

the Governor of Virginia, a wonderful man. He is a public servant for all of the right reasons. He has been burdened as Governor of the State with this terrible tragedy at Virginia Tech.

He called me and made sure that we were involved in the decisionmaking he has. He has appointed a blue ribbon panel that is going to look into this situation. It is the right thing to do. He has also asked that the people around the country, at 12 o'clock noon, stand in a moment of silence in memory of the loved and lost in that terrible tragedy in Blacksburg, VA, at Virginia Tech University.

As a memento of that, many people around the country are wearing the colors of the Virginia Tech Hokies. I am proud to do that. In just a minute, Mr. President, we will stand in silence with the rest of the country in recognition of the tragedy in Virginia.

Will the Chair advise me when the hour of 12 noon arrives?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will.

The noon hour has arrived.

Mr. REID. The Senate will stand in silence for 1 minute.

(Moment of silence)

Mr. President, thank you very much. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS SUBJECT TO THE CALL OF THE CHAIR

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:01 p.m., recessed subject to the call of the Chair and reassembled at 2:13 p.m., when called to order by the Acting President pro tempore (Mr. WHITEHOUSE).

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we heard again this afternoon the same old story from President Bush about the war in Iraq. He claimed again that his new escalation strategy is working, that the signs of success are everywhere, and that victory is imminent. He also, once again, attacked those of us with the courage to ask the tough questions and tell the truth about Iraq.

In an effort to shift attention from this administration's failed policies—and I say that in the plural—the President and his allies have repeatedly questioned whether I and my fellow

Democrats support our troops. No one wants us to succeed in Iraq more than Democrats. We have proven that time and time again since this war started more than 4 years ago. We take a back-seat to no one in supporting our troops, and we will never abandon our troops in a time of war.

Given the White House spin machine that has been working overtime in an effort to defend its failed policies, it is important for me to repeat what I said yesterday afternoon in this Chamber: The longer we continue down the President's path, the further we will be from responsibly ending this war. I said it yesterday, I say it again: The longer we continue down the President's path, the further we will be from responsibly ending this war. But there is still a chance to change course, and we must change course.

Partisans who launched attacks on my comments are the same ones who continue to support the failed strategy that hurts our troops. Is this administration supporting the troops when it sends our brave men and women into battle without the necessary body armor; with vehicles that are not properly armored? I ask, is the administration supporting the troops when it fails to provide them the health care they have earned when they come home?

Our responsibilities end with these troops—never. They don't end when they leave Iraq. They don't end when they get back home. We have to continue to help them. That is what we have done.

Is the administration supporting the troops by threatening to delay their funding unless Congress continues to rubberstamp its failed policy?

I believe supporting our troops means giving them the funding they need and a strategy they deserve. It means stopping the partisan attacks. And it means spending time working together on a bipartisan basis to develop an effective strategy to successfully end this war.

I wish some of my detractors felt the same. An effective strategy is exactly what we are offering the President and our troops—no more, no less. Let's all understand, changing course in Iraq will increase America's security by bringing this war to a responsible end and permitting our troops to more effectively fight terror all over the world. This is precisely the strategy President Bush is vowing to veto.

We heard the same old story from the President today because his strategy calls for more of the same. It is a failed strategy for our troops in Iraq. It is a failed strategy for our security at home. It is dangerous that the President refuses to recognize the reality on the ground in Iraq.

For those who claim we are on the right path in Iraq, I ask them to look at this week's newspapers. I am only going to mention now a few things we find in this week's news.

The White House announced additional National Guard troops would be

sent to Iraq; many, if not most, without the necessary training and equipment. The White House extended tours in Iraq for all active Army troops from 12 to 15 months. A week after the Iraqi Parliament was bombed in the Green Zone, which is the most secure part of Baghdad, almost 200 Iraqis lost their lives in that city on Wednesday. The bombings continue today. They will continue tomorrow. We are losing about four American troops every day this month.

I went to the White House this Wednesday with Speaker PELOSI to meet with the President and talk about a bipartisan way to craft an effective strategy in Iraq. We did so because we believe, as do the American people, that the lives of too many of our soldiers and too many Iraqis are on the line. The President refused to work with us.

How has the President responded? He has chosen to repeat his inflexible veto threats and continued to attack those who questioned his failed policies. Meanwhile, our troops and our national security are suffering.

It is painfully clear to me, the American people, bipartisan majorities in both the House and the Senate, military experts all over this country, and the Iraq Study Group, that the only way to succeed is to give our troops the strategy their sacrifices deserve. These groups all know there is no military solution in Iraq.

General Petraeus, the commander on the ground, has said so himself: 20 percent can be won militarily; 80 percent has to be won through our diplomatic efforts, politics, and economics.

I repeat, the only way to succeed lies through a comprehensive political, diplomatic, and economic strategy—so says the commander on the ground there, General Petraeus. Unfortunately, the only one to whom this is not obvious is our President.

The longer we continue down the President's path, the further we will be from success. But there is still a chance to change course, and we must change course. That is what we are offering the President in the supplemental we passed in both bodies with bipartisan support. We are offering a reasonable and attainable timeline to reduce combat missions and refocus our efforts on the real threats to our security. We are offering action, not just words.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I wanted to say to my friend and

my colleague and our leader that the President of the United States, when he was Governor of Texas, had a reputation as someone who reached out as a uniter, bringing together the two parties in a bipartisan way. Since the President has been elected President and has served in that capacity, he has chosen to change, for what reason I do not know because the country yearns for bipartisanship. That was clearly one of the messages that came out of last year's election, the 2006 election, that the people of this country are tired of the partisan bickering, and they want us to come together. Yet, as the majority leader was just recounting, there has been occasion after occasion where it seems, unnecessarily, that the White House has gone out of its way to attack someone simply because they were a member of the other party.

