

floor. Let's have the debate and have the vote. By the end of the day, let's have all of the relevant amendments considered to this legislation. I think we owe it to the people who have worked so hard to bring us to this moment, and now individual Senators should know that, to delay this, there is no excuse. Bring the Water Resources Development Act amendments to the floor.

In addition, the majority leader filed two amendments relative to the war in Iraq, which will be considered on a procedural basis to this Water Resources Development Act. It is a way to measure the sentiment of the Senate on two different approaches to resolving our difficulties between the White House and Congress on the funding in Iraq. There will be a cloture vote on those amendments tomorrow. That is an opportunity for Members to express their feelings.

As everybody knows, it takes 60 votes to invoke cloture. We hope we will have a strong bipartisan vote for one of those two approaches. I urge my colleagues to understand this is a very important and timely matter. We have little time left to deal with the requirements of funding our troops before the Memorial Day recess. The Democratic majority, as well as the Republican side, has made it clear we will fund our troops. At the end of the day, our troops will not go without the resources they need to provide for their own safety and a safe return home.

Also, we hope this week to initiate a conversation on the immigration bill.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be now a period for the transaction of morning business for 60 minutes, with the first half of the time under the control of the majority and the second half of the time under the control of the Republicans.

The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is obvious to most Americans our immigration system is broken. There are 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States today, and hundreds of thousands are arriving each year. In America today, unscrupulous employers hire undocumented immigrants because they can pay them less than American workers and force them to work in conditions that Americans would not tolerate. Employers can do this with impunity because our Government doesn't enforce immigra-

tion laws that prohibit hiring undocumented immigrants.

Immigration is a complicated issue that ignites strong passions. Some would rather avoid this issue because it is so sensitive. But Congress has an obligation to fix our broken immigration system. We need a comprehensive approach, one that is tough but fair. We need, first, to improve border security by increasing manpower and deploying new technology. We need to enforce the law against employers who are hiring millions of undocumented workers. We need a realistic approach to the 12 million undocumented workers who live and work in our country.

I commend our majority leader, Senator REID of Nevada. He is not afraid of tackling tough issues, including immigration reform. He knows it is an important national priority. Last week, Senator REID introduced immigration reform legislation that the Senate will begin debating this week. Senator REID did a reasonable thing. He said we should begin the debate where it ended last year, with the bipartisan Kennedy-McCain, Hagel-Martinez bill.

This bill, sponsored by Republican Senators CHUCK HAGEL, MEL MARTINEZ, ARLEN SPECTER, JOHN MCCAIN, SAM BROWNEBACK, and LINDSEY GRAHAM, and many Democrats, passed the Senate last year on a bipartisan vote of 62 to 36.

Of course, that Hagel-Martinez bill was only the starting point for the Senate's debate. Senator REID has set aside 2 full weeks to complete that debate. Members will have ample opportunity to offer amendments. This is the right place to start.

This is not a perfect bill. I voted for it, realizing there were real imperfections, but it reflects the culmination of months of work last year, including hearings and marathon markups in the Judiciary Committee, on which I serve, and over 30 rollcall votes on the floor of the Senate.

The bill is flawed, but it is comprehensive. It includes provisions to secure our borders, strengthen enforcement of our immigration laws, and addresses undocumented immigrants living in our country.

I am confident that over the next 2 weeks, through the amendment process, we can improve this bill and pass legislation that will be an important step in fixing our broken immigration system.

Unfortunately, there has been a hue and cry from the other side of the aisle. Some object to debating this bill. It is ironic, to say the least, that those on the other side who don't want to debate bipartisan legislation are objecting to a bill written, in large part, by their own side of the aisle—a bill that was passed when the Republican side of the aisle controlled the Senate last year. It is hard to understand how 21 Members of the Senate who voted for this bill last year now object to even proceeding to it now as the base bill for our debate. They understand, as we do,

that this bill is going to change once it comes to the floor. If they object to even bringing the measure to the floor—the same bill they voted for last year—one has to question whether they are committed to comprehensive immigration reform.

