

of this great Nation voted to fund the surge in Iraq, and this Senate voted 99 to 0 to confirm General Petraeus to lead that surge. We required an interim report on July 15 on how things are going and a more serious, comprehensive report from General Petraeus himself in September. OK? That is what we did, and that is what we are doing.

For the last, I believe, 3 weeks, the surge has been complete. For only 3 weeks have we had the full complement of troops as part of this surge. Already some things have happened militarily that are good in Iraq.

So before we get the general's report in September, without anything other than our own opinions from reading newspapers and watching TV and sitting in our air-conditioned offices, we are now going to come along and abrogate what this great Nation did 2 months ago because of some political pressure or some spot they saw on the evening news, placing our soldiers at risk, undermining the policies we are asking them to execute at this very moment. Even pushing for that at this time I think is irresponsible.

I wish to be on record as saying I understand the difficulties we are facing in Iraq. I understand the courage our soldiers are displaying. I understand the risks they are subjected to right now, and we want to see the situation improve. All of us do. But we voted for this policy. The surge has just started. We need to give General Petraeus a chance to proceed with it and not flop around irresponsibly and come up with a withdrawal policy that is so rapid that I am not even sure the military can effectively carry it out under the Levin amendment. As a matter of fact, they cannot effectively carry it out.

Mr. President, I guess we are still in morning business. I see my colleague, Senator NELSON from Florida, whom I respect so greatly. He chairs the Strategic Subcommittee of which I am pleased to be the ranking member.

I believe I am to be recognized in a few minutes on a separate amendment, but if Senator NELSON has some comments he would like to make at this time, I will consider yielding to him and see what our schedule is.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 1585, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 1585) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2008 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe

military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Nelson (NE) (for Levin) amendment No. 2011, in the nature of a substitute.

Nelson (FL) amendment No. 2013 (to amendment No. 2012), to change the enactment date.

Levin amendment No. 2087 (to amendment No. 2011), to provide for a reduction and transition of U.S. forces in Iraq.

Reed amendment No. 2088 (to amendment No. 2087), to change the enactment date.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. 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. LEVIN. Mr. President, under the unanimous consent agreement that was entered into last night, a Senator designated on the Republican side was to offer an amendment at this time and then I was going to, or someone designated by me was going to offer a second-degree amendment.

I want Senator GRAHAM to say what the intention was on that side—that intention has been changed—and then I will comment on what he has to say.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I had intended to offer amendment No. 2064 to strike certain provisions of the bill regarding detainee procedures, legal procedures affecting detainees. I have been talking with Senator LEVIN and his staff to see if there is some common ground we can find about this CSRT process at Guantanamo Bay—Combatant Status Review Tribunals. There are some ideas that Senator LEVIN has that I am going to associate myself with.

I thought what we would do, I intend to reserve my ability to offer the amendment—and intend to do so unless we can find some common ground—and allow Senator SESSIONS to go forward on the Republican side. I will continue to work with my colleague, Senator LEVIN, to see if we can find some accommodation with regard to the subject matter in question, with the understanding, if we can, that we will do that at the appropriate time. If we cannot, I would like to be able to bring my amendment to strike back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from South Carolina. That is our understanding. We understand what his intent was. We both have been involved in some discussions on this matter. Our staffs are involved in some discussions on this matter.

Senator GRAHAM has indicated his willingness to hold off offering his amendment at this time, with the understanding that he will have an opportunity at a later time to offer that

amendment, and these discussions will continue in the interim.

Mr. GRAHAM. That is correct.

Mr. LEVIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I understand the Senator from Alabama has an amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

AMENDMENT NO. 2024, AS MODIFIED, TO
AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank my colleague from Florida, Mr. NELSON, and I thank him for his leadership as chairman of the Strategic Subcommittee on the Armed Services Committee, of which I am the ranking member. I want to assert again that I have been pleased to work with him and value his judgment and insight, and value his insight with regard to amendment No. 2024, which I have filed a modification to, and I now ask that amendment, as modified, be called up at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Alabama [Mr. SESSIONS] proposes amendment numbered 2024, as modified.

The amendment is as follows:

At the end of subtitle B of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 1218. POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES ON PROTECTION OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ALLIES AGAINST IRANIAN BALLISTIC MISSILES.

(a) FINDING.—Congress finds that Iran maintains a nuclear program in continued defiance of the international community while developing ballistic missiles of increasing sophistication and range that pose a threat to both the forward-deployed forces of the United States and to its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies in Europe; and which eventually could pose a threat to the United States homeland.

(b) POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES.—It is the policy of the United States—

(1) to develop and deploy, as soon as technologically possible, in conjunction with its allies and other nations whenever possible, effective defense against the threat from Iran described in subsection (a)(1) that will provide protection for the United States, its friends, and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies; and

(2) to proceed in the development of such response in a manner such that any missile defenses fielded by the United States in Europe are integrated with or complementary to missile defense capabilities that might be fielded by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Europe.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators KYL, DOLE, INHOFE, and THUNE be added as cosponsors.

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

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I don't know if my colleague from Florida wants to make a comment now.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. After the Senator.

Mr. SESSIONS. I will be glad to yield to Senator NELSON if he wishes to share some thoughts.

The amendment offered today, simply put, acknowledges that we have a growing threat to peace and security that arises from Iran's nuclear and missile program, and this amendment would make it the policy of the United States to develop effective defenses against this threat as soon as possible.

The amendment also emphasizes the need to ensure that the defenses we deploy are coordinated with existing programs of our NATO allies. A number of Senators and Members of the House want to be sure that we coordinate with the NATO allies, and this amendment would call for that.

Sadly, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to threaten the United States and our allies and that threat must be recognized and confronted. My amendment signals the resolve of the United States to do that. At a time when Iran is openly threatening to destroy the United States and our various allies—and is providing weapons, such as explosively formed penetrators, or EFPs, which we have pretty clearly traced to Iran today, and that are killing our soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan—demonstrating our understanding of the seriousness of their threat and their purpose is critical for us to have clear thinking and sound policy. So I appreciate my colleagues, such as Senator LIEBERMAN, who spoke eloquently and offered an amendment on the need to confront Iran's support of worldwide terrorism, which we voted on yesterday—in a very strong vote.

I see missile defense as another facet of confronting and facing this threat. Even in the Middle East, where anti-Israel sentiments are all too common, Iran is the only country in the Middle East where the President openly calls for the destruction of Israel. Shortly after taking office in 2005, Ahmadi-Nejad, the President, rallied supporters at a conference, and the conference was called "A World Without Zionism." In that speech he said, "The current skirmishes in the occupied land are part of a war of destiny. The outcome of hundreds of years of war will be defined in Palestinian land. As the Imam said"—and here he is referring to the Ayatollah Khomeini—"Israel must be wiped off the map."

But Israel isn't the only target of Iran's crash program to develop long-range missiles with nuclear warheads—long-range missiles they are now developing. He is developing also nuclear warheads. In the same speech Ahmadi-Nejad was quoted as saying this: "Anybody who recognizes Israel will burn in the fire of the Islamic nation's fury."

That includes, of course, the United States—us—and our allies in Europe and the Middle East. For anyone who

doubts that Ahmadi-Nejad's threat was meant to include America, he has also been quoted as saying this: "And God willing, with the force of God behind it, we shall soon experience a world without the United States and Zionism."

A world without the United States. It does not get much more straightforward than that. Arnaud de Borchgrave, an experienced world observer and editor at large of the Washington Times and United Press International, had a piece in the Washington Times yesterday, and he pointed out some of the examples of the kind of extremism, real extremism, we have seen from the Iranian leadership.

Now, let me say this: The Iranian people are good people. They have quite an educated population, certainly for that area of the world. There is no need and no justification for Iranian leadership to betray those people, the people of that historic nation, with these kinds of policies. In truth, President Ahmadi-Nejad and certain clerics are damaging the history, the economy, the people, and the reputation of Iran. There is no reason for this. It should not continue. Unfortunately, it is reality. And while we can hope for change, change does not seem likely in the short run.

While the people of Iran may, and I think do, oppose this extremism, the President and the extremists, certain mullahs and others, seem to be firmly in control of the country and determined to pursue a radical and extremist ideology and policy. It is not only a tragedy for Iran that this is occurring but for the whole world.

Mr. de Borchgrave lists some of the statements that are more than sufficient to alert the world to the dangers and the intentions of the leaders of Iran today. This is what he wrote yesterday, and I quote:

Whether Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad said he wants to wipe Israel off the map is still contested, even by anti-mullah Iranian-Americans. But that he wants to wipe out the Jewish state, there can be no doubt. As he completes his visits to every Iranian town, the collection of his pronouncements is edifying reading.

Culled from a wide variety of sources, ranging from the Agence France Presse, the French national news agency, to the London Daily Telegraph, to the Sueddeutsche Zeitung Online, to France's Le Monde and Liberation, Mr. Ahmadi-Nejad spells out the target and the strategy: "This regime—here he is talking about Israel—will one day disappear. The Zionist regime is a rotten tree that will be blown away by one storm. The countdown for the destruction of Israel has begun. Zionists are the personification of Satan."

He goes on to say:

In the case of any unwise move by the fake regime of Israel, Iran's response will be so destructive and quick the regime will regret its move forever. The west invented the myth of the massacre of the Jews (in World War II) and placed it above Allah, religions, and profits.

So he continues to assert that the Holocaust was a myth, invented by the West.

What about his strategic plan?

