

additional and longer tours in Iraq in the months ahead. Like the emergency supplemental bill put together by the Appropriations Committee, the Defense authorization bill will continue the work of ensuring that the wounded from these conflicts receive the best care and support as they recover from their injuries.

In 430 BC, after the first year of the Peloponnesian War, the Greek historian Thucydides recorded the funeral oration delivered by Pericles, the great Greek general. Thucydides records that Pericles did not speak of the battles but, rather, of the glories—the glories—of Athens and what a privilege it was—what a privilege it was—for each Athenian to live in such a perfect place. Pericles said that the sacrifice of those fallen in battle to keep the nation strong left them with the:

Noblest of all tombs—the noblest of all tombs, I speak not of that in which their remains are laid, but of that in which their glory survives.

Pericles felt there could be no better place to live than Athens and no place more deserving of a soldier's sacrifice. Almost 2,500 years later, I feel confident that every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine who has fought and died in Afghanistan and Iraq probably felt the same way—yes—about the United States.

They were proud to be in uniform and ready to serve the Nation that they loved and held in such high regard. The Nation will ever mourn their loss and honor their sacrifice.

IRAQ

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, the President of the United States has recently stated that we are remaining in Iraq in order to defeat al-Qaida—a summary of a statement he made yesterday. Well, I wish to briefly state what I think the facts are.

Iraq has become a Bush-fulfilling prophecy. Al-Qaida was not there before the war, and it is there now. It is a problem, but it is not the primary problem. In my view, the President of the United States is inadvertently handing al-Qaida a propaganda victory here by vastly exaggerating its role in Iraq.

The sectarian war—the war between Sunnis and Shias, Sunnis and Shias killing each other—is the core problem, and our troops are caught in the middle of that war. New statistics from Iraq make it absolutely clear that sectarian violence is getting worse and now exceeds the levels immediately prior to the surging of American forces over a month ago.

The focus of the President of the United States on al-Qaida and Iraq, ironically, supports exactly what I have been arguing for. We need to dramatically limit the mission of U.S. troops in Iraq, getting them out of the middle of this sectarian civil war and refocusing their mission, which should be battling al-Qaida from occupying

territory in Anbar Province and training Iraqi troops. That would require far fewer troops and allow us to begin to remove American troops immediately and get the vast majority of our combat troops out of Iraq early next year, consistent with the Biden-Levin provision that was in the bill the President vetoed.

Our troops cannot end the sectarian war. Mr. President, 500,000 American troops will not end the sectarian war. What is required is a political solution, even as we continue to take on al-Qaida, which is a growing but not the primary problem in Iraq.

The President continues to bank on a farfetched hope. His hope is well-intended, but it is farfetched that the Iraqis will rally behind a strong democratic central government in Baghdad. But there is no trust within the Government in Baghdad. There is no trust of the Government in Baghdad by the Iraqi people. And there is no capacity by that Government in Baghdad to deliver either services or security.

Instead, the President should throw his full weight—the full weight of his office—behind the solution based upon federalism in Iraq, allowing the Iraqis to have control over the fabric of their daily lives, helping them bring into reality the Iraqi Constitution, where article 1 says: We are a decentralized federal system. We should not impose this. We do not need to. It is already in the Iraqi Constitution.

The President should call for a U.N. summit to get the world's major powers and Iraq's neighbors to push for a political agreement. It is not an answer to put up a straw man and say we remain there because of al-Qaida. What is an answer is to call for the permanent five of the United Nations to call for a regional conference; make Iraq the world's problem. I met with the Security Council permanent four, with us being the fifth, in New York on Monday. It is like pushing an open door. They are ready to respond to the President's request to do that. This is doable. This is necessary. The President should begin to focus on the facts, not the fiction of al-Qaida being our rationale for being there.

I will end where I began. Al-Qaida's presence in Iraq has become a Bush-fulfilling prophecy. They were not there before. They are there now. But they are not the primary problem. It is the vicious cycle of sectarian violence. It must end.

MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, nearly 6 years after the worst terrorist attacks in American history, we have yet to be hit again on our soil. No one would have thought this possible immediately after the 9/11 attacks. But it is true because America is on offense in the war on terror.

Memorial Day is a time to reflect on the brave men and women of the Armed Forces who have made that

achievement possible, and to honor their sacrifice. Since 2001, over 3,800 Americans have died fighting in Iraq or Afghanistan. Over 60 were from Kentucky.