Some on the Republican side argue that backroom negotiations between the White House and Republican and Democratic Senators are close to a deal and that starting debate on immigration before that deal is reached is premature. I don't think that is a legitimate argument. I have been in many of these negotiations, and I will say a great amount of effort has been expended to move this bill forward. Some parts of it are very positive. An agreement between the White House and the Senate is a step forward. There are some parts that are very controversial.

Human nature and political nature are interesting. People will not move toward a goal unless they face a deadline. How many people wait until the last minute to file their tax returns or wait too long for the checkup at the dentist? When we know we are facing a deadline and time is running out, we make important decisions. The same will be true for the immigration debate. Bringing last year's bill to the floor, which passed with an overwhelming bipartisan rollcall vote, as the base bill is going to move those negotiators in that room to a conclusion more quickly. To leave this open-ended and say that at some time in the future we will get back to it is an invitation for talks to break down and for the participants to disappear.

We don't want that to happen. We cannot afford to wait. The Senate's calendar is full this year. There are so many things we need to do to make sure this congressional session is much more productive than those in the past, not the least of which is passing important appropriation bills, which now must be accomplished in order to fund the Government. We don't want to fall into the same circumstance as the previous Republican Congress, when they failed to pass appropriation bills and tried to play catchup and failed, leaving it to the new Congress, the Democratic Congress—an awesome responsibility—to fund the Government for the remainder of this fiscal year.

There are some who feel it is now or never for immigration. What the majority leader has done is to tell the negotiators this is the time to wrap things up. This is the time to reach an agreement. This is the time to decide who at that table is there in good faith and who is there to stop the process. If they reach an agreement, it can be considered on the floor of the Senate as an amendment to the bipartisan Kennedy-McCain, Hagel-Martinez bill, which is being offered as the starting point of this debate. If there is no agreement, these differences can be debated and voted on over the next 2 weeks.

I understand negotiations continue as I speak. I hope they reach an agreement that is comprehensive, tough but fair, and one every Member can seriously consider supporting. But these negotiations are no excuse for avoiding public debate.

At some point, you have to move beyond the closed doors of the rooms in the Capitol and into the bright lights of the Senate Chamber and let Members speak to their wishes and their intentions on this important legislation.

I disagree with some of the ideas being proposed by those on the other side of the aisle. I am sure they disagree with some of my approaches. I respect their views, and I hope they will look at this as a constructive opportunity.

Should the Senate tomorrow fail to invoke cloture and to move forward on the immigration bill, it will be a lost opportunity. If the 21 Senators who voted for comprehensive immigration reform will not even allow us to bring the matter to the floor at this moment, it will be difficult to explain. They will have their chance to amend. They will have their chance to make changes they think are important. They will have their chance to act as Senators considering important measures.

There has been a lot of criticism of Congress for good reason. When we look at the list of issues the American people think are important, very seldom do we find those issues being debated on the floor of the Senate. We need to change that situation. One of the issues on which most Americans agree is that our immigration system cannot be sustained. There are too many undocumented workers in this country living in fear, being exploited in the workplace, uncertain of their future. There are too many still streaming across our borders, borders that are too porous. There are ways to deal with those issues and ways this bill will address them.

The Senate can offer, debate, and vote on amendments on all these issues. That is how the Senate is supposed to work. Some of my colleagues have suggested they will block this debate from taking place by filibustering this bipartisan bill which passed over the past year. I hope they don't. It reaches the point where we need to be held accountable. I hope that point will be this week and next, as Senator REID, the majority leader, has set aside a reasonable amount of time to debate it. The American people deserve more than closed-door, backdoor negotiations. The time has come for Congress to fix our broken immigration system.

IRAQ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, time is running out to fund the troops. There are many of us who believe the policy in Iraq is a failed policy. The numbers we are given every week are stark and frightening: Over 3,370 American soldiers have now lost their lives in the

war in Iraq. Another five were killed yesterday. Over the weekend, three American soldiers were kidnapped. There is a manhunt underway to try to find them and rescue them as quickly as possible. And to all those involved, they have our prayers and our wishes for Godspeed.

