8:45 a.m. Tuesday while searching for a gunman who was suspected of shooting a third trooper, Trooper Matthew Gambosi, during a traffic stop in nearby Margaretville, NY, a beautiful town in Delaware County. Trooper Mattson is in serious condition at a local hospital and, praise God, Trooper Gambosi only suffered minor wounds as the bullet was caught by his bulletproof vest. We pray for their speedy recoveries.

Law enforcement raided the farm where the gunman was holed up yesterday, and his body was recovered late last night. Now that this man is no longer a threat, we must turn our attention to the troopers' families and friends who have been devastated by these tragic events.

New York State troopers represent the best of all of us. They are brave, selfless heroes who put their lives on the line every day with unequaled character and dignity. They are tough, and they are just. The events of the past 48 hours have devastated our entire State. Now we will mourn together. The entire trooper community and the people of the great State of New York have suffered an enormous loss. The greatest way we can honor them is to remember their sacrifice always and to pledge to rise above this tragedy by continuing to do exactly what they did when they got into harm's way on our behalf. Of course, I speak of impartial, courageous, and professional law enforcement.

Trooper Brinkerhoff was born and raised in the Southtowns area of western New York and was only 29. He was an 8½-year State police veteran and joined the mobile response team in early 2006. He is survived by his wife Barbara and a 7-month-old daughter. Brinkerhoff is the second member of the New York State mobile response unit to be killed in less than a year. Trooper Joseph Longobardo was killed by serial killer Ralph ''Bucky'' Phillips in the woods of Chautauqua County in the western end of our State. Far too often our troopers and law enforcement officers are struck down by senseless violence. However, every time their mettle is tested, they return stronger and more determined to keep New York safe.

I am also pleased that the Senate will approve later today a resolution commemorating the sacrifice of the men and women of law enforcement who have lost their lives on the job. They are all true heroes. We honor each and every one of them.

My thoughts and those of my family are with Barbara and her daughter tonight, and I send them the full condolences of the Senate and the people of the State of New York. We will not forget you or the sacrifice of Trooper Brinkerhoff.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Madam President, I want to take some time, as we contemplate what is going to happen with the supplemental bill we just passed because, frankly, I am in a state of shock over the casual dismissal of the opinions of the American people, in huge majorities, who say: We have had enough of this war, and we want to make a change. They want us to start to position ourselves in a manner that would allow us to bring our people home.

Not far from this Senate floor, in the middle of the National Mall, is a place of stone and water, of strength and reflection. It is a place that is important to me and, I think, important to the country as a whole. It is where we honor those who served and those who died in World War II.

I proudly wore the uniform of my country during that war. I do not consider myself a hero, but I did my duty to the best of my ability. I and 16 million others went to war because our mission was clear: defeat the enemy who attacked us. And while the battles were fought across the ocean, the entire country united. They all sacrificed. That was the message: sacrifice, sacrifice at home, use less gas, turn off the lights, reduce energy consumption, black out the beachfront places or coastal areas so the enemy could not see the lights of the cities. Even with rising injuries and casualties in World War II, America kept its resolve because we believed in our leaders.

How times have changed.

There is one simple reason the American people have lost faith in this war effort: It has become clear our leaders are not providing us with the truth. And the chief purveyor of misstatements is Vice President CHENEY. He chooses to say whatever he wants to, to advance his agenda. But the agenda has now, we know, resulted in the deaths of thousands of Americans, thousands of Iraqis. It is time to say: Enough is enough.

I want to review some of the outlandish statements the Vice President has made about this war. On the eve of the invasion, in March 2003, Vice President DICK CHENEY assured the Nation that ''we will be greeted as liberators.''

I ask the question: How dare he make a statement such as that—without knowledge, without any idea of what the consequences of that action might be. We will be greeted as liberators?

He went on to say the fight would be ''weeks rather than months.''

In June of 2005, Vice President CHENEY assured us the insurgency in Iraq is ''in the last throes.'' That was almost 2 years ago. Ask our people in uniform, ask our people in combat, ask those who are facing another deployment after having been there once or even twice—ask them what they think about that statement, about the accuracy of those remarks.

Earlier this year, even after the Pentagon admitted there was no evidence at all of a connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida, the Vice President said there was a connection. If you say it, maybe you can convince people, even if it is not the truth.

