

Instead of waiting until 2041 to deal with this reality, what we should do now is listen to what Senator Moynihan had to say—but with this amendment, he said: Change the adjustment for inflation to match real inflation, and you get enough money to keep the two together.

I say: Leave the present overly generous adjustment for inflation in place for the single mom; that is, leave the present situation in place for the bottom third of people who pay into the trust fund. Then say to Oprah Winfrey and Bill Gates: You are going to have to struggle by with just inflation as it really is. We are not going to give you the inflation-plus energizer that we give to the bottom third.

Now, for those of us who fall somewhere in between the bottom third and Bill Gates, we can have a blend. We can have a mixture of the more generous benefits paid to the bottom third and the less generous benefits paid to the top 1 percent. By simply making that kind of adjustment now—now, not waiting until 2041—we can avoid the crisis in 2041.

Now, I have had conversations with my friends across the aisle about this proposal for several years. I have introduced it as a piece of legislation and discussed it with people around this Congress of both parties. This is the reaction I get: Bob, this is a good idea. This is something we probably ought to do. But we won't address the problem until after the next election.

Mr. President, the next election never comes. There never is an “after the next election.” We are constantly demagoging the Social Security issue for political advantage and putting off the time when we must deal with it.

So triggered by the occasion of the report released by the trustees of the Social Security trust funds, I say today, the time has come for both parties to recognize this is a problem that will not go away. This is a projection we can trust, and it is time for us to put partisan advantage or perceived partisan advantage aside and deal with it.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Colorado.

IRAQ SUPPLEMENTAL

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, last night we had our first and only conference committee meeting where all the members from both Appropriations Committees who are on the conference committee, including members on the House side, had an opportunity to come together for their first gathering. I predict it will be the only gathering. Everything else in that supplemental has been worked out behind doors, and a lot of us were not privy to it until legislation was proposed in the conference committee yesterday.

I am very disappointed in that piece of legislation. There is a huge increase in the amount of dollars being spent to try to placate some of those who may otherwise oppose the legislation.

But my main concern with that legislation is it has timelines and benchmarks in it that are going to tend to micromanage the conflict in Iraq. I think that is a bad idea. In fact, I have indicated I am not willing to sign the conference report that is going to come out of that particular committee because of the language in there that does lay down timelines and benchmarks. That creates a problem for our commanders in the field in Iraq.

Mr. President, it was not very many months ago the Senate unanimously approved General Petraeus to head our efforts in Iraq. Many Members have extolled the virtues of the general—his education, his leadership, and his commitment to his soldiers.

Unfortunately, we are still confronted with the reality that some want to tie General Petraeus's hands. Confusingly enough, they want to reject the strategy General Petraeus has proposed in Iraq even before he has been given the full opportunity to perform his mission.

I ask again: Why would we support him and recognize his stellar career with a unanimous nomination vote but not give him the means to get the job done? For what reason did my colleagues agree to send him to Iraq as the commander of our forces? His strategy in Iraq was made very clear, both publicly and privately, and yet we are not willing to support it. It is vexing.

We need to avoid micromanaging the war from the floor of the Senate. Let our Commander in Chief perform his duties, and let our military leaders do their jobs. If we do not support them fully in the supplemental bill, then I must continue to vote against any legislation that sets arbitrary deadlines and thresholds in Iraq—and plead with my colleagues to do the same.

We cannot afford to set a deadline and walk away from Iraq. The cost of failure is too great to our future long-term national security. It is in America's security interests to have an Iraq that can sustain, govern, and defend itself. Too much is at stake to simply abandon Iraq at this point. The price of failure is simply too great.

Let me remind my colleagues that we have seen terrible results from political motives being placed above military necessities—the attempt at rescuing the American Embassy hostages from Tehran, or Beirut in the 1980s, and Somalia in the 1990s. Leaving Iraq in the current situation would be like the ending of our efforts in those areas as well. Our withdrawal from these countries embolden the terrorists. Bin Laden himself is on record after these withdrawals criticizing our lack of will and questioning our commitment to fighting these zealots. We have to learn from our mistakes in the past.

How have we gotten to this point? Well, many of my colleagues in the Senate continue to beat the drum of the Iraq Study Group Report. They continue to state that their withdrawal proposal follows the report's recommendations.