I want to give the Senate an example. Because I had been twice before, over a 6-year period, to visit the President of Syria, immediately upon the Iraq study commission report that recommended that we open up to Syria, this Senator from Florida decided that I was going to go back, hoping that there might be some encounter in that conversation with the President of Syria that might crack the door a little bit. I did that in the week before Christmas.

The White House chose to attack me for having made that trip—however, very conveniently not attacking any Republican Senator who happened to follow, as did two Democratic Senators and one Republican Senator in a week or two after I made that trip.

So, too, it is noteworthy that the White House chose to attack Speaker NANCY PELOSI in her visit with President Assad while being mute about the congressional delegation that had just visited President Assad 4 days earlier, which included my good personal friends, the Congressman from Virginia, FRANK WOLF, and the Congressman from Pennsylvania, JOE PITTS.

When we are facing an issue of war and peace, as we are now, we have to come together. The person at the top has to set the standard and the atmosphere. These kind of attacks that become personal, as they were against Speaker PELOSI, are not going to do anybody any good.

Mr. REID. Will my friend yield?

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I will certainly yield.

Mr. REID. I certainly appreciate the Senator being here on the floor this afternoon. The Senator comes from the fourth most populous State, but soon to be the third, a State large in area with lots and lots of people moving there—thousands of people every month. It is a State that this good man has represented in so many different ways.

We first served together in the House of Representatives. If there were ever a person who served in Congress who served as a moderate, it would be the

Senator from Florida. He is a person who is always looking for consensus, always trying to work things out, understanding that the art of legislation is compromise.

I so appreciate his brief statement today, and I apologize for interrupting it. I would just go back to more than 6 years ago when President Bush was elected. I, too, was so enthused about his coming here. He told me: I want to be a uniter, not a divider. I have been stunned by what has been going on. It started with Social Security; Medicare; the recent flap with the Attorney General, the Katrina situation, wiretaps, stem cells, Terry Schiavo, energy—on and on, with all these things that we, with rare exception, with a little bit of patience, with a President willing to work with us, could have done on a bipartisan basis. On the war, we have to resolve that on a bipartisan basis. This legislative body is reaching out. That is what we are doing.

I say to my friend, I appreciate very much not only his statement today but who he is, who he represents, and how he represents the people of Florida. We need more BILL NELSONS in this Congress of the United States.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. I am grateful to the leader. I believed it was necessary. Partisanship has gotten out of control around here. I was so encouraged, the day that we were sworn in when the two leaders, the Democratic leader and the Republican leader, convened us in a private meeting in the Old Senate Chamber. There was a wonderful spirit. It clearly was, in large part, as a message from the American people that they were tired of the partisan bickering. That was clearly one of the messages from the election.

We started off in this mutual camaraderie of how we can make a body like this function that cannot pass anything unless we have 60 votes out of 100 Senators in order to shut off debate. That means we have to have coming together. As the Good Book says, "Come, let us reason together."

It is harder and harder to do that in a poisonous, partisan atmosphere. But it has to be set at the top.

I cannot tell the White House what to do. I can sure recommend. But there is something that I can do; that is, I am responsible for myself and my actions and how I treat others, treat others in this Chamber.

There is an age-old principle, and it has to be: Treat others as you want to be treated. I will put that in the old English, which might be a little bit more familiar: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

If we had a little bit more of that, we could sure get some things done around here. Typically, what happens in these 51-to-49 votes, there is not that much difference that we couldn't have 10 votes on that side of the aisle or 10 votes on this side of the aisle go one way or another in reaching a mutual consensus. Yet over and over it has been avoided.

I felt compelled to say these things.

THE NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I want to share another idea, and this has nothing to do with these weighty matters, but it certainly has to do with some weighty matters about whether the National Guard of this country has the proper equipment.

There was a General Accounting Office report from last summer that showed that the National Guard is woefully inadequate in its equipment. It pointed out in that GAO study that my State of Florida had only 53 percent of the equipment that it ought to have. It said the State of New Mexico National Guard had only 33 percent.

What is happening is what you would expect: As the National Guard units in America are activated to go over to Iraq and Afghanistan, they take their equipment with them, and so often it is worn out or it has to stay for others to use, and they come back and they do not have the equipment; or it is like the 11 helicopters of the National Guard in Florida—a year from now, they are planning to take those helicopters from the Florida Guard and send them over to the Middle East. Can you imagine if that occurs and the Florida National Guard is faced with a major hurricane and they do not have any helicopters? Hurricanes are indiscriminate in the way they come in and tear up everything over a large swath of property, so that in a big one you cannot traverse the roads because everything is suddenly on top of them. So often you have to have helicopters to get supplies and personnel in to people who are hurting.

That is one example. That is a year from now if they take the helicopters from the Florida National Guard because they need them over in the Middle East. But let me tell you the condition of it today. The Florida National Guard—and I am quoting their own figures—is short 500 humvees. They are short 600 trucks, and this is either a 5-ton truck or a deuce and a half, 2½-ton truck—600 short. They are short 500 long-haul trailers, they are short 20 wreckers, and they are short 4,400 night-vision goggles. What do all of those shortages have to do with anything? It has to do—if the big one comes and the big one is a category 4 or 5 hurricane hitting a densely urbanized part of Florida direct from the water, the Florida Guard is going to need every bit of equipment it can get to respond to that emergency.

Let me give you another example. The report 6 months ago was that Fidel Castro was going to be dead within 6 months. Looks like that may have changed, at least by the more recent reports. But what happens and what will be the political condition in Cuba when he does pass away? Is the then caretaker government going to be in sufficient control, or is chaos going to