And now, this week, we have our Vice President speaking out against this bill we just passed, again making outlandish claims.

You have to ask yourself a question: Who is still listening to those comments and giving them any credibility? Unfortunately, there are people, despite his outrageous and unsubstantiated claims—claims such as the ''insurgency is in its last throes''—who tend to believe him. He is, after all, the Vice President of the United States. It is a prestigious job. There is an automatic assumption that credibility goes to the occupant of that position.

We may never know the real motivation behind this administration's drive to Iraq, but we do know the following: They presented false intelligence to the American people and our allies.

We have seen some of those responsible, credible people, who believed in the case that was being made by the intelligence reports—look at one of the great figures in American contemporary history, Colin Powell—a general, Chief of Staff. I remember his speech at the United Nations providing evidence of materials that confirmed there were weapons of mass destruction there. And now this man, who has a lifetime built on honesty and credibility, has said he regrets those statements. But we do not hear that pause, that reflection, coming from the President or the Vice President of the United States.

The administration knowingly misled the country about Iraq's nuclear ambitions in President Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address.

In a recent CBS News poll, 66 percent of the American people disapproved of the way President Bush is handling this situation with Iraq. That disapproval has continued to build. If you look at some of the polling data we have seen over the last couple years, less and less of the people in the country believe we are doing a good job with the situation in Iraq, as portrayed by the President.

On Monday, President Bush said:

There's been some progress.

That statement shows the President is living in an alternate reality.

On that same day—Monday—10 American troops were killed, 9 of them in a single attack. Since the beginning of this war, more than 3,300 of our people in uniform have died.

One of those people was a fellow from Toms River, NJ, Marine Cpl Thomas Saba. He served with the Marines' Flying Tigers. He volunteered to extend

his tour of duty after his squadron was deployed to Iraq. He died with his comrades in February when their helicopter was shot down by insurgents. Corporal Saba is one of 77 people from my home State of New Jersey to see their last sunset in Iraq. Ten more have died in Afghanistan.

Beyond these casualties, nearly 25,000 of our troops have left the combat theater with serious wounds. More than 800 of them have lost at least one limb. We have spent mountains of taxpayer money in Iraq. We have spent $400 billion, going now at the rate of $3 billion a week. What have we gotten for our investment? A disaster. That is the reality of Iraq, not the endless and empty picture of optimism the Vice President and others in the administration and the President continue to paint. ''Extend our victories.'' What victories are they talking about? I don't see any victories. We see more threats. Not only to our people—that is the most serious one—not only to our reputation, but to our leadership in the world as it disintegrates in front of us as this conflict continues.

We need a new course, and we need it now. This supplemental provides that new course. We hope the President will reflect a little bit, instead of the braggadocio attitude and false stories about how Democrats want to surrender. That is the most offensive thing. Democrats want to surrender? Senator INOUYE, a Medal of Honor winner here, and other people who fought in Vietnam and other places. We want to surrender America? It is an outrage.

Outside my office, we have a memorial and it shows the ''Faces of the Fallen''—photographs. Some of them are blank, but they have a name and a location of the person—the faces of the fallen from Iraq and Afghanistan. Typically it carries each picture, and we have about 3,000 of them. It takes a while to get the pictures together. People walk by, they stop and pause and write notes in a journal we have there. It includes the name and age, the rank and the battalion or company they served in, the cause of death of each of the Nation's fallen servicemembers, inscribed with their photo on the memorial. Families, friends, and visitors search those photos on a daily basis looking for people from their State, from their area, people who many knew and loved and miss. One woman found a picture of her son up there and wrote an inscription in our journal.

As they search these pictures, some write notes in a book of reflections. I want to share two of those reflections. A person named Prudence Hart from New Jersey wrote:

> We honor our soldiers for answering the call of their Nation. We must honor them and this Nation by never allowing another President to wage war as this one has.

Another person, Jay Miller from Rhode Island, wrote:

> We are at a pivotal point in our country's history. Our leaders must take a stand and use their constitutional powers to end this madness.

To Prudence Hart, Jay Miller, and every American, I say: We are with you. We do honor those who have bravely taken up their task, able and willing to do it. Some of those troops are the third deployment away from a spouse, children, community, job. They are the ones making the sacrifice, and they are the ones whom we want to honor. We want to honor them by remembering those who paid the ultimate price, but we want to honor them further by bringing them home and giving them appropriate post-service treatment.