Our country must honor those who died in the line of duty as well as their families. The debt we owe them can never be repaid. I have had the honor of meeting many of the families of these servicemembers, and I have told them their loved ones did not die in vain.

Many who fought in the war on terror live to tell their stories, and I recently heard one I had like to share involving soldiers from Fort Campbell, KY. Four soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division lived up to the warrior ethos of never leaving a fallen or wounded comrade behind.

The city of Ramadi, Iraq, has seen some of the worst battles between coalition forces and the terrorists. One night in March 2006, SGT Jeremy Wilczek, SGT Michael Row, PFC Jose Alvarez and PFC Gregory Pushkin, among others, made their way through the city's narrow alleys back to base.

Suddenly Sergeant Row saw two figures run into a house. Immediately suspicious, he stopped the team in its tracks just as machine-gun and small-arms fire and grenades erupted on the street in front of them. The soldiers took cover and returned fire.

Private First Class Alvarez noticed a fellow soldier had been hit and was lying in the middle of the storm of bullets. Without thinking twice, he ran into the line of fire and threw himself over his comrade. But he was too late. The soldier was dead.

Private First Class Alvarez kept firing until he had unloaded his weapon at the enemy, and then stood up and began to carry the soldier's body to a safe area. Sergeant Row provided cover fire, while Sergeant Wilczek and Private First Class Pushkin ran into the firefight to help Private First Class Alvarez carry their colleague.

The three soldiers were nearing cover when two rocket-propelled grenades exploded yards away from them, knocking all three down and slicing Private First Class Alvarez's knee with shrapnel. But the three continued, finally reaching a safe area out of the path of bullets.

Sergeant Wilczek and Private First Class Pushkin then ran back into the enemy's kill zone several times, rescuing more trapped soldiers. Sergeant Row continued to lay down cover fire, even though the same explosion that injured Private First Class Alvarez's knee had buried shrapnel deep in his elbow. Finally, every soldier made it to a safe area.

They were out of immediate danger. But gunfire all around them made clear the terrorists were still out to kill. Sergeant Wilczek, Sergeant Row and Private First Class Pushkin made their way to the roof of a building, and with the advantage of the high ground, successfully killed, captured or drove off

the terrorists, enabling the squad to return to base safely.

This February, now-Staff Sergeant Wilczek and now-Specialists Alvarez and Pushkin were awarded the Silver Star, the third-highest award given for valor in the face of the enemy. Sergeant Row was awarded the Bronze Star for Valor.

Their acts of heroism rank them among the finest America has to offer. But what I find most amazing is that they are everyday people who could be your neighbor, coworker or relative. And we have thousands more brave Americans in uniform all willing to do the same.

So this Memorial Day, remember the courage of our servicemen and women, performing extraordinary feats just like the men of Fort Campbell. Remember the sacrifice of those who don't make it back home. As long as America has fighters of such spirit, we can never be defeated on the battlefield.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, we are approaching Memorial Day, a time to honor those servicemembers who gave their very lives—what Abraham Lincoln described as “the last full measure of devotion.” When Lincoln spoke those words, he was dedicating a modest “soldiers cemetery” in a Pennsylvania town called Gettysburg. Today Gettysburg and the address Lincoln gave there hold a special place in our national memory. In fewer than 300 words, President Lincoln delivered one of the most famous speeches in the history of this great Republic.

In that speech, Lincoln said what was known: that it is good and right to dedicate a place to honor the brave servicemembers who rest beneath it. But more importantly, he put into words what was felt: that the best way to honor the dead is to remember their sacrifices, and dedicate our lives to the Nation for which they gave their lives.

What we now call Memorial Day was begun in the aftermath of that war, with two dozen cities and towns across the United States laying claim to being the birthplace of what was then called Decoration Day. Generations later, America paused in the aftermath of World War I, a massive conflict that inspired the poem, “In Flanders Field,” about the lives the war took and the bond between the living and the dead. That poem roused the convictions of an American teacher named Moina Michael, who clung to the image of the red poppies in Flanders Field, which grew above the graves of World War I servicemembers. Miss Michael vowed to “keep the faith” with those who had died and to wear a red poppy as a sign of that pledge. She recorded her commitment in a poem she called “We Shall Keep the Faith,” which reads, in part:

We Cherish, too, the poppy red,
That grows on fields where valor led;
It seems to signal to the skies
That blood of heroes never dies

Miss Michael spent the rest of her life raising money for veterans and sur-

vivors in need, by selling red poppies to honor the men and women who gave their lives in the service of our Nation. Through the sale of poppies made by disabled veterans, she raised approximately 200 million dollars for veterans and their survivors.