We don't shy away from declaring Islam is ready to rule the world. The wave of the Islamist revolution will soon reach the entire world. Our revolution's main mission is to pave the way for the reappearance of the 12th Imam, the Mahdi, a 5-year-old boy who vanished 1,100 years ago and who will lead the world into an era of peace and prosperity, but not before the planet is first convulsed by death and destruction.

He goes on to say:

Soon, Islam will become the dominating force in the world occupying first place in the number of followers among other religions. Is there a craft more beautiful, more sublime, more divine than the craft of giving yourself to martyrdom and becoming holy? Do not doubt, Allah will prevail and Islam will conquer mountaintops of the entire world. Islam can recruit hundreds of suicide bombers a day. Suicide is an invincible weapon. Suicide bombers in this land showed us the way and they enlighten our future. The will to commit suicide is one of the best ways of life.

This is the President of a country that is steadfastly moving forward to develop nuclear weapons and steadfastly advancing its ability to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles.

What does he say about nuclear power?

By the grace of Allah we will be a nuclear power and Iran does not give a damn about the IEA, the International Energy Agency, their demands to freeze enrichment of nuclear fuel. Iran does not give a damn about resolutions.

That is the U.N. Resolutions. Those are his words. There are other comments. He goes on to say, as I indicated earlier, at this conference on the world without Zionism—the President of Iran said:

To those who doubt, to those who say it is not possible, I say accomplishment of a world without America and Israel is both possible and feasible.

You can say this is an exaggeration. You can say this is not realistic. But I suggest that is the repeated statements of the leader of a very dangerous nation, a nation with real capabilities. They are developing a nuclear capability and an expanding and growing missile capability. I think yesterday Senator LIEBERMAN, after the vote on his amendment, summed it up very well. This is what he said:

The threat posed by Iran to our soldiers, to our allies, to our national security is a truth that cannot be wished or waved away. Congress today began the process of confronting it.

We also need to take one more step in that process by making clear that we are not going to leave our Nation or our allies in Europe vulnerable to any missile threats from Iran.

Most Senators were in the room a few weeks ago when the Director of National Intelligence, ADM Mike McConnell, gave us a classified briefing and described in detail the threat posed by Iran. Having received that briefing, I think few of us would doubt that Iran does pose a threat to the security of the United States and our allies. It is a threat to us. It is not something we need to be intimidated about. We don't need to back down to Iran. Militarily

there is no doubt in the mind of this Senator or any objective observer's mind what would happen if a conflict developed here. But we need to be realistic, we need to seek to avoid conflict, but we need to pursue policies that will make sure we don't allow our citizens to fall under a risk of a nuclear missile attack.

So they are pursuing, under Ahmadi-nejad's leadership, the means to kill millions of people with the single push of a button. When Iran's Shehab-3 missiles are paraded through the streets of Iran, they are draped with banners stating, "Israel must be wiped off the map." That is what they put on their missiles. With a range of 1,300 kilometers and a payload capacity of over 700 kilograms, the Shehab-3 has the capacities to implement Ahmadi-Nejad's genocidal agenda. Iran is also working hard to develop missiles that can reach Europe and the States. The Shehab-4 is well along in development and will reportedly be able to reach most of continental Europe. The Shehab-5 and Shehab-6 have also been discussed in open sources. They are developing those advanced missiles. These sources claim these models will have the capacity to reach the eastern seaboard of the United States.

Iran's ability to develop nuclear warheads for those missiles are proceeding apace as well. In April, in a speech at the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility, there in Iran, Ahmadi-Nejad stated:

I declare that as of today our dear country has joined the nuclear club of nations and can produce nuclear fuel on an industrial scale.

International Atomic Energy Agency later confirmed that Iranian enrichment capabilities were developing rapidly while our knowledge and understanding of their nuclear program was decreasing. This uncertainty is very disturbing.

Yesterday, the Washington Post reported the construction of an underground tunnel complex near its enrichment facilities at Natanz. It appears, therefore, that Iran is preparing to protect and hide its nuclear capabilities.

Nothing about Iran's behavior recently suggests that it will use these capabilities in a responsible manner. In fact, to the contrary, we expect Ahmadinejad to use nuclear-tipped missiles to threaten, blackmail, and terrorize the nations that oppose its radical agenda and using them, actually using them based on some of the extreme statements he has made, cannot be placed out of the question.

We all remember last March when Iran seized 15 British sailors and held them as hostages. Imagine a time in the not-too-distant future when Iran could take the whole city of London as a hostage with a nuclear threat. According to reports in the Washington Post, the intelligence community assesses that Iran's ICBMs and its nuclear weapons capability will both mature in 2015. That is not that far away.

As a result, the cities of the eastern seaboard and of Europe are expected to face the threat of nuclear attack from Iran in less than 8 years.

Keep in mind that 2015 is the midpoint of the estimated range. Iran's capability could come online in 2017, later, or even by 2013, if things proceed faster than expected. That may seem like a long way away, but an adequate defense will take a long time to build and we need to start now. According to the Missile Defense Agency, even if Congress fully funded the European defense site—which I hope that we will. We refer to it as the "third site," and it is funded every year—the system would not be up and running until 2013. Any delay to that schedule—which could happen for a number of reasons—could open up a window of vulnerability during which Iran would have the means to attack us and our allies, perhaps with nuclear weapons, and we will have no means of defending the American people or our allies against them.

The good news is we have it in our power to prevent this window of vulnerability and keep it from opening if we commit as a nation to doing so. My amendment represents an opportunity for the Senate to go on record with such a commitment. An effective missile defense, which we would promptly begin to deploy, could convince the Iranian leadership that developing such missiles for their nuclear weapons is a futile undertaking. Perhaps we may have already missed, however, that opportunity to actually deter them in this way, making it all the more important that we get moving on development of the means to defend ourselves and our allies.

This amendment is more than about setting U.S. policy on missile defense, it is about sending a message to the rest of the world, our friends and enemies alike, that we take this Iranian threat seriously and we intend to stand up to it. The debate over the third site is being watched with great interest around the world. Some may be drawing conclusions about our commitment to meet this threat head on and doubting that we are committed. In fact, I will note that we effectively deployed and continue to upgrade a national missile defense system that can meet the North Korean missile threat, which is somewhat more advanced than Iran's but not a lot. We know we have this capability and we should do it with Iran also.

Imagine sitting in Mr. Ahmadi-nejad's shoes today. He provides sophisticated weapons to our enemies in Iraq, killing hundreds of American troops in the process. In response, one of our colleagues proposed legislation to prohibit the President from attacking Iran without congressional authorization. Ahmadinejad rushes headlong toward a nuclear weapon and long-range delivery capability and both the Senate and the House cut funding for missile defenses that could neutralize

the threat. Ahmadi-Nejad must not feel like his bluster and threats will be effective.

They will not be. Imagine the conclusions that Vladimir Putin is drawing from those media reports. In February of 2007, Mr. Putin and the Russian Army Chief of Staff, Yuri Baluyevsky, threatened to unilaterally withdraw from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, which prohibits the United States and Russia from deploying arsenals of short- and medium-range missiles in Europe. Mr. Putin later suspended Russia's obligations under the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, which historically allowed NATO and the Warsaw Pact to remove much of the military personnel and material that was arrayed along Europe's central front during the height of the Cold War.

Finally, in June of this year, Putin directly threatened to focus Russia's nuclear arsenal on "new targets in Europe." Putin claimed that "the strategic balance in the world is being upset" and that Russia "will be creating a system of countering that anti-missile system."

These threats coincided with Russian tests of an advanced ICBM, the RS-24, by Russia.

It ought not. Of course, any third site in Europe will be ineffective against the massive missile capability of Russia. We don't have any capability of doing that. We can create a system that will be very effective against anything the Iranians can do in the decades to come but not Russia. Our plans have no intention of affecting Russia. But we also need not be affected by Mr. Putin's bluster or that we be slowed down in our legitimate interests in protecting our country and our allies from Iranian threats by these kinds of comments from the Russians.

We reduced somewhat—not greatly—but \$84 million in funding for the third site in Europe. Colleagues felt that money could not be effectively spent. They did not believe it was necessary in this year's budget. The problem might be that some would conclude the action by our committee in taking those steps to trim the budget would be a plan to kill missile defenses in Europe.

Yesterday, an article in the Christian Science Monitor entitled "Obstacles Ahead for Missile Defense," stated the Senate was opposed to building defenses against Iranian missiles, in effect, saying:

In Washington, the Democratic-controlled Congress appears reluctant to fund the move, scrambling its near-term prospects.

I don't think that is true. I think there is bipartisan support for creating a missile defense system, but a firm belief exists on the part of my Democratic colleagues that we should not go so fast that it is not done wisely.

We have reached a proposal in the legislation as written that we can live with. However, there has been some confusion as to our seriousness in this commitment.

In fact, on July 5 the Washington Post ran an article entitled, "Senate Panel Faults Missile Defense Plan." In the article, the Post states:

Democrats in Congress are building a legislative roadblock for the Bush administration's plan to place elements of a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic.

It is an incorrect perception. It undermines our alliance relationships by causing our allies to think we are not committed in a serious way to building a missile defense system that would be effective against Iranian attacks and be protective of Europe. So I think it is therefore incumbent upon us to clarify the Senate's stance.

The Poles and the Czechs and other NATO allies have all undertaken the momentous challenge of winning over their populations to the idea of American missile defenses in Europe. They have battled anti-Americanism, pressure from Europe and Russia, because they value our friendship, but more importantly because they realize Europe may soon be vulnerable to Iranian nuclear intimidation and potential nuclear attack unless steps are taken to develop defenses now.