I wish we were treating our veterans in the same honorable manner in which they were recruited. We have failed in many instances. We failed, even as people criticize Democrats and those who disagree with them, even as they try to discredit us as wanting to surrender, when they didn't provide the right equipment, whether the humvees were sufficiently armored, or whether they had the proper flak jackets.

I went to Iraq some years ago, and when I asked the people I met from New Jersey: What is it we could do to make their job better and protect them more, one of them said, Senator—and I was with four other colleagues—Senators, the flak jackets you are wearing, the body armor you are wearing is the latest and the best. We don't have it. People who were in the coalition have that, but we don't. What else? They said: Our humvees are not sufficiently armored to protect us. We know what has happened.

So if we want to talk about honoring our troops, where was the administration while Halliburton was stealing from the country with food and shelter and had a fine of millions of dollars imposed by the auditors from the Defense Department? Shame on them. In the war I fought in, there wasn't anybody except a traitor who would do something that might help the enemy like having a sham corporation in the Cayman Islands, a branch in Dubai where they then did business with Iran—Iran, which supplies weapons and encouragement to insurgents who want to kill our people there. It is shocking that we see that, and when we hear these false tales coming from the Vice President of the United States, when he talks about victory, and I am paraphrasing: victory within our grasp, within our reach. The American people don't believe it, and I tell my colleagues I don't believe it, and a lot of my colleagues don't believe it.

We had a vote one day that was significant. It was 56 to 44, and it included seven of our colleagues from the Republican side, people who had the courage to stand up and say: Look, we are not ashamed to be Republicans, and we are not ashamed to be Democrats, but we think this policy is wrong. We had enough votes—not to get cloture, but to establish a significant majority. I know some of our colleagues over there who are loyal to the party and to the President who don't like a bit what he is asking of the American people now, and asking of us, labeling this bill as a porkbarrel thing.

I can't get the word ''surrender'' out of my mind.

I sit on the Appropriations Committee, and I was at a conference committee of the House and the Senate the other night, and the ranking Republican on the House side said the Democrats want to surrender just when General Petraeus is coming in—surrender. This bill is our stand, the American stand. It begins to set a timetable for us to come home—not to run away from our responsibilities. Our responsibility has been more than met. But we are even willing to leave enough of a cadre there to say: OK, we will help the Iraqis learn to defend themselves. We will help the Iraqis to reconstruct their society. We will help even to do some counterterrorism and counterinsurgencies.

It is time to come home. It is time to come home, and I hope the President of the United States will follow the demands of the American people and a major number of people who oppose where we are, a huge majority.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I was in Iraq this weekend, and I was there in December, right before Christmas, with my friend, Senator NELSON of Florida. Our meetings at that time took place in the shadows of the 2006 Congressional elections and in the wake of the much anticipated Iraq Study Group report. During each of our visits at that time, the atmosphere exuded a feeling of transition, a desire to get out of the constant struggle of lateral movement to a feeling of longing for a new strategy, long overdue in Iraq. On January 10, we learned the details of that new strategy. It wasn't exactly what many of us expected and it raised some particular concerns for me. Two weeks earlier when I was in Iraq, I met with the National Security Adviser for the Prime Minister of Iraq, Dr. al-Rubaie, and he told Senator NELSON and me he didn't think sectarian violence was the biggest problem in Iraq. To express that kind of denial was incredulous. Senator NELSON and I kind of looked at each other. His comments reflected to me at that time that I didn't think the Iraqi Government had the commitment to reconciliation needed to warrant an increase in U.S. forces in Baghdad and in an area wracked by sectarian civil war.

So at the time I stated the idea of sending an additional force of 20,000 troops into Baghdad, into the lion's den of sectarian violence without any additional commitment from the Iraqi Government was something I did not feel I could support. Because of the duty we share as Members of this deliberative body, I put myself on record expressing my views. I wasn't popular with a lot of my constituents. I joined

the senior Senator from Virginia, a colleague whom I respect so deeply on military matters, the former chairman of the Armed Services committee, and I cosponsored his resolution expressing the concern over the proposed surge in Baghdad.

