD is not just to be laid at the feet of the program manager for ACWA. It is a mission entrusted to the Department of Defense. Accordingly, the department itself needs to provide oversight over ACWA to ensure that the new program manager is acting in a manner consistent with the way ACWA has conducted its business in the past. Those at the department also need to support the ACWA program manager's mission by providing sufficient funding in the annual budget request, in the $450–500 million range, so that the chemical weapons are disposed of in a timely fashion. In the past, the department has chosen to tie itself in bureaucratic knots over the program. Those days need to end. These chemical weapons need to be destroyed. The people of Madison County deserve no less.

RECIDIVISM REDUCTION AND SECOND CHANCE ACT

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, for far too long the criminal justice system has failed to adequately address recidivism, and that failure has imposed a large financial and social cost on the Nation. Even the best-intentioned prisoners face debilitating challenges when they rejoin their communities, yet the current system leaves them ill-prepared to face those challenges.

Our existing policies of mass incarceration and release are not working. Large prison populations and high recidivism rates place heavy burdens on prisons, communities, and taxpayers. Of the 2.2 million persons housed in prisons today—an average annual increase of 3 percent in the past decade—97 percent will be released into the community. Overcrowding continues to plague the system. State prisons are operating at full capacity and sometimes as much as 14 percent above capacity, and Federal prisons are 34 percent above capacity. In 2005, prison populations in 14 States rose at least 5 percent. Recidivism and inadequate reentry programs add to the problem. Over 600,000 prisoners are released each year, but two-thirds of them are arrested again within 3 years.

The social cost of recidivism is devastating to communities, and it also imposes a financial burden. States spend an average of approximately $22,000 annually to house a prisoner. Taxpayers spend more than $60 billion annually on corrections, more than six times the $9 billion spent 25 years ago. Yet the current system still fails to adequately support the essential programs for health, housing, substance abuse, education, and employment that ex-offenders need to reintegrate into their communities. Even community and local law enforcement programs that are effective in helping ex-offenders often lack adequate resources and guidance.

Future generations will bear the burden created by today's high recidivism rates. In 2006, the Department of Health and Human Services reported that 2 million children nationwide have an incarcerated parent. Studies suggest that these children are seven times more likely to end up in prison themselves. One study found that as many as 1 in 10 will have been incarcerated before reaching adulthood. Of the approximately 100,000 juveniles who are currently incarcerated, many will become recidivists because of a lack of effective reentry programs.

This increasingly serious failure demands a comprehensive solution that takes into account both the challenges that ex-offenders face and the role of law enforcement and community and family-based programs in successful reentry. That is why I am pleased to join my colleagues in support of the Second Chance Act. This legislation provides an opportunity for law enforcement, communities, and families to give former offenders a helping hand that the vast majority of them will use to become productive members of society.

The Second Chance Act provides financial support, research, and guidance for proven and cost-effective solutions to the health, housing, substance abuse, education, and employment challenges that former offenders face in reintegrating into their communities. It funds mentoring grants, demonstration grants, drug treatment, and family-based treatment. It authorizes the National Institute of Justice to conduct research on offender reentry and on the need for a national resource center for State, local, and community service providers to collect and disseminate best practices. The bill also creates an interagency taskforce to review and report to Congress on the Federal barriers that so many ex-offenders face.

A second chance starts with a place to live. This bill will promote programs that help recently released inmates overcome the first major hurdle they face—finding safe, adequate, and affordable housing. 15 to 27 percent of prisoners expect to go to homeless shelters upon release. Figures published by the Volunteers of America in 2004 indicated that two-thirds of former prisoners who lacked adequate housing had committed crimes within 1 year of their release, compared to only one-quarter of those who had housing. Another recent study released by the National Criminal Justice Reference Service showed that 30–50 percent of parolees in urban areas such as Los Angeles and San Francisco are homeless, which compounds the profound hardship that re-integration already places on urban communities. The Second Chance Act supports our communities and local law enforcement by supporting housing programs for ex-offenders, so that they can take the first steps towards getting back on their feet and rejoining the community.

The Second Chance Act also supports mental health care and substance abuse treatment programs that are vital to many ex-offenders as they struggle to reintegrate. Nearly a quarter of State prisoners and jail inmates with a mental health problem had served three or more prior incarcerations, yet two-thirds of State prisoners do not receive mental health treatment. In substance abuse treatment, more than two-thirds of State prisoners have been regular drug users at some point during their lives, and one-third had committed the crime for which they were imprisoned while under the influence of drugs.