

money spent on the war or on our troops, but it would write into law that the number of U.S. forces in Iraq should not exceed the number that were there on January 10, 2007, the day the President announced his escalation policy.

This measure would stop the escalation of the war in Iraq, but it is my belief that simply opposing the surge is not good enough. If we truly believe the only solution in Iraq is a political one—and I fervently believe that—if we believe a phased redeployment of U.S. forces in Iraq is the best—perhaps only—leverage we have to force a settlement between the country's warring factions, then we should act on that. That is why the second part of my legislation is a plan for phased redeployment that I called for in a speech in Chicago 2 months ago. It is a responsible plan that protects American troops without causing Iraq to suddenly descend into chaos. The President must announce to the Iraqi people that, within 2 to 4 months, under this plan, U.S. policy will include a gradual and substantial reduction in U.S. forces. The President should then work with our military commanders to map out the best plan for such a redeployment and determine precise levels and dates.

Drawing down our troops in Iraq will put pressure on Iraqis to arrive at the political settlement that is needed and allow us to redeploy additional troops in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region, as well as bring some back home. The forces redeployed elsewhere in the region could then help to prevent the conflict in Iraq from becoming a wider war, something that every international observer is beginning to worry about. It will also reassure our allies in the gulf. It will allow our troops to strike directly at al-Qaida wherever it may exist and demonstrate to international terrorist organizations that they have not driven us from the region.

My plan would couple this phased redeployment with an enhanced effort to train Iraqi security forces and would expand the number of our personnel—especially special forces—who are deployed with Iraqis as unit advisers and would finally link continued economic aid in Iraq with the existence of tangible progress toward reducing sectarian violence and reaching a political settlement.

One final aspect of this plan that I believe is critical is it would call for the engagement by the United States of a regional conference with other countries that are involved in the Middle East—particularly our allies but including Syria and Iran—to find a solution to the war in Iraq. We have to realize that neither Iran nor Syria wants to see the security vacuum in Iraq filled with chaos, terrorism, refugees, and violence, as it could have a destabilizing effect throughout the entire region and within their own countries. So as odious as the behavior of those

regimes may be at times, it is important that we include them in a broader conversation about how we can stabilize Iraq.

In closing, let me say this: I have been a consistent and strong opponent of this war. I have also tried to act responsibly in that opposition to ensure that, having made the decision to go into Iraq, we provide our troops, who perform valiantly, the support they need to complete their mission. I have also stated publicly that I think we have both strategic interests and humanitarian responsibilities in ensuring that Iraqi is as stable as possible under the circumstances.

Finally, I said publicly that it is my preference not to micromanage the Commander in Chief in the prosecution of war. Ultimately, I do not believe that is the ideal role for Congress to play. But at a certain point, we have to draw a line. At a certain point, the American people have to have some confidence that we are not simply going down this blind alley in perpetuity.

When it comes to the war in Iraq, the time for promises and assurances, for waiting and patience is over. Too many lives have been lost and too many billions have been spent for us to trust the President on another tried-and-failed policy, opposed by generals and experts, opposed by Democrats and Republicans, opposed by Americans and even the Iraqis themselves. It is time to change our policy. It is time to give Iraqis their country back, and it is time to refocus America's effort on the wider struggle against terror yet to be won.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WYDEN. I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

DRUG BARGAINING POWER

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, we all understand there has been an awful lot of heated rhetoric about this issue of Medicare and negotiating drug prices and how much savings will come about for the consumer.

I and the distinguished senior Senator from Maine have been working for well over 3 years, in a bipartisan way, on this issue. I and Senator SNOWE have been able to come up with an approach for dealing with this issue, helping the seniors of this country, helping the taxpayers of this country, and lowering the temperature of the debate about prescription drugs by showing

how Medicare can be a smart shopper without setting up some kind of big Government price control regime.

Throughout this discussion over the last 3 years, Senator SNOWE and I have repeatedly put into the legislation that we have brought to the Senate a strict prohibition on establishing any kind of price control regime or any kind of uniform formulary, which is essentially a list of drugs that restricts the choices for those involved—seniors or anyone else.