A slightly modified version of his resolution came before the full Senate on February 5, a little over 2 months ago. Although my colleagues in the majority at that time sought to limit our opportunity to amend this legislation through procedural maneuvering, I believed I had a duty to follow my conscience and I supported the procedural motion to move forward on that resolution. I joined many of my colleagues, mostly on the other side of the aisle, in voting for cloture on this resolution on February 5.

Here we are, 2 short months later, and how the debate has changed. I will talk a little bit about what I have seen in Iraq but how the debate has changed. I thought I would take a brief moment to remind some of my colleagues across the aisle what they went on record as supporting on February 5. On February 5, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle said: We respect what S. 470 said, we respect the constitutional authorities given to the President, that the President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States. Here we are 2 months later making an attempt to limit his constitutional authority to exercise his fundamental constitutional duties.

On February 5, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle said the resolution they supported should not be interpreted as precipitating any immediate reduction in, or withdrawal of, the present level of forces.

Here we are, 2 short months later, picking an arbitrary withdrawal date without the consent of our commanders on the ground and advocating a pullout.

On February 5, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle stated their belief that ''the U.S. should continue vigorous operations in Anbar province.'' And here we are 2 short months later and we are trying to pull our forces out and leave the Sunnis in Anbar alone to deal with the terror of al-Qaida.

On February 5, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle stated their belief that ''a failed state in Iraq would present a threat to regional and world peace.'' I don't know that many who have studied this issue would disagree with that notion. And here we are 2 short months later essentially working to ensure that this frightening prospect materializes.

On February 5, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle commended our troops in the field, agreeing that they have served our country ''with the bravery and professionalism consistent with the finest traditions of the U.S. Armed Forces.'' But here we are today, reflecting on comments that they have ''lost'' the war in Iraq.

Most importantly, on February 5, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle stated their belief that the U.S. ''should not take any action that will endanger U.S. military forces in the field, including the elimination or reduction of funds for our troops.'' Here we are 2 months later, conditioning that funding on withdrawal timelines to handcuff our military leaders, delaying the delivery of resources our forces need.

One of the things I heard in Anbar Province from a Marine general was that they needed these V-shaped humvee vehicles to protect against IEDs. Regular humvees are flat and they take the full force of a blast. With the use of these V-shaped humvee bottoms, we have not had many casualties. This bill the President will veto has about 8,000 of those V-shaped vehicles that we need.

I supported that resolution in February, but I did not support the bill before us today. It is unfortunate that the majority in this body has decided to utilize this important piece of legislation to attempt to set us on a course for failure in Iraq. When I say that, it is true this bill contains a lot of important things for our military, our veterans. But it is unconscionable that our veterans would be used as pawns in a political game, where the majority seeks to ensure failure in Iraq at all costs. That is what happens when you say it is lost, when you tell the enemy this is when we are withdrawing. I think our soldiers and our families deserve better.

My recent trip to Iraq underscored the fact that while we face formidable challenges, there are also glimmers of hope. General Petraeus said that to me in Baghdad on Saturday. He showed me the charts of the declines in the death squads and sectarian violence in Baghdad. He talks about the sheiks in Anbar Province coming over and fighting shoulder to shoulder with us against al-Qaida in Iraq.

When I visited Iraq this weekend, I traveled to Taqaddum in Anbar Province, between Fallujah and Ramadi, and Talil, in south central Iraq. I also spent time in Baghdad. We have some Minnesota National Guard in Talil and Taqaddum. We have a long way to go. It is certainly too early to tell whether our new strategy, including the surge in troops, is succeeding at the level set out by the President. Even General Petraeus has said that. Certainly our headlines here at home still echo the horrific suicide bombs and insurgent attacks we have sadly grown to expect when we read the morning paper. This is an enemy with resolve. It understands the impact of those actions on the American people.

General Petraeus told me and others in this body that he will come back to us in September—his troops are not all deployed at this point in time—and he can show the progress and the decline in the killings and sectarian violence. He talked about the elimination of some of the killing cells and some of their leadership. He will come back in September with the Ambassador, whom I also had dinner with that night, to discuss the situation. They will tell us whether they have succeeded in providing the stability in Baghdad that will allow the process of reconciliation to move forward more aggressively. He used the phrase many times that ''the clock in Washington ticks much faster than in Iraq.'' We know that. He did say military action cannot win this war. But my colleagues on the other side, when they quote that, don't quote the other half of the sentence. He said it is 20 percent military action, but you cannot do the other 80 percent unless you are successful in the military action. He is clear about that. I believe General Petraeus and the troops he commands deserve to be given the time they need before we arbitrarily decide the war is lost.

