

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS
CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, relative to the conference report that is before the Senate, this emergency supplemental appropriations bill includes \$95 billion for the Department of Defense, primarily to fund military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. That is approximately \$4 billion more than the President requested for the Department of Defense, including \$2.2 billion above the President's request for health care for our service men and women and their families.

When the military forces are in harm's way, it is our solemn duty to provide the equipment they need and the health care they deserve, and we are meeting that duty with this bill. We also owe it to our troops to give them the best chance to succeed. In the case of Iraq, a majority of the Members of the Congress and a majority of Americans believe a change in course in Iraq will provide the best chance of success. That is at the heart of the debate here in Washington.

There is at least a broad, if not universal, consensus that the war in Iraq will not be won militarily and that a political settlement by the Iraqi leaders is required to end the sectarian violence and defeat the insurgency. General Petraeus made that point in a press conference in Baghdad on March 8 when he said:

Any student of history recognizes that there is no military solution to a problem like Iraq.

Iraq's own Prime Minister Maliki noted 5 months ago that:

The crisis is political, and the ones who can stop the cycle of aggravation and blood-letting of innocents are the [Iraqi] politicians.

The debate, then, is how best to bring about the political settlement that must take place. There are some who say security, particularly in Baghdad, is the key, and if Baghdad can be made secure, the Iraqi politicians will have breathing room to reach the agreements and pass the legislation that will lead to reconciliation.

Others, including this Senator, believe the Iraqis must be pressured to take responsibility for their own future, and the best way to do that is to convince them our military presence is not open-ended.

The emergency supplemental before us is designed to do just that. It forces the Iraqi leaders to take responsibility for their own country by ending the open-ended commitment to provide a U.S. security blanket. Instead, it would require the beginning of a partial reduction of U.S. troops, leaving time for the Iraqis to make the political compromises they promised to make months ago.

The bill calls for a change in mission for our forces in Iraq, from policing a civil war to a limited support mission, so that the Iraqis can finally realize our military presence in Iraq is not open-ended; that the future of their country is in their hands, not ours.

The present course in Iraq is failing. The Iraqis are no closer to political reconciliation today than they were when the surge began. Instead of Prime Minister Maliki's government becoming stronger, it appears it is weaker. Disagreements in the Government have prevented proposals for deBaathification and oil revenue sharing legislation from even being forwarded to the Council of Representatives for consideration.

The committee considering amendments to the Iraqi constitution appears to be as far from completing its work as it has always been. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Assembly is apparently planning to go on a 2-month recess at the end of June. Now, let me repeat that since it is so unbelievable. The Iraqi Council of Representatives is apparently planning to go on a 2-month recess at the end of June.

Incredibly enough, a man named Hasan Suneid, who is a lawmaker and the adviser to Prime Minister Maliki, was quoted in the paper the other day as saying, "Time is irrelevant."

Well, time is plenty relevant to us, to our troops, and to their families. Baghdad is burning while the politicians in Iraq avoid responsibility for their own country's future. Even the detonation of a suicide bomb within the Green Zone killing Iraqi parliamentarians has failed to change the political situation. It appears the Iraqi factions are content to seek vengeance rather than reconciliation.

Senior administration officials, including Secretary Gates, Secretary Rice, and Ambassador Khalilzad have, in fact, wisely used this debate in Congress in an attempt to pressure the Iraqis to achieve political reconciliation.

Secretary Gates said the week before last in Jordan:

The debate in Congress has been helpful in demonstrating to the Iraqis that American patience is limited. The strong feelings expressed in the Congress about the timetable probably has had a positive impact . . . in terms of communicating to the Iraqis that it is not an open-ended commitment.

Secretary Gates told a press conference just last Thursday:

I think one of the ancillary benefits of the debate on the Hill is that the Iraqis have to know that this isn't an open-ended commitment. The President has said that our patience is not unlimited. I don't think we've been very stubborn in communicating these messages to the Iraqis.

That is what Secretary Gates said: "I don't think we've been very stubborn in communicating these messages to the Iraqis" that our patience is not unlimited. Well, we need to change course in Iraq. We need to stubbornly communicate our message to the Iraqis. Voting for this bill will help to send that message.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there

will now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein.

Under the previous order, all time until 12:45 p.m. will be equally divided between the two leaders or their designees.

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

AMERICA COMPETES ACT

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I am glad we are ready to begin again, after we finished up on our bill yesterday.

Finally, we will be prepared to deal with the funding for our troops today. It has taken a very long time but, nevertheless, I am glad the time has arrived.