I think it would be a slap in the face and unbecoming to our Nation if we were to pull the rug out from under these projects after our allies have stepped up and been supportive of them. We cannot stand idly by, my colleagues, when a madman threatens to destroy the United States and to wipe from the map allies of the United States, then defies the international community by developing the means to carry out these threats.

We are the most powerful military in the world, but some people doubt our seriousness and our commitment. In the Middle East, in particular, this perception of weakness can be a fatal error. So I think it is appropriate for us to make clear to Iran and to Russia and to our allies worldwide that we understand that the Iranian danger is clear and present.

We must leave no uncertainty in anyone's mind that we intend to defend ourselves and our allies from this threat. Our security, the security of our allies, and the credibility of our commitments are all at stake. I will just add that while the Iranian actions are very troubling, they should be taken very seriously. Iran's words cannot be ignored.

I would say one thing further. We have no reason to be intimidated by Iran. We have the capability of defending ourselves, our military, and our interests, and the leaders in Iran need to know this. This Senator is prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to defend our national interests.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, with regard to the Sessions amendment, it would establish a U.S. policy concerning defense against Ira-

nian ballistic missiles stating that the United States will develop and deploy effectively defenses against Iranian ballistic missiles as soon as technologically possible.

I think everyone agrees with that idea. I would suggest that this is effectively our policy today, and, indeed, is the policy of the bill and is so stated in the bill before us, that we are already developing and deploying a number of missile defense programs to provide such effective defenses.

For example, the United States has already deployed the Patriot PAC-3 system to the region to provide defensive capability for our forward-deployed forces in the region. We are also developing and deploying the AEGIS BMD system, and we are developing the THAAD system. All of these systems will provide effective defense capability against Iran's existing and near-term missile capabilities.

However, we do not have sufficient capability today with these systems to provide the level of protection that our combatant commanders need. Our senior military commanders readily acknowledge that fact, including the combatant commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, General Cartwright. He is responsible for global integrated missile defense. He readily acknowledges that fact.

For that reason, the bill before the Senate authorizes an additional \$315 million to increase or accelerate these three crucial near-term missile defense programs. And what they do is to provide increased protection for our forward-deployed forces, our allies, and our friends in the region.

In other words, we are already putting this policy in effect. That is the true measure of our determination to provide effective defenses against Iran's ballistic missiles.

Now, I understand the Republican leader wants to make a statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, would the Senator yield 1 minute for my response?

I thank Senator NELSON for his comments. I agree with him that, properly read, our legislation does what he says. But I even had a military person think that perhaps we had done something to weaken our commitment. I think others, such as the Washington Post, may have overinterpreted some of the things that are in that language. I believe this would be a good way to clarify our policy. I thank him for his leadership.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, before I speak on the amendment concerning the withdrawal from Iraq offered by Senator LEVIN, I would like to make a few comments about the benchmarks report required by the supplemental bill that was signed in May and released by the President just this morning.

We knew when the Senate passed the conference report that according to the legislation we were requiring a benchmark report in July and a benchmark report in September. Why were these dates important? First, we knew that July was important because the Baghdad security plan is now fully manned, something that was achieved less than 1 month ago.

Congress wanted to send a clear signal to the Iraqi Government that full cooperation and sacrifice in executing the Baghdad security plan was imperative and that the hard work of political compromise must begin. We have done that.

Second, General Petraeus informed the Senate that he and Ambassador Crocker would provide an assessment of the counterinsurgency plan to the President, as we all know, in September. Having heard that, the Senate thought it reasonable that we would be provided the same assessment and that we could form a reasoned legislative response to that report.

What have we learned? We have learned that progress is mixed, that many of our military tasks assigned to the military have been achieved, and that we have not seen sufficient progress on the political benchmarks. The Congress decided in May that 1 month of a fully manned surge was an insufficient period to call the Petraeus plan a success or a failure. Certainly, the young soldiers and marines risking their lives today on the streets of Baghdad and Ramadi would agree, and they deserve our patience.

Some of our colleagues have quite reasonably refrained from drafting new amendments that would revisit the actions taken by this Senate back in May until they have at least reviewed the benchmarks report delivered just today.

I would encourage my colleagues to review the report, as I intend to, and to hear what General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker have to say in September. There is much at stake and, frankly, they deserve to be heard.

AMENDMENT NO. 2087

Now on another matter, Mr. President, the Senate will soon take up the Levin amendment. But before we do, I think it is important that we take a look at what it says.

The Levin amendment says:

The Secretary of Defense shall commence the reduction of the number of United States forces in Iraq not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of the enactment of this Act.

Now, exactly what would this reduction involve—10,000 troops, 20,000, 50,000, all of them? Can we at least get maybe a ballpark figure? The Levin amendment does not quite give us one. It only says U.S. forces will have a "limited presence" after this reduction. What is a "limited presence"?

Does it mean limiting our presence in Al Anbar, which everyone agrees has been a stunning success in our fight against al-Qaida? Does it mean limiting our presence in Baghdad? In the

Kurdish areas to the north? What does "limited presence" mean? The Levin amendment does not say. We are left to guess.

The Levin amendment says the members of our Armed Forces will only be free to protect the United States and coalition personnel and infrastructure, to train Iraqi security forces, and to engage in targeted counterterrorism operations against al-Qaida. What does "targeted" mean? The Levin amendment does not tell us.

It says:

The Secretary of Defense shall complete the transition of United States forces to a limited presence and missions by April 30.

But how will we know when he has completed the transition? And how many forces would have to be moved in order for the Secretary of Defense to comply with the bill's mandate to complete it? The amendment is silent on that question as well.

If there were more to this amendment, I might have more questions, but there is not. That is it. The supposedly groundbreaking policy shift that the Democratic majority has been circling around is nothing more than a page and a half of vague policy proposals; in fact, an empty shell. Do they really expect us to send this to conference and to see what might happen? That is wise war policy? That is a responsible alternative to the current policy? That is the alternative they give us to the Petraeus plan, a doctrine that has been widely acclaimed as the last word on counterinsurgency, which is showing signs of success less than a month after it was fully manned?

Look, Democrats and Republicans voted to go into Iraq based on the same intelligence the President had. It is dishonest and it is unhelpful to turn every debate on this war into a discussion of how and why we entered it in the first place.

More than 150,000 American troops are there. They are now fighting the same group that attacked and killed thousands of innocent Americans on 9/11, who attacked many others before and since, and who are plotting to kill thousands more even as we speak. There is one thing we should be concerned about in discussing this war, and it is the one thing we never hear about from the other side; that is, in the fight against al-Qaida.

Now, the President has recognized that previous strategy failed to focus on the insurgency and al-Qaida. He changed course. Now we are fighting them head on with the Petraeus plan. At full manning, this strategy has been in place for less than a month. We will get a report on its progress in September. What sense does it make to short-circuit that strategy right now, especially when the only alternative we are getting from the other side is a page and a half of questions.

Yesterday, the spokesman for the Multi-National Force in Iraq gave us an update on al-Qaida's operations in Iraq. He reminded us that al-Qaida

members refer to Iraq as their central front. This is al-Qaida members who say it is their central front. He told us al-Qaida and its affiliates are the greatest source of the spectacular attacks that are fueling sectarian violence in Iraq.

He told us that in recent months, more and more Iraqis have started to reject al-Qaida and its ideology and are finally fighting back. Troops are getting good, actionable intelligence from these people which they are using to disrupt al-Qaida networks and safe havens in and around Baghdad. He showed us a chart that illustrated some of our recent successes against the enemy. Our Armed Forces in Iraq killed or captured 26 high-level al-Qaida leaders in May and June alone. Eleven of them were emirs who were city or local al-Qaida leaders; seven were smuggling foreigners, weapons, and money into Iraq; five were cell leaders; and three were leaders of IED networks. Last month, our troops uncovered an al-Qaida media hub near Samarra. They have concluded that between 80 and 90 percent of suicide attacks in Iraq are carried out by foreign-born terrorists who have killed some 4,000 Iraqi citizens just over the last 6 months.

These are some of the concrete realities on the ground. This is what is actually happening, not what people over here seem to be talking about. We are fighting al-Qaida head-on, and we are making progress. Would the Levin amendment force us to turn our backs on al-Qaida again? We have no idea. It really doesn't say. But it could. That is something we should all keep in mind as we begin this debate, whether we are willing to go with this or with the Petraeus plan.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I support the provisions in the 2008 Defense authorization bill that seek to prevent premature deployment of missile defenses in Europe, and I continue to have serious concerns about the operational effectiveness and cost of these technologies. I voted for the amendment offered by Senator SESSIONS because Iran may develop the capacity to threaten our allies with nuclear weapons and because the amendment supports development of an "effective defense" when it is "technologically possible." I will continue encouraging the administration to work with the international community to engage directly with Iran.

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. LEVIN. 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. LEVIN. I ask unanimous consent that the Sessions amendment No. 2024, as modified, be set aside until 4 p.m. today and that no amendment be in

order to the Sessions amendment; that at 4 p.m. today, there be 2 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled between Senator SESSIONS and myself or our designees; that upon the use of that time, without further intervening action or debate, the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the Sessions amendment, as modified.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCAIN. Reserving the right to object, I will not object, but I would like to clarify with the chairman that we intend to not only take up the wounded warrior amendment but also, if there are other amendments, if we debate and discuss wounded warrior and there is time for that—we want to tell our colleagues that there are some 98 pending amendments that have not been addressed as of yet, and we would like to address those as soon as possible since we will obviously have a very busy week on this bill next week as well as today. We have 4½ hours between now and the next vote.