I continue to have my doubts about the Iraqi leadership. I met with the Prime Minister of Iraq, and he told me he was annoyed by a statement by the Secretary of Defense regarding the need to bring Sunnis more into their Government. His comment was that the Shia is a majority and it would undermine the democracy, tell the majority what they have to do. I said: Respectfully, I serve in the Senate. In the Senate, we protect in this country against one of the enemies of democracy, which is the tyranny of the majority. That is what has to go into the reconciliation in Iraq. I don't believe, as I listened to him, that he has the kind of commitment yet we need to make reconciliation successful. So that is of concern.

For us in this body, it is hard to think that giving a voice to the minority would constitute undermining democracy. We know the perils of a tyranny of the majority, which Alexis de Tocqueville defined in 1835, and that Madison and Hamilton alluded to in the Federalist Papers. The fact we are still trying to persuade the Prime Minister that he has to do a better job of reaching out to his own countrymen makes it hard for me to be optimistic.

Despite these challenges, the atmosphere in my meetings last weekend was so different than what I saw in December. The brave American civilians who are executing the diplomatic components of our strategy have a new sense of mission. I met with State Department folks—two of them—at breakfast Saturday morning. They are part of the new PRT. They are about to go Anbar Province, and they are reading in the paper that the war is ''lost'' and they are going out into Anbar Province to work on the reconstruction of Anbar and Fallujah. They are just about to begin their mission with a sense of hope, and shame on us if we dash it here. Some of the Iraqi leaders I was with reacted strongly in an opposite direction from the Prime Minister and clearly understood our commitment is not open-ended. Certainly, the courageous men and women in the field told

me to relay to my colleagues this war is not lost. Let me be very clear. I sat in meetings with members of the Minnesota National Guard—by the way, I am unhappy about their tours of duty being extended. They and their families heard in the press that they were being extended. I complained about that to the Army and received an apology. In spite of that, they stood up and said to me: Use our names. Tell the Senate the war is not lost.

MAJ Brian Melton, from Moorhead, MN, said: Tell the Senate the war is not lost. Lieutenant Martin of the 1/34th Support Battalion in Talil, Iraq, wants the Senate to know the war is not lost. These soldiers talked about at one point it being kind of the Wild West in Anbar Province and it is being transformed.

I wish my colleagues would have heard the story from LTC Gregg Parks of Walker, MN. He told me about a suicide bomber who came into a town called Habbaniyah, and he veered into a crowd coming out of a mosque, blew himself up, and wounded or killed many Iraqis. Not a single American shed blood in that attack; yet our soldiers lined up to give blood. The next day, the mayor and local sheiks came in and gave the names of al-Qaida operatives and pledged to work side by side with our troops to drive al-Qaida out of Iraq. I wish my colleagues could have heard COL David Elicerio, commander of the 1/34 Brigade Combat Team of the Minnesota National Guard. He told me about the ''adopt a highway'' program his men and women have implemented with the local Iraqis. He said the local sheiks came in and identified where there were two IEDs.

There are many challenges that lie ahead, probably too many to name here. I don't see the situation in Iraq through rose-colored glasses and I am not trying to paint an unrealistic picture. The violence we have see over the past weeks in places like Baqubah reminds us all too well of the struggles we face.

I know the American public has run out of patience on this war. I don't know what the next round of letters to the editor will look like, or the attack ads on moveon.org for the vote I cast; but I am committed to stemming the flow of terrorism, not handing al-Qaida a victory they will be able to use to strengthen their forces and hurt and kill more Americans.

This bill we passed, with the timeline for surrender, doesn't make America safer. I am not for an open-ended commitment or a blank check, but as General Petraeus has said, you have to have a plan B. If the Iraqis don't do what they need to do for reconciliation, we are going to figure out a way to get Americans out of the crosshairs of that civil war. Some say we will be in Kuwait or some other area. General Petraeus told me he has to refuel his helicopters three times to get back into Baghdad, and if there is a ''Rwanda'' in Baghdad, we are not going to be able to do anything about it. We will redeploy our troops if this surge doesn't work, put them outside the center area.