I just wanted to say that as often is the case, I have had the opportunity to visit with several students from my wife's class at Washington Lee High School. Each year I look forward to her bringing her class here because it is important for young people to understand this is their Government as much as yours and mine. So I am delighted at the number of young people who come here from Wyoming and, in this case, from Virginia.

To learn more about this Government is so important, and these young people are, of course, tomorrow's responsible leaders. I am just delighted to have them here. We talked about the American COMPETES Act. These students and opportunities for them is what it is all about. That is what we have been talking about and thinking about.

The American COMPETES Act has a good purpose and a good role. America must maintain its competitiveness to be able to continue to compete. We need to challenge our young people and encourage them to challenge themselves to be prepared to move into the future and be prepared to take advantage of the opportunities this country provides for all of us.

However, I do not believe the solution to keeping America in the forefront of technology simply lies in throwing money there, without any particular reason to expect results from it.

We have gotten in the position here in the Congress that when we hear of a problem—and there are problems—if we can pass a bill and send some money, then we have accomplished our job. I am sorry, I do not believe that is necessarily the case. I think we have to take a look at where we are on these issues. For instance, how many Federal educational programs are there now? What kind of a job have we done in trying to see how effectively those dollars have been spent and are being spent? So just having more programs and more money is not necessarily the answer.

Certainly, these students and these schools need more money, and they need to have programs, but they really need support from dedicated teachers,

from parents, from family members, and friends.

Having discussed this topic on the floor before, we have to be careful about the number of Federal programs we continue. We talk about the budget over here, about deficit spending, and yet at the same time: Well, let's have another bill, let's have another \$60 billion and go forward with programs of that kind.

It is important that we try to concern ourselves about adding more programs and not knowing necessarily where and how effectively that money is going to be spent. Unfortunately, most of the programs we put out there are institutionalized. They suddenly become part of the permanent process and are there forever and become permanent fixtures, irrespective of whether there are objectives to be met and whether they are meeting them. I hope, as we go forward, as we are now in the process of doing, with appropriations and funding for the year 2008 and being concerned about the deficit, about the amount of spending the Federal Government finds itself in and, frankly, the role of the Federal Government in terms of what the States should be doing, what local schools should be doing, these kinds of things, we will re-evaluate what is the role of the Federal Government and how we can be most effective. We have a role, there is no question, but there is a limit to that role.

It is a little easy for us, if we see a problem, to say: Let's just pass another bill. Let's put some more money out there and then just walk away from it and say: We have done our job. That is not necessarily the case.

I believe the America COMPETES Act has good intentions. Perhaps it will do some good. But I have to say again that in retrospect, it is important that we look at what is the role of the Federal Government. What programs are we doing and how do we measure their effectiveness and how do we measure how long they will be there and how can we measure their impact. We will find out soon how that works.

IRAQ SUPPLEMENTAL

A word or two about the supplemental bill that will come before us today. We have talked about this a number of times. I must say that I am not pleased with how we have gotten to where we are. It has absolutely taken too long. There is no question, as my friend from the other side of the aisle says, that we need to talk about this issue. We have talked about it. We need to take positions. We have taken positions. That is a good thing. But the idea of simply stalling the money that is necessary to support our troops who are already there is not a good idea. Funding is not the way to deal with our feelings about it.

In particular, the process has taken too long. Billions in nonemergency spending has been added to the bill, things that may have merit, some of them, and some of them do not. Fortu-

nately, some of them have been taken out. But the idea of adding spending that is totally irrelevant to funding the troops just doesn't seem to be appropriate. It sort of indicates the way we keep spending money around here and finding ways to hook it onto something else. I am disappointed in that.

The majority has attached an increase in the minimum wage to this bill. How does that fit the funding for the troops in Afghanistan and Iraq? During the conference, additional measures not in either the House nor Senate bill were quietly tucked in. We are using this as a transportation system for a lot of things, when the challenge before us is that we have troops there who have to be funded. There is talk about: Well, they don't need to be funded until July because they can take their money from somewhere else. Then you are taking money away from the various kinds of health care that is available for veterans and other things that are equally important.

What is most frustrating is the majority has used the parliamentary maneuver to deny a vote that I had intended as an amendment on the most egregious spending. We didn't get a chance to put that on the floor. Certainly, if there is anything that is appropriate, that would have been the way.