My other question to the distinguished chairman is, Is it his desire that we perhaps have another amendment that could be voted on at that time?

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Arizona. It is our hope that we can complete the debate on the wounded warriors legislation. I did intend to offer that as soon as this unanimous consent agreement is agreed to. Those who wish to speak on the wounded warrior legislation we invite to come to the floor in the next few hours. If the debate on that legislation is completed before 4 o'clock, the Senator from Arizona is correct, we would then, hopefully, have a vote on the wounded warriors amendment immediately after the vote on the Sessions amendment. If debate on the wounded warriors legislation is completed before 4 o'clock, as he indicated, there would then be an opportunity for another amendment to be offered as designated by the ranking member. I believe, in terms of alternating, it is now our turn. I will be offering, on behalf of many Senators, on a bipartisan basis the wounded warrior legislation. Then it is our understanding the next amendment would be from the Republican side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the unanimous consent request?

Mr. MCCAIN. I thank the Senator from Michigan. I understand there were already several amendments to the wounded warrior legislation, which have been accepted on both sides, which we will be presenting. I would ask the indulgence of the chairman to make a brief statement before we take up the wounded warrior amendment bill. Would that be OK? It is not on wounded warrior.

Mr. LEVIN. I have no objection whatsoever to Senator MCCAIN being recognized immediately after our UC is accepted—if it is—for a statement. Then it would be the understanding that I

would then be recognized to introduce the wounded warrior amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the unanimous consent request?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague and friend from Michigan. I know he shares my concern about the work that needs to be done in the next few days to try to get this bill completed. We do urge our colleagues to come forth with relevant amendments. As I mentioned, there are at this time, obviously, a number of amendments my colleagues will want considered and debated, including two very big amendments on Iraq, the Salazar-Alexander amendment, as well as the Reed-Levin amendment which I am sure will take up considerable time. Before we move to the wounded warrior bill, which I praise for its bipartisan ship and its effort to bring together both sides of the aisle to address one of the most compelling issues of our time, and that is the treatment of the men and women who are serving in the military—I will have more remarks about that later—I would like to draw my colleagues' attention to an editorial that ran last Sunday in the New York Times titled "The Road Home."

I ask unanimous consent to have that editorial printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the New York Times, July 8, 2007]

THE ROAD HOME

It is time for the United States to leave Iraq, without any more delay than the Pentagon needs to organize an orderly exit.

Like many Americans, we have put off that conclusion, waiting for a sign that President Bush was seriously trying to dig the United States out of the disaster he created by invading Iraq without sufficient cause, in the face of global opposition, and without a plan to stabilize the country afterward.

At first, we believed that after destroying Iraq's government, army, police and economic structures, the United States was obliged to try to accomplish some of the goals Mr. Bush claimed to be pursuing, chiefly building a stable, unified Iraq. When it became clear that the president had neither the vision nor the means to do that, we argued against setting a withdrawal date while there was still some chance to mitigate the chaos that would most likely follow.

While Mr. Bush scorns deadlines, he kept promising breakthroughs—after elections, after a constitution, after sending in thousands more troops. But those milestones came and went without any progress toward a stable, democratic Iraq or a path for withdrawal. It is frighteningly clear that Mr. Bush's plan is to stay the course as long as he is president and dump the mess on his successor. Whatever his cause was, it is lost.

The political leaders Washington has backed are incapable of putting national interests ahead of sectarian score settling. The security forces Washington has trained behave more like partisan militias. Additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything.

Continuing to sacrifice the lives and limbs of American soldiers is wrong. The war is sapping the strength of the nation's alliances and its military forces. It is a dangerous diversion from the life-and-death struggle against terrorists. It is an increasing burden on American taxpayers, and it is a betrayal of a world that needs the wise application of American power and principles.

A majority of Americans reached these conclusions months ago. Even in politically polarized Washington, positions on the war no longer divide entirely on party lines. When Congress returns this week, extricating American troops from the war should be at the top of its agenda.

That conversation must be candid and focused. Americans must be clear that Iraq, and the region around it, could be even bloodier and more chaotic after Americans leave. There could be reprisals against those who worked with American forces, further ethnic cleansing, even genocide. Potentially destabilizing refugee flows could hit Jordan and Syria. Iran and Turkey could be tempted to make power grabs. Perhaps most important, the invasion has created a new stronghold from which terrorist activity could proliferate.

The administration, the Democratic-controlled Congress, the United Nations and America's allies must try to mitigate those outcomes—and they may fail. But Americans must be equally honest about the fact that keeping troops in Iraq will only make things worse. The nation needs a serious discussion, now, about how to accomplish a withdrawal and meet some of the big challenges that will arise.

The United States has about 160,000 troops and millions of tons of military gear inside Iraq. Getting that force out safely will be a formidable challenge. The main road south to Kuwait is notoriously vulnerable to roadside bomb attacks. Soldiers, weapons and vehicles will need to be deployed to secure bases while airlift and sealift operations are organized. Withdrawal routes will have to be guarded. The exit must be everything the invasion was not: based on reality and backed by adequate resources.

The United States should explore using Kurdish territory in the north of Iraq as a secure staging area. Being able to use bases and ports in Turkey would also make withdrawal faster and safer. Turkey has been an inconsistent ally in this war, but like other nations, it should realize that shouldering part of the burden of the aftermath is in its own interest.

Accomplishing all of this in less than six months is probably unrealistic. The political decision should be made, and the target date set, now.

Despite President Bush's repeated claims, Al Qaeda had no significant foothold in Iraq before the invasion, which gave it new base camps, new recruits and new prestige.

This war diverted Pentagon resources from Afghanistan, where the military had a real chance to hunt down Al Qaeda's leaders. It alienated essential allies in the war against terrorism. It drained the strength and readiness of American troops.

And it created a new front where the United States will have to continue to battle terrorist forces and enlist local allies who reject the idea of an Iraq hijacked by international terrorists. The military will need resources and bases to stanch this self-inflicted wound for the foreseeable future.

The United States could strike an agreement with the Kurds to create those bases in northeastern Iraq. Or, the Pentagon could use its bases in countries like Kuwait and Qatar, and its large naval presence in the Persian Gulf, as staging points.

There are arguments for, and against, both options. Leaving troops in Iraq might make

it too easy—and too tempting—to get drawn back into the civil war and confirm suspicions that Washington's real goal was to secure permanent bases in Iraq. Mounting attacks from other countries could endanger those nations' governments.

The White House should make this choice after consultation with Congress and the other countries in the region, whose opinions the Bush administration has essentially ignored. The bottom line: the Pentagon needs enough force to stage effective raids and airstrikes against terrorist forces in Iraq, but not enough to resume large-scale combat.

One of Mr. Bush's arguments against withdrawal is that it would lead to civil war. That war is raging, right now, and it may take years to burn out. Iraq may fragment into separate Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite republics, and American troops are not going to stop that from happening.

It is possible, we suppose, that announcing a firm withdrawal date might finally focus Iraq's political leaders and neighboring governments on reality. Ideally, it could spur Iraqi politicians to take the steps toward national reconciliation that they have endlessly discussed but refused to act on.

But it is foolish to count on that, as some Democratic proponents of withdrawal have done. The administration should use whatever leverage it gains from withdrawing to press its allies and Iraq's neighbors to help achieve a negotiated solution.

Iraq's leaders—knowing that they can no longer rely on the Americans to guarantee their survival—might be more open to compromise, perhaps to a Bosnian-style partition, with economic resources fairly shared but with millions of Iraqis forced to relocate. That would be better than the slow-motion ethnic and religious cleansing that has contributed to driving one in seven Iraqis from their homes.

The United States military cannot solve the problem. Congress and the White House must lead an international attempt at a negotiated outcome. To start, Washington must turn to the United Nations, which Mr. Bush spurned and ridiculed as a preface to war.

There are already nearly two million Iraqi refugees, mostly in Syria and Jordan, and nearly two million more Iraqis who have been displaced within their country. Without the active cooperation of all six countries bordering Iraq—Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria—and the help of other nations, this disaster could get worse. Beyond the suffering, massive flows of refugees—some with ethnic and political resentments—could spread Iraq's conflict far beyond Iraq's borders.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia must share the burden of hosting refugees. Jordan and Syria, now nearly overwhelmed with refugees, need more international help. That, of course, means money. The nations of Europe and Asia have a stake and should contribute. The United States will have to pay a large share of the costs, but should also lead international efforts, perhaps a donors' conference, to raise money for the refugee crisis.

Washington also has to mend fences with allies. There are new governments in Britain, France and Germany that did not participate in the fight over starting this war and are eager to get beyond it. But that will still require a measure of humility and a commitment to multilateral action that this administration has never shown. And, however angry they were with President Bush for creating this mess, those nations should see that they cannot walk away from the consequences. To put it badly, terrorism and oil make it impossible to ignore.

The United States has the greatest responsibilities, including the admission of many more refugees for permanent resettlement.

The most compelling obligation is to the tens of thousands of Iraqis of courage and good will—translators, embassy employees, reconstruction workers—whose lives will be in danger because they believed the promises and cooperated with the Americans.

One of the trickiest tasks will be avoiding excessive meddling in Iraq by its neighbors—America's friends as well as its adversaries.

Just as Iran should come under international pressure to allow Shiites in southern Iraq to develop their own independent future, Washington must help persuade Sunni powers like Syria not to intervene on behalf of Sunni Iraqis. Turkey must be kept from sending troops into Kurdish territories.