I would simply like to point out something to my colleagues. Unlike the supplemental bill that will soon be voted on—or what I would like to call our surrender document—the Iraq Study Group Report does not call for us to walk away from our mission. They do not call for us to walk away from our mission. In fact, the Iraq Study Group Cochair, James Baker, recently had this to say about artificial deadlines:

The [Iraq Study Group] report does not set timetables or deadlines for the removal of troops, as contemplated by the supplemental spending bills the House and Senate passed. In fact, the report specifically opposes that approach. As many military and political leaders told us, an arbitrary deadline would allow the enemy to wait us out and would strengthen the positions of extremists over moderates.

So here we are, a must-pass bill that flies in the face of what the Iraq Study Group has recommended. But the Democratic majority is well aware of what effect slowing down passage of the supplemental means to the Department of Defense as a whole. Particularly, the House of Representatives has dragged its feet in appointing conferees to the bill, knowing full well the President intends to veto this legislation. In fact, just yesterday, President Bush stated he would strongly object to any deadlines, stating that:

An artificial timetable of withdrawal would say to an enemy, “Just wait them out.” It would say to the Iraqis, “Don't do hard things necessary to achieve our objectives.” And it would be discouraging to our troops.

He also stated he does not want “Washington politicians trying to tell those who wear the uniform how to do their job.” I agree with the President wholeheartedly.

By placing the President in the precarious position of vetoing this bill, even in the dire financial straits it places the Department of Defense, the other side of the aisle has chosen to play politics rather than fund a clean bill that gives our soldiers in the field the resources they need.

The question remains, if the other side truly believes the war is lost, then why not cut off funding for the war entirely? The power of the purse is in our constitutional authority as a Congress. If the majority party wants to dictate Iraq policy to the President, rather than put limitations on our military in Iraq, which would be a disaster, they should attempt to no longer fund our efforts.

But I doubt that will happen because they know they do not have the votes or the support for such a precipitous withdrawal. Instead, the “slow bleed strategy” will continue from our colleagues in the Senate and the House that will, in my opinion, leave our troops dejected and less safe than before. This ill-advised strategy will clearly hand Al Jazeera its propaganda message.

There is no doubt we face extremely difficult challenges in Iraq. We have not made enough progress. Citizens of Iraq must be willing to fight for their own freedom. The President recognizes this, and his new plan is the result of increased commitments from the Iraqi Prime Minister. The President has developed a new plan with new leadership. We should not jerk the rug out from under those we have put in charge in Iraq.

I ask my colleagues to reject this bill and let us craft a clean funding bill that will meet the priorities and needs of our men and women in Iraq.

Mr. President, that concludes my remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I want to follow on the remarks of my dear friend from Colorado related to the current situation in Iraq. It appears some movement has been made on the war supplemental. Unfortunately, it is a flawed piece of legislation, one the crafters of it well know will be vetoed by the President. It will be vetoed for good reasons—because it contains completely unacceptable language, as was just being pointed out.

It is impossible for us to micro-manage what is happening in the field. It is a bad idea for politicians in Washington to tell generals when and how they can move forces in a battle. It is a bad idea for us to slow-bleed our military as they face an unrelenting enemy. It is a bad idea for us to simply not have the wherewithal to stick with the fight at a time when it is difficult. The President this week again reiterated his commitment that he would veto a bill that had artificial timetables for withdrawal and that would empower the enemy. It gives the enemy hope and an opportunity to wait us out. There is no question about that. A deadline simply tells the enemy by what date they need to know that the American commitment is over.

Imagine the confusion for someone in Iraq trying to make a decision whether to cast their lot which, in fact, may mean the death of himself or herself, and their family, to support our effort there toward a democratic country. If they had no anticipation that our commitment was equal to theirs, they might simply wait it out. So how can we ever turn the political tide in our favor in Iraq if we don't show the commitment the people of Iraq must have in order to make a commitment to our stated goals?

General Petraeus is here. He met with the President yesterday; he will be meeting with Members of Congress. It is important that we ask him his assessment of the current situation.

I know there are many who would be ready to suggest that the surge is not working. In fact, the full surge is not in place because all of the troops are yet to be deployed for the surge, but some who already said it wouldn't work are now saying it hasn't worked.