But we understand the reality of this war, a war where almost 30,000 Americans have been killed or disabled, a war where many soldiers have returned home with injuries that they will have to cope with for a lifetime. This war has cost us over \$500 billion, \$500 billion that could have been spent in America for many issues important to us—improving our schools and education, making certain every American has basic health insurance, making sure our children all across America have the kind of health care and attention they need at an early age to be healthy through the rest of their life, money that could have been spent at the National Institutes of Health looking for new cures for diseases and illnesses from which we suffer in America. There are so many programs in which we could have invested that money.

Instead, we have invested that money in a war with no end, a war that is now in its fifth year. The war in Iraq has lasted longer than the Korean war, has lasted longer than World War II. It is the most expensive war in the history of the United States, save World War II, which was, in fact, a world war where the United States made a total national commitment. But we now find that second in rank in terms of cost is this war in Iraq.

There are many of us who understand that Americans across the board may have supported the initial invasion but had second thoughts. I was one of 23 who voted against this war at the outset in October 2002. There were colleagues on both sides of the aisle who in good faith thought the President should have the authority to deal with Saddam Hussein. They were misled, as the American people were misled by intelligence estimates that were just wrong, intelligence estimates that said Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and threatened the United States, fear of nuclear holocaust, fear of mushroom-shaped clouds. All of these images were paraded before the American people a short time after we had gone through the tragedy of 9/11. It is understandable the American people were concerned and fearful, and they supported the idea of invading Iraq in the hopes of keeping America safe.

We learned that in so many ways the information given to the American people before the invasion of Iraq was wrong. There were no weapons of mass destruction, there were no nuclear weapons, there was no connection between Saddam Hussein and the events of 9/11 that were sponsored by al-Qaida. But the invasion took place.

Many of us felt that once our soldiers were in the field, it was time to close

ranks behind them, stop the debate. They volunteered, they are serving our country, they didn't write this policy. They are risking their lives right now, and we should stand behind them. So many of us, even those who opposed this war and voted against it from the outset, voted year after year for the emergency appropriations President Bush sent to Congress, money for our troops in the field. Now we are in the fifth year, and there is no end in sight.

We have been told by our military leaders that even the best military in the world in the United States cannot save Iraq. Only the Iraqis can save Iraq. It has to be the Iraqi people through their Government who decide to move forward toward stability. We cannot police a civil war. We cannot contain the violence in Iraq even with 20,000, 30,000, 40,000 more American soldiers. That is a reality and one we should face. Regardless, the President concluded a few months ago that he would escalate this war and send even more American soldiers into harm's way. I think that was a mistake. I think the President was moving in the wrong direction. As I said, I don't believe our military, though it be the best in the world, can really contain the violence of the civil war in Iraq. I certainly don't believe our military, as good as it is, can give spine to Iraqis leaders who can't seem to reach conclusions and decisions on timetables about their future.

So the war continues. The President asked for more money, \$80 billion, \$90 billion at a time to continue this war in Iraq. Many of us believe we should do two things: fund the troops, make sure they have all that they need, but change the policy, start bringing American soldiers home. Tell the Iraqis once and for all that we will not be there indefinitely. We are not going to stay until you work up the political courage to make decisions to govern your country. We are going to start coming home. As we come home, these Iraqi soldiers whom we have spent millions of dollars to train and equip need to stand up and defend their country. The Iraqi Parliamentarians and leaders of their Government need to stand up and make the hard political decisions.

That is the reality of Iraq today. It is a reality we are reminded of every morning with the newscasts that tell us of the suffering and death which takes place in that country.

I wish to say a word, too, about the Iraqi people. I was reminded over the weekend when I was home in Illinois—and a good reminder it was—that when we speak about the loss of life in Iraq, don't forget the innocent Iraqis who have lost their lives as well. We don't even know what that number is today. We know that close to 3,500 American soldiers have lost their lives, and we know the coalition forces who have lost their lives. We don't know how many innocent Iraqis have lost their lives as victims in the civil war or even of our invasion.