For this effort to have any remote chance, Mr. Bush must drop his resistance to talking with both Iran and Syria. Britain, France, Russia, China and other nations with influence have a responsibility to help. Civil war in Iraq is a threat to everyone, especially if it spills across Iraq's borders.

President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney have used demagoguery and fear to quell Americans' demands for an end to this war. They say withdrawing will create bloodshed and chaos and encourage terrorists. Actually, all of that has already happened—the result of this unnecessary invasion and the incompetent management of this war.

This country faces a choice. We can go on allowing Mr. Bush to drag out this war without end or purpose. Or we can insist that American troops are withdrawn as quickly and safely as we can manage—with as much effort as possible to stop the chaos from spreading.

Mr. MCCAIN. It is worth spending a few moments to discuss this editorial because it is not often that one of America's flagship papers declares as lost a war which 160,000 brave American soldiers are trying mightily to win.

Beginning with its first line in this remarkable editorial, "It is time for the United States to leave Iraq without any more delay than the Pentagon needs to organize an orderly exit," the Times editorial advocates a precipitous withdrawal of American forces. It does so conceding that such a withdrawal is likely to increase the chaos and bloodshed in Iraq, not decrease it, and that a redeployment could prompt "reprisals, further ethnic cleansing, even genocide." A remarkable statement that a newspaper that frequently calls for the United States to bring its national power to bear for moral purposes, not the least of which in the Darfur region of Sudan, could so easily throw out consequences that are so terrible.

In the opinion of the New York Times, apparently genocide is not worth fighting to prevent, nor is it worth fighting to prevent "potentially destabilizing refugee flows" hitting Jordan and Syria or to stop Iran from filling the power vacuum left behind by our departure or disrupting a likely terrorist sanctuary. No, none of these things are worth fighting for in the Times' opinion because it has concluded that "keeping troops in Iraq will only make things worse."

This misunderstanding clouds the entirety of the editorial. The Times appears to believe that because things have been mismanaged since 2003 and

because violence remains at unacceptably high levels, things simply can't get worse, so we should withdraw and at least save ourselves. But this is sheer folly. Things in Iraq, however bad they have been and remain, could get far, far worse. Anyone who recalls Cambodia or Rwanda or any of the other places that have seen killing on a massive scale knows just how terrible violence can be when it spirals out of control.

The consequences of a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq include emboldening terrorists, inducing a wider regional war, fanning the flames of a Sunni-Shia conflict, putting millions of lives at risk, and destabilizing an area key to America's strategic interests.

The editorial states bluntly, "Whatever [the President's] cause was, it is lost," because "additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything." That is a remarkable statement, a remarkable statement. "Additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything." I just came back from a visit. I know I have been pilloried for saying that there has been progress in Iraq. Well, they can pillory General Petraeus and they can pillory their own reporters who have clearly pointed out that there have been measurements of success—and a long, long way to go, but the fact is, there has been some success.

The fact is, in Baghdad, as General Petraeus attests, it is demonstrably untrue that additional military forces poured into the Baghdad region have failed to change anything. In Baghdad, U.S. military and Iraqi forces are establishing joint security stations and patrolling the city together to manage violence. Since January, sectarian violence has fallen. The total number of car bombings and suicide attacks has declined in May and June, and the number of Iraqis coming forward with information is rising.

The President offered an assessment today. There are some areas of success. There are some areas of no movement, and there are some areas of failure, particularly where the Iraqi Government is concerned. We should know that. In an area south of Baghdad, commanders report increasing numbers of local tribes siding with the coalition against al-Qaida and similar effects north of the city.

This editorial makes the breathtaking assertion that the war in Iraq is "a dangerous diversion from the life-and-death struggle against terrorists." Someone from the editorial board must have neglected to inform our troops on the ground, who, when I visited them last week in Baghdad and Anbar, spent several hours briefing me on their counterterrorism operations. The editors must have also neglected to speak with General Petraeus, who has called Iraq "the central front of al-Qaida's global campaign."

In case terrorists remain in Iraq and seek to plan attacks outside the coun-

try, the Times has an answer. The United States can set up bases in Kuwait and Qatar and even in northern Iraq because:

... the Pentagon needs enough force to stage effective raids and airstrikes against terrorist forces in Iraq.

Yet I wonder whether the Times has thought through any of the logistical issues associated with waging a counterterrorism effort from a neighboring country. Do we send American counterterrorism teams into Iraq for these operations? Do they remain in place? How are they supplied? We have seen for 3½ years that such efforts are much less successful when our troops are confined to forward operating bases than when our soldiers are deployed among the population, in the cities. I can hardly imagine how difficult it would be to wage the same struggle not from forward operating bases but from a neighboring nation.

These troops would not be needed to help stop an incipient civil war because, as the Times tells us, "that war is raging, right now." Iraq may fragment into separate states, the editorial goes on, but "American troops are not going to stop that from happening."

Well, a couple days ago, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari explained that the dangers of a quick American pull-out from Iraq could include a civil war. I suspect the foreign minister means a real, full-scale civil war, one that dwarfs the violence taking place today. I also suspect the foreign minister understands there is no clear delineation between sectarian violence, whether or not it constitutes civil war, and terrorist activity. Al-Qaida bombed the mosque in Samara in a deliberate attempt to foment sectarian violence. Zarqawi wrote of his plans to target the Shia before his own death. Walking away from Iraq would not simply leave an ongoing sectarian struggle simmering away at its own pace, sealed off from the world. Civil war in Iraq has real implications for American national security interests.

After the withdrawal prompts the terrible consequences that even the New York Times foresees, it will be incumbent upon the United States to ameliorate the fallout. This, the editorial page tells us, can be done by talking to Iran—by talking to Iran—to pressure it to "allow Shiites in southern Iraq to develop their own independent future."

At a time when Iranian operatives are already moving weapons, training fighters, providing resources, and helping plan operations to kill American soldiers and damage our efforts to bring stability to Iraq, I think it is a pretty safe bet that Tehran will not be open to many of Washington's entreaties following a withdrawal. The much more likely course is that Iran will comfortably step into the power vacuum left by a U.S. redeployment. When it does so, though, the Times would have Washington "persuade Sunni powers like Syria not to intervene on behalf of Sunni Iraqis." My

friends, that would be a tough sell, to put it mildly, if the Iranians are in the regional ascendance.

Perhaps the root of the New York Times' misconception of the war in Iraq is crystallized by a sentence in its final paragraph. It expresses fierce opposition to "allowing Mr. Bush to drag out this war without end on purpose." "Allowing Mr. Bush to drag out this war without end on purpose." I think all of us would oppose any war without end or purpose, but this does not describe the conflict in Iraq. We remain in Iraq to bring enough security to allow the Government to function in a way that will protect the people of Iraq and, as a result, the national interests of the United States. That is the purpose and the end goal of this war, as I see it.

But do not take my word for it, Mr. President. Ask the thousands of brave men and women who are putting themselves in harm's way every day. I had the privilege to once again visit many of them in Iraq last week, and I can tell my colleagues they understand the purpose. I wish I could say the same of our journalistic friends in New York.

Mr. President, I wish to remind my colleagues about the statements that have been made by various people who are experts on Iraq and are respected national security advisers, including people such as Brent Scowcroft and Henry Kissinger, and many others who have been involved in this issue, many of whom, like General Zinni, were opposed from the beginning to the conflict but now believe setting a date for withdrawal will be a disaster of monumental consequences.

I hope the editorial page of the New York Times would listen to some of those people. For example, Henry Kissinger, who recently said that setting a date for withdrawal will lead to chaos in the region; including people such as General Zinni, who had opposed our intervention in Iraq to start with, who said setting a date for withdrawal would have catastrophic consequences.

I have seen some interesting op-ed pieces in my time. I have rarely seen one that is farther off the mark than the editorial in last Sunday's New York Times. I am convinced that if we pursued that course, as the editorial leads: that the war is lost, and it is time for the United States to leave Iraq without any more delay, and the Pentagon needs to organize an orderly exit—is a remarkable statement by one of the largest newspapers in America.

Henry Kissinger—I think we can find wisdom in several suggestions put forward by him. But we also should heed his words, as well as many others. He is correct to say: "precipitate withdrawal would produce a disaster," one that "would not end the war but shift it to other areas, like Lebanon or Jordan or Saudi Arabia," produce greater violence among Iraqi factions and "embolden radical Islamism" around the world.

My friends, I hope the editorial writers for the New York Times would pay

attention to Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaida's deputy chief, who said that the United States is merely delaying our "inevitable" defeat in Iraq, and that "the Mujahideen of Islam in Iraq of the caliphate and jihad are advancing with steady steps towards victory."

Their target is not Iraq. Pay attention to their words. Their target is the United States of America.

Recall the plan laid out in a letter from Zawahiri to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi before his death. That plan is to take shape in four stages: establish a caliphate in Iraq, extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq, clash with Israel—none of which will commence until the completion of stage one—expel the Americans from Iraq.

If the New York Times editorial board does not pay attention to the words of people like me and General Scowcroft and General Zinni and Dr. Kissinger, and many other people who are experts, I would hope they would pay attention to the words of Zarqawi, Zawahiri, and others who have made very clear what their intentions are in Iraq.

Mr. President, at this time I yield the floor and ask unanimous consent that Senator LEVIN offer the wounded warrior legislation or whatever he wants.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The senior Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I did not have a chance, because the Senator was speaking, to ask the Senator from Arizona if there would be any objection if instead of offering the wounded warrior amendment at this time that I yield to the Senator from North Dakota for a statement on an amendment, a different amendment that he intends to offer. I think his statement would last 15 minutes or 20 minutes.