I wish to have General Petraeus's assessment of it. I want to know what the general on the ground—not a politician in Washington—thinks about the effort of success we are meeting with our effort at this point in time.

The Iraq Study Group has been mentioned. Congress should drop fixed deadlines for withdrawals of U.S. forces. As Commander in Chief, the President needs flexibility on draft deployments. This is from the cochair of the Iraq Study Group, Democrat Lee Hamilton.

It is important that we recognize the Iraq Study Group not only when it is convenient but also when it might be inconvenient.

I think it is very important that we not sound the voice of defeat. Imagine the surprise that must have come to our enemies—and whether we like it or not, we have enemies—imagine the delight that must have come when, from the halls of the Congress, from the leader of the Senate, they were told that they had, in fact, won; that the war was lost.

This is not the right thing to say at a time when our troops are engaged in battle. Nine U.S. soldiers lost their lives in the last 24 hours alone. This is a difficult time. It is not a pleasant time. It is not an easy assignment. So for us to simply tell our troops in the field they have been defeated when they in fact have not, and for us to tell our enemies that in fact they have won when in fact they have not, is not a good idea. I believe it is terribly important that we attempt somehow in the midst of this rancor and debate that is so classic of modern day Washington that we find it within ourselves to look beyond the current moment of politics, beyond the political advantage that might be gained at any one moment or another, and seek within the depths of our souls the opportunity for us to begin to work together to try to find a solution to this very difficult problem.

It is a sure thing that we, in fact, have a problem on our hands, that Iraq is a difficult situation. There is no question they must reach a political settlement. There is no question that they must do—the Iraqis themselves—the hard work of peace. However, as we do that, we need to also find it within ourselves to find a way of shaping a political consensus, for us to find a way to begin to talk to one another, not past one another, about how we resolve the issues in Iraq in a way that will enhance America's strength. It is not about defeating a point of view. It is not about defeating President Bush. A loss in Iraq would be a defeat for the United States of America. So how do we find a way to empower America to be a stronger country, to be a united country as we seek to defeat the enemies of our country, which surely are there, continuing to fight against us, wishing us to be unsuccessful, and wishing for our country to be defeated?

We should pull together, Republicans and Democrats all, to try to find the

common ground that will bring us to a sensible solution, to a sensible outcome, so America is not defeated, but the enemies of America are defeated.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

BIPARTISANSHIP STARTS AT THE TOP

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I say to my good personal friend and colleague from Florida, if we want to solve this and other problems, we have to have some genuine bipartisanship, and that bipartisanship has to start at the top. There has to be an atmosphere of mutual respect and willingness to work together, and it has to start in the White House.

I have shared these comments publicly and privately. Whenever you face something as contentious as the matters we face—matters of war and peace, the making of Medicare financially solvent, the question of prescription drugs and their cost—you simply can't do it by taking a unilateral position over and over on either side of this aisle; it has to be that people have to come together and work it out. There also has to be a sense of mutual trust, of people telling the truth to each other, of doing what the standards were in the old days where a man's word was his bond. Until we get that, we are going to continue to have difficulty.

We see the problems right now in a war that is certainly a difficult one. We all share the same goal: that the interests of America are furthered if we can stabilize Iraq. How do we get there? There has been so much mistrust and suspicion that has been bred because of all the inconsistencies and lack of information and misinformation and massaged information. But that is then; now is now. What do we do? Thus far, it looks as though the White House and the leadership in Congress can't come together. There is too much distrust.

I have said before and I will say again, thank goodness the Secretary of State is out on a new diplomatic initiative. It is not catty to say it is about time, because there certainly have been those forces within the administration that have wanted this much more in the past, but I think the Secretary of State is making a very valiant effort now, because you are not going to solve the problem in Iraq unless you can get all the neighbors in the region involved to make a political solution stick.

Is a political solution viable? This Senator cannot say at this point that it is a viable prospect because of the sectarian hatred we have seen play out over these last several months. But this hasn't just been going on for months; this has been going on for 1,327 years, ever since the Battle of Karbala. I say to my colleague, who is my friend, and the two of us work together very well all the time, that a lot less rhetoric coming from both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue would help this