At any rate, we seem to have lost our focus somewhat. We had a good report yesterday from the commanding general in Iraq. He indicated that while we are not experiencing runaway success, we are beginning to see success in a new approach with new leadership, and they need our support. I am optimistic the Senate will have another opportunity to get through this, get it right, and get the funding to the troops. I will do my part to ensure that we do.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I join with my colleague from Wyoming in rising to express my concerns about the budgetary problems the Army and Marine Corps are going to face because the Democratic majority has committed to staging a showdown with the White House instead of fulfilling our obligation to fund the military.

Over 2 months ago, the former Army Chief of Staff, General Schoomaker, testified before the Armed Services Committee that if the Army and Marine Corps do not get the supplemental funding by mid-April, the services will experience a serious cashflow problem and have to take extraordinary measures that will slow down the whole system. On April 11, the Secretary of Defense wrote Congress and stated:

It is a simple fact of life that if the Fiscal Year 2007 supplemental legislation is not enacted soon, the Army faces a real and serious funding problem that will require increasingly disruptive and costly measures to be initiated—measures that will inevitably negatively impact readiness and Army personnel and their families.

Moreover, on April 19, the Associated Press reported that the \$70 billion pro-

vided to fight the war has mostly run out. I want to say that again: The \$70 billion that the Army needs to fight this war has mostly run out.

In order to stretch their remaining funds through June, the Army is slowing down the purchase of nonessential repair parts. I am not sure what repair parts during a war are nonessential. I guess we will have to leave it to our generals to inform their soldiers that their vehicles are not getting repaired because they are nonessential.

There is important funding in this supplemental. For example, Senator BIDEN offered an amendment to purchase more mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles for our soldiers in the field. I commend Senator BIDEN for offering this amendment. I commend his commitment to it. Senator BIDEN said two things with which I wholeheartedly agree. First, he said that providing funding for these vehicles is a moral imperative. Second, he said it was a matter of life and death. I agree. His amendment and the supplemental as a whole represent a moral imperative for every Senator. It is a matter of life and death for our soldiers serving in combat. Yet the Democratic leadership is not handling this issue as a matter of life and death because they are determined to send a bill to the President that he has said he will veto.

As we all know, the President's objection to this bill is the troop withdrawal language that ties our commanders' hands and telegraphs to our enemies the time and place of our surrender. Congress should not and Congress must not get into the habit of interjecting itself into the military chain of command. To do so invites disaster and moves the country from the premise of conducting our military operations with one Commander in Chief and not running it by committee.

I direct some of my comments to some of our colleagues on the other side, primarily the leadership. I have been very concerned and shocked recently to read statements of members of the majority stating that their strategy is to send the President bills he will veto because it is politically advantageous. Some of our colleagues on the other side were quoted as saying recently:

We are going to pick up Senate seats because of this war.

Quoting again:

We will break them, because they [the Republicans] are looking extinction in the eye.

I would say to my Democratic colleagues, we are not the enemy. If you want to break something, let's break the enemy. Let's break al-Qaida. I am concerned about where this debate is headed.

I have to tell my colleagues, as I have listened to our colleagues talk about this war particularly of late, we have had Democratic leadership saying that the war was lost. If that is true, then who won? Terrorism? Al-Qaida?

Religious extremists who murder the innocent? Or all of the above? If this is a true and accurate representation of the majority's position, it is not surprising that Congress has not sent an emergency supplemental to the President.

I serve on the Armed Services Committee. I have traveled several times to Iraq. I have visited, numerous times, Walter Reed Hospital and the military hospital in Germany. I have to say that I have not talked to one GI who says the war is lost. I have not talked to one injured soldier who says the war is lost. I have not talked to one officer who has said the war is lost. I have not talked to one commander who has said the war is lost. The only place I hear the statement that the war is lost is right here from the Halls of our Nation's Capitol or from news reports from Al-Jazeera or Iranian television quoting the majority leader of the Senate.

Our American soldiers believe they can win. Our American soldiers always believe they can win. That is why they are American soldiers. They are the best. It has to be very disturbing to our American soldiers to constantly hear politicians in Washington, DC, telling them they can't win. The Democratic leadership in Washington is playing a game of roulette with the administration where the only losers will be the American soldier.

We need to focus on providing our troops the equipment and resources they need to win this war. It is a global war. We have to quit acting as if short-term political gains are going to win this war for us. They will not. We need a unified and serious effort on the part of both parties in the Congress to win this war and to keep our Nation secure. History is going to judge us based on how we respond to the crisis of our generation.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, instead of this body appointing an accusatory finger across the partisan aisle, what this body ought to be doing is invoking the old principle that in the old days, at the water's edge, partisanship stops. We have seen on both sides of the aisle too much of that partisanship, particularly in matters of war and peace. There is a genuine disagreement not only over the conduct of the war but the very fact that we are in this war to begin with. We can't do anything about that now. We were given false information, massaged information, misinformation that caused us to enter this war and, after a quick and very decisive and very impressive victory, then set about the process of an occupation that was fraught with error and misinformation. But that was then, and now is now. What is in the interest of the United States? Clearly it is to stabilize Iraq, if that is possible.