Mr. MCCAIN. How long?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Arizona withdraw his unanimous consent request?

Mr. MCCAIN. I withdraw it. I just wonder how long, again.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, 15 or 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator withdraws the unanimous consent request.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, could I ask the Senator from Michigan to amend the request to immediately following the remarks of the Senator from North Dakota that then there would be the offering of the wounded warrior amendment?

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from North Dakota be recognized for up to 20 minutes to speak on an amendment that he would intend to offer at a later time, and immediately following that I then be recognized to offer the wounded warrior legislation.

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

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized for up to 20 minutes.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, let me thank my colleague from Michigan and my colleague from Arizona as well.

I believe my colleague, Senator CONRAD from North Dakota, may well join me, if he is able to.

I want to describe an amendment we have filed. We will attempt to offer it at some point, but I have filed an amendment, along with my colleague, Senator CONRAD, and I want to describe it briefly. As I do, let me say this: I understand, and have always understood, it is far easier, when making a case, to make the negative side than the positive side. I understand, and have always understood, it is easier to recognize failure than it is to recognize success. I respect everyone's views on this issue, this issue of the war in Iraq, the fight against terrorism. It is a passionate debate we have in this Chamber and in this country. I respect the views of everyone who stands and offers their thoughts about what this country ought to do.

We need to get this right. The future of this country, perhaps the future of the world, depends on our ability to get this right. But I have been waking up in the mornings and picking up the morning papers and seeing statements in the papers that have bothered me a lot.

I want to mention, as we bring to the floor of the Senate a piece of legislation authorizing the spending for our military of \$640 billion roughly—\$640 billion—and we are building anti-ballistic missile defense systems, we are building ICBMs, we are building tanks and planes and ships, we are doing all these things, and we are spending a lot of money—but, even as we do all that, let me review something else, if I might.

It has been 6 years since Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida attacked us with 19 people and box cutters, hijacking airplanes loaded with fuel and killing innocent Americans—thousands of them.

Six years since those attacks. A long time.

It has been 6 long years, and yet Osama bin Laden is still free today. He has not been brought to justice.

It has been 6 long years, and al-Qaida is stronger today than it has been in years, according to all of the reports recently released.

It has been 6 years, and al-Qaida is now rebuilding its terrorist training camps, along with the Taliban, in a safe harbor.

It has been 6 years, and they are reconstituting their ability to attack us. Yes, al-Qaida and the Taliban are reconstituting their operational capability in a safe hideaway in Pakistan. It is called a "secure hideaway in Pakistan" officially.

It remains the greatest threat to the United States, even after these 6 long years: after two wars in two countries, after trillions of dollars spent on those wars and for homeland security, after the deaths of thousands of our military, and after the wounding of tens of thousands of our military.

Yesterday, we heard from the No. 2 person, al-Zawahiri. He has released about a dozen tapes in the last year. Previously, we heard from Osama bin Laden. They are free, and they have escaped justice, and they are exhorting their followers to attack and kill, and al-Qaida is reconstituting.

All this after six years.

Let me describe a couple of things.

On, January, 11, 2007, in testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the top intelligence person in our country said:

Al Qaeda continues to plot attacks against our Homeland and other targets with the objective of inflicting mass casualties. And they continue to maintain active connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders' secure hideaway in Pakistan.

Our top intelligence person in this country said they have a secure hideout in Pakistan. John Negroponte said that. He was the Director of National Intelligence at the time. That was only a few months ago.

Here is what he also said:

Al Qaeda is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to US interests, including to the Homeland.

January 2007. That is not from the New York Times or the Washington Post, that is the testimony from John Negroponte, who at that point was the top intelligence official in our Government. Al Qaeda had a secure hideaway in Pakistan and remained the greatest threat to the U.S.

Now, 2 days ago, I read in the paper that the head of our Homeland Security agency has a "gut feeling" about a new period of increased risk—a "gut feeling."

Well, let me show you what we had in August of 2001: a Presidential daily briefing. This was released, by the way, about 3 years ago. This was the Presidential daily briefing, and I have it in my hand, dated August 6, 2001. The title is "Bin Laden determined to strike in the U.S."

That was the Presidential daily briefing in August of 2001. "Bin Laden determined to strike in the U.S."

July of 2007, almost six years later, top administration officials say that "Al Qaeda is better positioned to strike the West." That's the secret intelligence assessment of the National Counter Terrorism Center.

Think of that for a moment. Six years have passed. Six years have passed since the attacks of September 11, 2001. But, here we are debating a \$640-plus billion authorization bill for armaments of every kind, and the greatest threat to our country today, according to the top intelligence Director in this Government, is al-Qaida and its network. And they operate from a secure hideaway in Pakistan. And, they are rebuilding their operational capability. Six years later.

What has happened? What is happening? Well, we wake up in the morning and we read what is happening: Officials are worrying of a terror attack

this summer. Michael Chertoff says he has a "gut feeling" about that. Other U.S. counterterrorism officials who spoke on condition of anonymity shared Chertoff's concern. This article says:

Al-Qaida and like minded groups have been able to plot and train more freely in the tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistani border in recent months.

I have been in that area. I have flown over the Afghanistan and Pakistani area border. I understand what it looks like. I understand you can't see where one country starts and another country begins. I understand how difficult all this must be. But I don't understand how this administration has decided, after 6 long years, that it doesn't matter so much that we haven't captured Osama bin Laden. The President himself said that. He doesn't worry much about Osama bin Laden. That's a direct quote. I can get it for you. That's exactly what he said: Don't worry much about him.

Well, our country ought to worry about him. The leadership of al-Qaida is the leadership of the organization that attacked this country and who, even now, we are told, are planning additional attacks against this country. So how is it in all this time that has elapsed that Osama is still on the loose and that al-Qaida is getting stronger and stronger.

How is it that this is so even after the President said "If you harbor terrorists, you are the same as terrorists to us; there will be no safe harbor." There was a safe harbor in Afghanistan for the terrorists. The Taliban gave them a safe harbor, so we went to war in Afghanistan. We drove out the Taliban and got rid of the safe harbor. That's what we did back in 2001 and 2002.

But, apparently now, there is another safe harbor for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida. After 6 long years, they have another safe harbor. It's in Pakistan or on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan. They have terrorists training camps there. They are rebuilding. They are planning. Just like they did before.

We must do something about this. We must not ignore this warning. We must act now.

Senator CONRAD and I have filed an amendment and we will offer it when we get the opportunity. It will do a couple of things. No. 1, it will insist we be given classified briefings on a quarterly basis on the hunt for Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida.

It will require that every quarter the Defense Department and the Director of National Intelligence provide Congress with a classified briefing telling us what is being done by the resources of this administration and the resources that are given in this Defense authorization bill to apprehend and bring to justice Osama bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, and others who led the attacks against this country and who even today plan additional attacks against our country.

This is an urgent matter. This isn't just going after those who attacked us yesterday. It's about going after those seeking to attack us today and tomorrow.

Just 2 weeks ago, the McClatchy Newspaper, on June 26, 2007, reported that "Al-Qaida regrouping in a new sanctuary on the Pakistani border," senior U.S. military intelligence and law enforcement officials say. It reported that "While the U.S. presses its war against insurgents linked to al-Qaida in Iraq, Osama bin Laden's group is recruiting, regrouping, and rebuilding in a new sanctuary along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan."

Six years after the attacks in this country, this is what we read.

Now, we are in a war in the country of Iraq. I understand there are some in this Chamber who say this is the beachhead against al-Qaida. It is not. Does al-Qaida exist in Iraq? Yes, it does. But most of what is happening in Iraq is sectarian violence: Shia killing Sunni, Sunni killing Shia, Sunni and Shia killing American soldiers. Yes, al-Qaida exists in Iraq, but al-Qaida has largely come to Iraq as a result of what has been happening in Iraq. It was not and is not the central fight with respect to the war on terror.

I spoke about this previously with respect to an amendment of this type. Incidentally, Senator CONRAD and I have gotten this amendment passed by the Senate previously, but it gets dropped in conference. My hope is it will pass the Senate once again and this time—this time, at long last—it will not be dropped in conference.

Finally, on a quarterly basis, at least, we will be able to get classified information about whether this administration is pursuing and bringing to justice those who attacked this country on 9/11, 2001, and those who, according to the papers this morning and yesterday morning and the morning before that, continue to plot those attacks against this country.

How much longer will we be asked to read these stories, in most cases by unnamed administration officials?

"Senior leaders of al-Qaida operating from Pakistan over the past year have set up a band of training camps in the tribal regions near the Afghan border," according to American intelligence and counterterrorism officials. "American officials said there was mounting evidence that Osama bin Laden and his deputy, al-Zawahiri, have been steadily building an operations hub in the mountainous Pakistani tribal area north of Waziristan."

Those are the reports. They have been the same for a year or so now. Every couple of months we read this.

I think it is important to ask the question—as we describe a piece of legislation that will offer \$640-plus billion for the Department of Defense—I think it is important for us to ask the question as to whether at least a portion of this is dedicated to bringing to justice those who attacked this country.

If the head of our intelligence service is correct when he says that "Al-Qaida

is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests, including to the Homeland," then why is the central fight not a fight to apprehend and bring to justice the leadership of al-Qaida?

Why are they free today? Why are they in a secure area? Why are they harbored in a secure area where they are plotting attacks against our country and other countries? Why does that exist? It seems to me, at least in part, it must be a matter of will. The central fight, in my judgment, ought to be the fight to bring to justice those who attacked our country.