What Senator SNOWE and I have tried to do is lower the temperature on this issue, to try to zero in, in a bipartisan way, on the areas where it is important for the Secretary of Health and Human Services to be in a position of trying to have some negotiations to get a break for the seniors and for the taxpayers. I will use those words specifically. We are talking about what could be a negotiation—not going in with some arbitrary price and throwing around figures of \$1.20 a pill or something like that. We are talking about the opportunity for our Government to be a smart shopper, while steering clear of any price control regime. By the way, I know this was an important issue for the Presiding Officer as he campaigned to come here.

Senator SNOWE and I voted for the Medicare prescription drug program. I still have the welts on my back to show for it. But what Senator SNOWE and I said from the very outset, from the very time of the original Senate debate, is we were going to go to work on a bipartisan basis to try to fix those areas, such as the one identified by the Presiding Officer, the distinguished Senator from Rhode Island. We have set out to do just that. And in 2004, the Congressional Budget Office sent us a letter saying we were heading in the right direction.

Senator SNOWE and I said from the beginning we have to make sure that seniors and taxpayers get a good deal when we have what are called single-source drugs, monopoly drugs. These are drugs where there isn't any ability to have the kind of leverage and clout we would like to have in the marketplace.

In 2004, the Congressional Budget Office sent me a letter that there could be savings if negotiations were permitted on single-source drugs for which there is no therapeutic equivalent. It is common sense, it seems to me, when the Congressional Budget Office says there could be savings in one kind of area, we would want to add that. The distinguished chairman of the Committee on Finance, Senator BAUCUS, puts it pretty well. Senator BAUCUS says: Why don't you add that to your cost containment tool box? Senator BAUCUS has said what we need is a variety of ways to hold down the cost—he calls it, in my view correctly, a kind of tool-box approach to making sure seniors and taxpayers get a good deal. What Senator SNOWE and I have said is let's make sure that tool box that Senator BAUCUS has been talking about

zero in on this question of single-source drugs, where we do need some bargaining power.

There are some who have said the only possible way to have negotiations is if you set up some kind of one-size-fits-all national formulary. They say: The VA has one. Gosh, you all in the Senate would not want to limit the drugs available to our country's seniors.

Let me make it clear what Senator SNOWE and I are doing rejects that approach. We are not talking about a nationwide formulary or some kind of list of drugs that restricts seniors' choices.

By the way, when the former Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson, felt it was important to do the kind of thing Senator SNOWE and I are talking about on the drug Cipro, Secretary Thompson did not go out and set up a nationwide formulary. He didn't say: We are going to say the price of the pill is \$1.27. He did not set up some kind of arbitrary price-control regime. Secretary Thompson, in his last meeting with the press when he was leaving the Department, said he wished he had the power to bargain under Medicare.

Secretary Thompson did exactly the kind of thing that I and Senator SNOWE have been talking about. He said we have to make sure that the consumer and the taxpayers get a good deal for Cipro. Secretary Thompson did not set up a nationwide formulary. Secretary Thompson did not set up some price-control regime. Secretary Thompson did not say: It is going to be \$1.27 per pill. He said: Let's negotiate, let's talk, let's go back and forth as everyone does in the marketplace in Rhode Island, Oregon and everywhere else across the country. Let's ask: What are we going to do to make sure that everyone gets a fair shake?

That situation, of course, was an emergency, because we had anthrax. But as the Senator from Rhode Island has pointed out a number of times over the last few months, for a lot of seniors, trying to afford prescription medicine is kind of like having a new emergency every day.

Secretary Thompson said: Yes, we have a big emergency on this anthrax situation. I think the Senator from Rhode Island knows exactly what I see when I am home in Coos Bay, John Day, Pendleton, or Gresham, Oregon, and everywhere else. For a lot of seniors in this country, every day is an emergency with respect to being able to afford their medicine. Those seniors ought to know that their Government, in the case of the single-source drug, for example, where there is monopoly power, can bargain in those kind of instances without price controls, without a nationwide formulary. That is what Senator SNOWE and I and others, on a bipartisan basis, wish to stand up for—to help those seniors and those taxpayers.