A distinguished group of Americans, five Republicans and five Democrats in

the Iraq study commission, unanimously came together last winter and said what they thought would be the plan, the best way we could stabilize Iraq, led by an eminent and distinguished Republican, former Secretary of State and a former Chief of Staff in the White House to President Reagan, Jim Baker, and led by the longtime and distinguished and equally as respected former Congressman and former chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in the House, Lee Hamilton.

Now, this is not a question about losing or winning a war; this is a question about, What is the best chance we have for stabilizing Iraq? Because clearly a stabilized Iraq in that part of the world is going to certainly help the neighbors in the region, and it is certainly going to help us, and clearly it is going to help the Iraqis.

So what did the Iraq study commission say? Well, they said it very clearly. I am reading from the Executive Summary:

The primary mission of U.S. forces in Iraq should evolve to one of supporting the Iraqi army, which would take over primary responsibility for combat operations. By the first quarter of 2008—

By the way, that is a year from now, that is April, that is the end of March—

By the first quarter of 2008, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground, all combat brigades not necessary for force protection could be out of Iraq.

It is true, they did not say "should be out of Iraq." They said "could be out of Iraq." But they are giving a blueprint.

I continue with the quote:

At that time, U.S. combat forces in Iraq could be deployed only in units embedded with Iraqi forces, in rapid-reaction and special operations teams, and in training, equipping, advising, force protection, and search and rescue.

I conclude this particular paragraph:

Intelligence and support efforts would continue. A vital mission of those rapid reaction and special operations forces would be to undertake strikes against al Qaeda in Iraq.

That is the Iraq Study Group report. It said: Go after al-Qaida. It said: Continue to train the Iraqi forces. It specifically talked about, in that training, embedding with Iraqi forces. It said "force protection," meaning force protection for our forces and for U.S. personnel. And it said "search and rescue" missions. That is exactly what we have in front of us today to vote on.

Now, there is additional language put in here about the President would have to certify and waive on this and that progress by the Iraqi Government. Clearly, you want to give some indicators to the Iraqi Government of what we expect. Again, what we are voting on today is a goal of having redeployed—basically, with the waiver by the President, we are talking about October 1. This is April—May, June, July, August, September—6 months from now is the goal of starting the rede-

ployment. It does not say "withdrawal," it says "redeployment" because "redeployment" is a term that is then defined by all of those things we just talked about. That is in this legislation we are going to vote on today.

Now, there are those in this body I certainly respect who would say they do not want any kind of conditions put on the President in order to conduct the war. I respect that. That is a difference of opinion that we have. But common sense would tell you that you cannot conduct a war if you do not have the support of the American people. The American people clearly want change. So it is time for us to start the process of the change.

Now, this Senator, along with most every Senator in this Senate, was in the meeting yesterday with General Petraeus. There was clearly a message that General Petraeus had hope, but seasoned with a great deal of reality, realizing the additional complexity. There were no clear-cut answers yesterday in us meeting with the top general over there in Iraq, a general whom we all admire and respect. Yes, there is still hope. But there is also the need for change. This document starts the process of the change.

Now, it is my hope that after we go through this exercise, it will pass today—narrowly, just like it passed a month ago narrowly—the legislation will go down to the President—and he has already said he is going to veto it—and then is the opportunity for cooler heads, as the Good Book says, to come let us reason together. That is my hope.

So I will be voting for this supplemental funding request that funds the troops, that funds other necessary emergencies.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nevada.

IRAQ

Mr. ENSIGN. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the subject of the emergency war supplemental and the adverse impact this political theater is having on our efforts in Iraq.

For me, this political gamesmanship calls to mind a book written some 50 years ago about some very brave men in our Nation's history—not brave in the sense of today's marines and soldiers, who are doing the grunt work in Afghanistan and Iraq to ensure that the free world can sleep in peace at night. No, the men in this book were brave for a very different reason.

The book I am referring to is the 1956 classic, "Profiles in Courage," written by a young U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, who later became our 35th President. The book is an account of men of principle, integrity, and bravery in American politics.

Then-Senator Kennedy profiled eight exceptional U.S. Senators from throughout the Senate's history whom he considered to be models of virtue