Now, with respect to Iraq, this country is going to leave Iraq. That is not the question. The question is when and how.

The American people are not going to continue year after year after year asking American soldiers to be in the middle of a civil war in Iraq. It simply will not be the case that the American people will allow that to happen. So we are going to leave Iraq; the question is how and when. We will debate that via several amendments over the coming days.

But my point this morning is to say, while we debate Iraq and debate the circumstances of American troops largely in the middle of a civil war in Iraq, the question remains: Why? Why, after 6 years, does Osama bin Laden remain free? Why does he remain in a secure hideaway and remain apparently at the top, along with al-Zawahiri, in charge of al-Qaida, plotting attacks against free people? Why is that still the case?

Shouldn't we, finally, at last, at long last as a country, insist that our major objective be to bring to justice the leaders of al-Qaida and destroy the al-Qaida network? That is the real fight against terrorism.

There is so much to say about so many subjects on the Defense authorization bill, but when we talk about defending our country's interests, we can go back some years and recall that we were in the middle of a Cold War, where we knew who the enemy was. The enemy was a nation state. In that case, the Cold War was the Soviet Union; the Soviet Union and the United States built large arsenals of nuclear weapons to stand each other off in something called mutually assured destruction.

Times have changed. The Soviet Union doesn't exist anymore. Now, the major threat to our country is not a nation state. It is not an organization that has an "army" that wears uniforms. The greatest threat to our country now, according to testimony before the Select Committee on Intelligence of our country's most senior intelligence official, the Director of Intelligence, Mr. Negroponte, is clear:

Al-Qaida is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests, including to the Homeland.

If that is the case, then where is the strategy in the use of all the resources

we provide in this legislation to the administration? Where is the strategy to bring to justice those who attacked this country? Regrettably and unfortunately, I think that strategy has not existed for far too long.

As I indicated, I have filed the amendment I have written and the amendment that I and Senator CONRAD, who joins me in this amendment, will attempt to have considered by the Senate. I assume it will be considered following the consideration of several others of the Iraq amendments that have already been noticed. The amendment we have filed requires classified reports on a quarterly basis. It also will double the reward that has been offered from \$25 million to \$50 million for apprehending or information leading to the apprehension of Osama bin Laden.

We gave the current administration substantial authority to boost the reward 2 years ago. It did not do that. We believe that, because nothing seems to happen with this administration on this issue, it is important for the Congress to push and to insist.

In this amendment, we ask for four key things. We ask that the classified briefings be given to Congress telling us the likely current location of the al-Qaida leadership. All of the information suggests that senior leaders in this administration know generally where that location is.

We ask for a description of the ongoing efforts to bring the leadership of al-Qaida to justice and a report on the Governments of the countries in which al-Qaida is allowed to exist and allowed to rebuild. We ask for reports on whether they are fully cooperating with us and what they are doing to help us apprehend those who attacked our country.

So that represents my interest in trying to address this issue. Once again, I have spoken to Senator LEVIN previously on this issue. In fact, we have previously passed a similar amendment through the Senate, and I appreciate his cooperation in doing so. I would ask of Senator LEVIN if he would give us some consideration. We filed the amendment, and we will ask to follow it up and have it considered at some appropriate point.

He, of course, manages this bill and has the juggling requirement to meet all the needs for time that people have. I see my colleague, Senator CONRAD, is coming to the floor, and I think I have a few minutes remaining. As he joins us to speak of his interest in this amendment, let me ask Senator LEVIN, if I might, while we are waiting for Senator CONRAD, would we have an opportunity either this week or next week to be able to consider our amendment?

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, that would be our plan and our hope. Perhaps the Senator from North Dakota could remind me, did we clear this amendment or was there a rollcall vote on this?

Mr. DORGAN. The amendment was cleared, I believe. We actually offered it twice, but I believe it was cleared.

Mr. LEVIN. I would hope we could clear it again, and if not, there will be a spot for the Senator to offer the amendment.

Mr. DORGAN. We would like, if necessary, a rollcall vote on the amendment and I thank you for your consideration. As I said, Senator CONRAD will take the remaining time, so at this point I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, how much time is remaining of the unanimous consent?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 1 minute 45 seconds.

Mr. LEVIN. How much time does Senator CONRAD, if I could address him, need? We were delaying introducing the wounded warriors legislation in order to give the Senator an opportunity to speak on the amendment which he plans on offering. Is that the same amendment which—

Mr. CONRAD. Yes.

Mr. LEVIN. I wonder if the Senator could let us know about how long it would be?

Mr. CONRAD. Ten minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Senator MCCAIN is not here, but I doubt that he would have any objection, so therefore I take the liberty of asking unanimous consent that Senator CONRAD be recognized for 10 minutes and then I be recognized to introduce the wounded warrior legislation. Senator AKAKA is also here, and I am wondering if he has any objection.

Mr. AKAKA. No objection.

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

The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the September 11, 2001 attack by al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden, is seared on the soul of the Nation. I know it is a day I will never forget. President Bush vowed then to bring Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terrorist allies to justice.

Days after 9/11, President Bush said:

This act will not stand; we will find those who did it; we will smoke them out of their holes . . . we will bring them to justice.

Every American shared those feelings. Similar to Pearl Harbor, the date of 9/11 became a seminal moment for our Nation, a day we cannot and must not forget. But it has now been nearly 6 years—2,130 days—since the attacks of 9/11—that's more time than America took fighting fascism in World War II.

Osama bin Laden is still at large. In fact, he and al-Qaida are gaining strength, by all accounts. Two weeks ago in Great Britain, we saw a failed attempt to target airports with car bombs. Two years ago, London subway bombings killed 52 and injured 700—bombings which may be linked to al-Qaida.

Today's newspapers report U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that

al-Qaida has rebuilt to its pre-9/11 strengths. These analysts say al-Qaida is "considerably operationally stronger than a year ago" and has "regrouped to an extent not seen since 2001." The reports suggest al-Qaida has created "the most robust training program since 2001, with an interest in using European operatives" and is "showing greater and greater ability to plan attacks in Europe and the United States."

Private experts agree al-Qaida is now stronger than before. According to the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, the number of al-Qaida operatives worldwide has grown from 20,000 6 years ago to 50,000 today.

What is going on here? What does it say to jihadists around the world that a terrorist mastermind such as bin Laden can kill 3,000 Americans and remain alive and untouched 6 years later? What does it say that he and his allies are gaining strength?

There can be only one conclusion: The President got our priorities wrong. Before finishing with al-Qaida and capturing bin Laden, President Bush lost focus.

We know who attacked us on 9/11. It was Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, not Saddam Hussein and Iraq. Yet the painful truth is the administration got our priorities wrong. The President pulled troops and intelligence specialists out of Afghanistan and the search for Osama bin Laden and the leaders of al-Qaida and instead attacked Iraq.

USA Today reported:

In 2002, troops from the 5th Special Forces Group who specialize in the Middle East were pulled out of the hunt for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to prepare for their next assignment: Iraq. Their replacements were troops with expertise in Spanish culture.

Are people hearing this? We pulled experts in the Arab language and Middle East culture out of the hunt for Osama bin Laden, an Arabic speaker who led the attack on us, and we put those troops over into the hunt for Saddam Hussein in Iraq and replaced them with experts in Spanish culture. There are not many Spanish speakers in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The CIA, meanwhile, was stretched badly in its capacity to collect, translate, and analyze information coming from Afghanistan. When the White House raised a new priority, it took specialists away from the Afghanistan effort to ensure Iraq was covered.

I believe this will go down in history as a profound mistake. We lost focus. The President took us on a path that proved to be a distraction. Instead of following up on Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, we got diverted and directed our energy and attention to Saddam Hussein and Iraq. I believe the priorities were wrong.

The former head of the CIA's bin Laden unit called the invasion of Iraq "a godsend to Osama bin Laden." So I have to ask why—why did we allow our post-9/11 focus on bin Laden to be distracted? Why didn't we have enough

forces on the ground at Tora Bora to get the job done and capture bin Laden and his al-Qaida allies? The answer, I believe, unfortunately is clear: The administration made a strategic error and shifted its focus from Afghanistan to Iraq. I believe, as I have said before, that that was a profound mistake.

I spent the last 2 years of my high school years living in the Arab culture. I attended an American Air Force base high school in Tripoli, Libya. In that culture, it is critically important not to allow someone to go uncaptured and unaccounted for who launched an attack. If you don't finish business with those who attack you, they only grow in the public mind. That is absolutely the wrong message to send.

Last September, the administration once again showed it is not focused on al-Qaida. President Bush's national strategy for combating terrorism includes only one passing reference to Osama bin Laden. Last September, the White House issued an updated strategy for counterterrorism. In a 23-page document, bin Laden's name appears only once.

This man ordered the killing of 3,000 innocent Americans, but in the administration's report on fighting terrorist threats, he is only an afterthought.

It has now been 2,130 days since President Bush said "We will find those who did it; we will smoke them out of their holes . . . we will bring them to justice." Those were absolutely the right sentiments and the right plan. Unfortunately, the President's strategy has failed. He has not found Osama bin Laden. He has not smoked him out of his hole, and he has not been brought to justice. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida operatives continue to threaten this Nation.

I believe that is unacceptable. We must capture or kill Osama bin Laden. We must bring his entire network of terrorists to justice. I believe deeply that stopping al-Qaida should be our top priority.

Our amendment makes that clear. It is very simple. It says that capturing or killing Osama bin Laden and dismantling al-Qaida should be our top priority.