Now, some have argued that as seniors get a better deal for Medicare, that

means higher prices for everyone else. They, also, argue that negotiations would not do anything. I don't know how one can make both arguments at the same time and make sense. Those two do not connect.

What Senator SNOWE and I wish to do is have a Medicare program that is a smart, savvy shopper. By being a better shopper, seniors and taxpayers are going to save. We know that no one goes to Costco and buys toilet paper one roll at a time. They shop smart. We ought to do that with Medicare.

I was pleased with last week's Committee on Finance hearing. Chairman BAUCUS and others said it is valuable to have additional information to know whether markets for drugs are achieving the best price possible. I and Senator SNOWE have been interested in that approach as well. We know there are a variety of pharmacies out there that can offer cheaper medicines to seniors without limiting the drugs available, and we find it hard to believe that Medicare cannot do exactly the same thing. Let us give Medicare the opportunity to do exactly the same thing that people do in New Hampshire, Texas, and Rhode Island; that is, to shop smart, look for a bargain, and don't set up nationwide price controls and don't set up a nationwide formulary that restricts the kind of drugs our seniors can get.

If we work in a bipartisan way, which is what Senator SNOWE and I have been trying to do on this issue for 3½ years, we can draw a line that promotes smart shopping in Medicare without going over the line to price controls and restrictive formularies. Let us try to lower the temperature on this particular debate by looking at ways to shop smart without price controls.

In 2004, the Congressional Budget Office said it would make a difference in at least one key area I have been talking about today. I believe it would make a difference in other key areas. I am looking forward, as a member of the Senate Committee on Finance, to working under the leadership of Chairman BAUCUS, on a bipartisan basis, to get this issue resolved because, as the Presiding Officer of the Senate has noted over these many months, this is not an abstract issue for the people most involved. Those are seniors walking on an economic tightrope. We don't know what will happen to medical costs this year, but we can make sure we use every possible opportunity without price controls to make the Medicare Program a smart shopper.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mr. GREGG. I ask unanimous consent to proceed as in morning business for 15 minutes.

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

IRAQ

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise to talk a little bit about the situation in

Iraq and how we are trying to deal with this as a nation. We need to start with, when we are discussing Iraq, what are our national interests and why are we engaged there.

Our basic national interest in Iraq is the protection of America, our desire to make sure that we are projecting our purposes in a way that reduces the ability of those who would wish to do us harm in this war against us, which was declared in the late 1990s, when it was obviously brought to our shores on September 11, that in that war we are best postured to make sure terrorists, specifically Islamic fundamentalists who wish to do us harm, are not successful. That is the first purpose of our engagement in Iraq.

The second purpose, of course, is to make sure our troops, who are engaged in pursuing this war on the ground in Iraq, are adequately funded and given the support they need in order to do their job and not be exposed to risks which would occur were they not adequately funded and supported.

It has been 5 years since we were attacked. That is the good news, that we have not been attacked for 5 years. Obviously, some of that is good fortune and luck, I suspect. But a lot of that is the result of a policy which has essentially said we are going to find the terrorists before they can find us, and we are going to bring them to justice. And we are going to also try to initiate a process where we establish, in the Middle East, an attitude that respects democracy, respects individual rights, respects the rights of women, and respects the approach of a marketplace economy.

In Iraq, we have attempted to accomplish that, and much has occurred in Iraq that has been good, although, obviously, there is a lot there that has occurred that has been unfortunate, and there have been mistakes made. But the fact is, they have gone through major election processes. They have elected a government. They have had a number of elections, where a large percentage of the population participated. Women have been allowed out of the household and are participating in society.

It remains, however, a nation which is torn by religious strife and cultural and deep ethnic differences. We have not been successful in being able to resolve that and nor have the Iraqi people been able to do that through their democratic process.

But the question becomes for us—in light of the President's request that there be an increase of troops, called the surge, of potentially 20,000 troops, especially concentrated in the Baghdad area, to try to bring more stability to that region—how do we approach this as we move down the road?

Well, I think we have to, as we approach this, keep in context what is our goal. Our goal is to protect us—America—from attacks by radical fundamental Islamic movements and individuals, terrorists specifically, and to