Today our great Nation steps further into the fifth year of our current conflict in Iraq, and our sixth year in Afghanistan. As we ponder how best to honor those who have died in these conflicts and in all prior wars, we can look to our history to find words and actions to guide us. Just as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address turned sentiment into prose, Miss Michael turned it into poetry, and then into action. For ourselves, we can look at the sacrifices of those who have served and then look within ourselves to honor them with our lives.

For myself, I pledge my continued best effort to make certain that those who serve receive the thanks and the benefits and services they earned by their service and for those who gave their all, that their survivors are likewise given all they need.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR TED STEVENS

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, I rise today to honor one of the true stalwarts of this institution an indefatigable legislator, a tireless advocate for his home State of Alaska, a public servant with a lifetime of contribution, and a treasured leader of this venerable Chamber, Senator TED STEVENS who, this past April 13, 2007, became the longest-serving Republican member of the U.S. Senate. Our good friend and colleague has received countless, well-deserved accolades for a tremendous milestone indeed.

It is fitting that we pay tribute to an esteemed lawmaker whose ongoing legacy and longstanding record of accomplishment over a remarkable span of nearly 39 years of service in the U.S. Senate stand as a testament to the courage, vigor, and sense of duty he feels toward this country and the issues and policies shaping it. TED is a force of nature, steadfast and resolute, in this time-honored body and in our nation's capital. His constituents wouldn't have him any other way, and we wouldn't either.

His legacy of achievement on behalf of Alaskans is as large as the State they call home, and began even before he entered politics when he first moved to Washington, DC, to join the Eisenhower administration. While working for the Secretary of the Interior, he was not only present at Alaska's creation as a State in 1959, but was also instrumental in helping advocate for statehood. As a U.S. Senator, he was essential in championing the development of the Alaskan pipeline which was critical to his state and to the energy future of the country. He successfully advanced Alaska's infrastructure and transportation capabilities, espe-

cially vital to the state that is one-fifth the size of the entire lower 48. Alaska rightfully commemorated Senator STEVENS' indelible impact in these areas with the dedication of the TED STEVENS Anchorage International Airport in 2000. With a far-reaching litany of accomplishments too numerous to mention, it comes as little surprise that the Alaska State Legislature—where he served as House majority leader in only his second term in the mid-1960s would name him at the millennium, the Alaskan of the Century.

The people of my State of Maine are especially grateful to Senator STEVENS for his landmark legislation that bears his name—the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act our Nation's indispensable fisheries act, which was reauthorized this past January and signed into law. First as the chair, and now the ranking member on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation subcommittee handling fisheries issues, I had the pleasure of working with full committee chairman and now ranking member STEVENS throughout the process to help bring this bill to fruition. From the 300 year-old fishing villages in downeast Maine to remote Aleutian Island outposts, Senator STEVENS has always been bound by a commitment to sustain both fish and fishermen.

Through many Congresses, as both a chairman and ranking member, Senator STEVENS has spearheaded and done much to shepherd improvements in the largely uncharted world of telecommunications policy that have been historic and consequential, and which will reverberate for generations. On a personal note, I want to express my debt of enormous thanks to Senator STEVENS for his pivotal support in his Universal Service Fund Reform bill of the E-rate program which provides discounted telecommunications services to schools and libraries. Senator STEVENS has been a bulwark catalyst on this initiative, and, as we recently commemorated the 10th anniversary since its inception, I couldn't help but recall with gratitude his crucial role in the wiring schools in my State and across the country.

It must also be noted that in an era of increasing partisanship, Senator STEVENS shares an unassailable bond with the senior Senator from Hawaii, a Democrat, Daniel Inouye a friendship, profoundly steeped in their mutual, heroic tours of duty in World War II, which continues to this day as a model example of collegiality, bipartisanship, and comity that transcends politics.

This decorated Army Air Forces pilot in the storied “Flying Tigers,” whose immense devotion to this land and its people extends across six decades, is not one to move to the side or step away when he is fighting for what he believes in or on behalf of his State or in defense of his country. That speaks volumes in explaining Senator STEVENS' well-known trademark as he prepares to debate on the Senate floor and