In the end, they may have to look at a plan B. But that decision will come soon. General Petraeus said: Let me come back in September. Perhaps that is not soon enough for the American public, but the decision we made today, the statement that the war is ''lost,'' the decision to set into place a timetable for surrender, doesn't help us provide an opportunity for reconciliation to occur in Iraq, or for there to be greater stability in the region, and it will let al-Qaida have a victory. A timetable for surrender hurts our warriors on the front line. It is a path I could not follow, one America shall not follow. Let us come back with a different supplemental and let us give our warriors the money they need to fight the war that has to be fought. Let us do that quickly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT JOSEPH M. TACKETT

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Senate to pause for a moment today in loving memory and honor of Sgt. Joseph M. Tackett of Whitehouse, KY. Sergeant Tackett was tragically killed on June 23, 2005, in Baghdad while serving his country in the U.S. Army. He was 22 years old, and the recipient of numerous awards including the Bronze Star.

Not long after Sergeant Tackett's death, his body returned home to Johnson County, KY, and family, neighbors and friends came to pay their respects at his flag-draped casket in the Johnson County Middle School gymnasium. Even the kindergarten students at his old elementary school to whom he wrote letters remembered him that day as a friend and a hero.

Joe ''was just very excited and enthusiastic about protecting a country he loved,'' says Nellie Bowen, Joe's third-grade teacher. ''He had a pride in our country that we sometimes miss.''

It was Ms. Bowen's class of kindergartners that Sergeant Tackett wrote to, becoming their overseas pen pal even while serving in Iraq. He replied to every letter they sent him, and even came to the school to speak to the children after his first tour of duty.

Mr. President, when you know this about Sergeant Tackett, you can see why so many in Johnson County turned out to support the Tackett family after the loss of their brother and son.

That Sergeant Tackett excelled in the Army is no surprise. He embraced his duty to serve with the same vigor and passion he displayed for so many activities in his short but full life.

''He looked at everything with enthusiasm,'' Joe's mother, Kathy Tackett, tells us. ''He was so looking forward to the future, [and] he was always planning for the future.''

As a child, Joe turned this infectious enthusiasm to many activities, including music. He was the singer for a Christian band and also a budding entrepreneur.

High-profile musicians didn't often include Whitehouse on their tours. But Joe filled the gap by producing rock concerts locally, showcasing local bands.

His love for music persisted to his time in Iraq. While there, he befriended Iraqi college students and introduced them to American rock music. Joe made friends so easily this way, he even exchanged emails with Iraqis while back home in Kentucky between tours.

Joe graduated from Johnson Central High School in 2000 and even then held dreams of one day becoming a soldier. He attended Big Sandy Community and Technical College, and then the terrorist attacks of 9/11 happened. Joe enlisted a month later.

He was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 76th Field Artillery, 4th Brigade Combat Team of the Third Infantry Division based at Fort Stewart, GA. He saw the Army as a way to learn new things and gain new experiences, and he devoured each new experience with excitement.

Sent to Iraq and Afghanistan for his first tour of duty, Joe learned new skills and new proficiencies. He took online classes while serving in Iraq to get his college degree. He took any training that became available and was always open to opportunities for self-improvement.

''Joe wanted to travel . . . he was curious about other countries, other lands,'' Kathy Tackett says. Joe called his mother once from the Middle East telling her he was standing in a mosque. ''There's not many people who have ever done this, Mom,'' she remembers him saying with pride.

Sergeant Tackett was deployed a second time in January 2005. His assignment was to escort visiting dignitaries through the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad. Even while undertaking this important mission, he still found time to write e-mails to his family back home. ''He was interested in so many things,'' Kathy Tackett recalls. ''I can't imagine the person that he would have become, if he would've had more years.''

Sergeant Tackett's families may never know the answer to that question. But I think we know Joe would have tackled anything he did with energy and with enthusiasm, as he did throughout his life.

Sergeant Tackett leaves behind a loving family. He is loved and remembered by his mother, Kathy, his father, Wendell, his brother, Sam, his sister, Michelle Spencer, his nieces Hailey Tackett and Shawna Spencer, and other beloved family members.

Mr. President, no words we can say today will ease the pain of the Tackett