Our amendment has two parts. First, it doubles the bounty on Osama bin Laden. Whether we capture or kill him, it is past time that he be brought to justice. I urge my colleagues to join us in sending that message.

Second, our amendment requires a clear report to Congress, laying out the administration's strategy for bringing bin Laden and al-Qaida operatives to justice.

I urge my colleagues to make it this Nation's top military priority to bring Osama bin Laden to the justice that he deserves as the world's most notorious terrorist.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

(Purpose: To provide for the care and management of wounded warriors)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I call up amendment No. 2019, the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. AKAKA, Mr. WARNER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SESSIONS, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. BYRD, Mr. CHAMBLISS, Mr. OBAMA, Mrs. DOLE, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. THUNE, Mr. REED, Mr. MARTINEZ, Mr. BROWN, Mr. NELSON of Florida, Mr. TESTER, Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, Mr. BAYH, Mrs. CLINTON, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. WEBB, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. BINGAMAN, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. BOND, Mr. ISAKSON, Mr. SALAZAR, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. LOTT, Mr. DODD, Mrs. HUTCHISON, Mr. CARDIN, and Mr. BIDEN, proposes an amendment numbered 2019 to 2011.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of Monday, July 9, 2007, under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am offering this with Senators MCCAIN, AKAKA, WARNER, MURRAY, GRAHAM, and about 40 other Senators who are listed on the amendment.

This amendment, in bill form, was introduced on June 13 of this year. It was marked up and unanimously agreed to by the Armed Services Committee on the 14th of June. It was reported to the full Senate on the 18th of June. As of now, as I indicated, we have over 40 cosponsors. The ideas of many Senators and parts of legislation championed by many Senators are incorporated in this amendment.

This is truly a bipartisan amendment. It is an amendment that has had a huge amount of input by many Senators. Although I would prefer the Senate consider this important legislation as a stand-alone provision, a stand-alone bill, because of the shortage of floor time, we now offer it as an amendment to the national defense authorization bill. If it is adopted as an amendment, and assuming that our Defense authorization bill is passed, we would then seek to have it introduced and passed immediately thereafter as stand-alone legislation, so we would have it in two forms—one as an amendment to the bill and the other as a stand-alone bill passed by the Senate, so it could go immediately to the House, without waiting for a conference on the authorization bill between the Senate and the House, which would delay the passage of this very important legislation.

Shortfalls in the care and treatment of our wounded warriors came to our

attention as a result of a series of articles in the Washington Post in February. These articles described deplorable living conditions for some servicemembers in an outpatient status. They described a bungled bureaucratic process for assigning disability ratings that determine whether a servicemember will be medically retired with health and other benefits for himself and his family. They describe a clumsy handoff between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs as the military member transitions from one department to another. The Nation's shock and dismay, when hearing about these problems, reflected the American people's support, the American people's respect, and the American people's gratitude to the men and women who put on our Nation's uniform. Those men and women deserve the best—not shoddy medical care and bureaucratic snafus.

The Armed Services Committee and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a rare joint hearing to identify the problems our wounded soldiers are facing. These committees have continued to work together to address these issues, culminating in the amendment we offer today. The Committee on Veterans' Affairs has also marked up separate legislation that will be offered as an amendment to our amendment. Their legislation will ensure that the Veterans' Administration appropriately addresses the problems our seriously wounded and injured servicemembers face after they transition to VA care.

The amendment we are introducing addresses the issues of inconsistent application of disability standards. It addresses disparate disability ratings, substandard facilities, lack of seamless transition from the Department of Defense to the Veterans' Administration, inadequacy of severance pay, care and treatment for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, medical care for caregivers not eligible for TRICARE, and it addresses the need to share medical records between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our amendment addresses the issue of inconsistent disability ratings by requiring that the military departments use VA standards for rating disabilities, unless the Department of Defense rating is higher. So it would take the higher of the two ratings under our legislation. Our amendment adopts a more favorable statutory presumption for determining whether a disability is incident to military service. We do that by adopting the more favorable VA presumption.

We require two pilot programs to test the viability of using the VA to assign disability ratings for the Department of Defense. We also establish an independent board to review and, where appropriate, correct unjustifiably low Department of Defense disability ratings awarded since 2001.

Our amendment addresses the lack of a seamless transition from the military

to the Veterans' Administration by requiring the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to jointly develop a comprehensive policy on the care and management of injured servicemembers who will transition from the Department of Defense to the VA.

We establish a Department of Defense and a Department of Veterans Affairs interagency program office to develop and implement a joint electronic health record.

The amendment authorizes \$50 million for improved diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of military members with traumatic brain injury, TBI, and post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD. We require the establishment of centers of excellence for both TBI and PTSD to conduct research, train health care professionals, and a number of other things.

We provide guidance throughout the Department of Defense in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of TBI and PTSD. And the amendment requires that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, report to Congress with comprehensive plans to prevent, diagnose, mitigate, and treat TBI and PTSD.

The amendment increases the minimum severance pay to 1 year's basic pay for those separated with disabilities incurred in a combat zone or combat-related activity and 6 months basic pay for all others. This is quadrupling or doubling, depending on the circumstance, of the current arrangement.

Our amendment also eliminates the requirement that severance pay be deducted from disability compensation for disabilities incurred in a combat zone.

Our amendment also addresses the problem that exists because medically retired servicemembers who are eligible for TRICARE as retirees do not have access to some of the cutting-edge treatments that are available to members still on active duty.

The amendment does that by authorizing medically retired servicemembers to receive the Active-Duty medical benefit for 3 years after the member leaves active duty, and this can be extended to 5 years where medically required.

The amendment authorizes military and VA health care providers to provide medical care and counseling to family members who leave their homes and often leave their jobs to help provide care to their wounded warriors.

The dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment requires the Secretary of Defense to establish standards for the treatment of and housing for military outpatients. These standards will require compliance with Federal and other standards for military medical treatment facilities, specialty medical care facilities, and military housing for outpatients that will be uniform and consistent and high level throughout the Department of Defense.

In summary, the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment is a comprehensive approach that lays out a path for the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to address shortfalls in the care of our wounded warriors in the Department of Defense and through the transition to care in the VA system. With the amendment we will be discussing in a moment, that has been adopted by the Veterans' Affairs Committee under the chairmanship and leadership of Senator AKAKA, this bill will also address shortfalls in the VA system itself after the transition to the Veterans' Administration of our wounded warriors. Those warriors deserve the best care and support that we can muster. The American people rightly insist on no less.

There are a number of organizations which support this legislation. I will read from a release that was issued by one of those organizations. This is the Wounded Warrior Project:

[This] is a nonprofit organization aimed at assisting those men and women of the United States armed forces who have been severely injured during the war on terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other hot spots around the world.

A description of this project is:

Beginning at the bedside of the severely wounded, Wounded Warrior Project provides programs and services designated to ease the burdens of these heroes and their families, aid in the recovery process and smooth the transition back to civilian life.

Just one paragraph from their release is the following:

With this legislation, the Senate is telling our nation's wounded warriors that they have heard their concerns and are ready to take appropriate actions to ensure that these brave men and women are taken care of in a manner befitting their sacrifices. . . . This wide ranging legislation will improve the provision of health care and benefits to injured military personnel and make the system much more efficient as well.

I ask unanimous consent that the statement of the Wounded Warrior Project and the statement of the Fleet Reserve Association be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.
(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, we have a number of amendments which have been cleared, 10 amendments which have been cleared which we will describe in a few moments after Senator MCCAIN speaks and after Senator AKAKA speaks. We will describe those second-degree amendments that have been cleared on both sides of the aisle.

Again, I especially thank my ranking member, Senator MCCAIN, and all the members of our committee for the extraordinary work they have put in on this legislation. It is, as I mentioned, comprehensive and desperately needed.

I also thank Senator AKAKA, who is chairman of our Veterans' Affairs Committee, for his leadership because that committee has worked very closely

with our committee on this joint project. This is truly not just a joint effort between two committees but just about every Member of this body has had a role and a voice in this legislation. It is one of the best examples, I believe, of not only bipartisan action that I have seen in the Senate, but also a very speedy action and, we believe, very thorough consideration as well.

I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT (WWP) APPLAUDS SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE FOR NEW LEGISLATION TO ASSIST SEVERELY WOUNDED SERVICEMEMBERS

Jacksonville, FL, June 14, 2007.—Today, the Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) applauded the Senate Armed Services Committee for the introduction of the "Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act", a comprehensive piece of legislation that will greatly assist severely wounded servicemembers. WWP was particularly pleased to note that the bill included several of the legislative proposals that the organization has proposed and supported.

"With this legislation, the Senate is telling our nation's wounded warriors that they have heard their concerns and are ready to take appropriate actions to ensure that these brave men and women are taken care of in a manner befitting their sacrifices", said WWP Executive Director, John Melia. "This wide ranging legislation will improve the provision of health care and benefits to injured military personnel and make the system much more efficient as well".

The "Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act" is sponsored by Senators Levin (D-MI), McCain (R-AZ), Akaka (D-HI), Warner (R-VA), Clinton (D-NY) and others. Among the provisions included in the legislation, the bill would require the Department of Defense (DOD) to adopt a Pre-Deployment Cognitive Assessment tool to help identify Traumatic Brain Injury or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in returning servicemembers. Additionally, it would require DOD to work with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on developing a caregiver training program for family members of brain injured servicemembers, and reform the disability evaluation and ratings system that military personnel must navigate prior to retirement from service. The bill would also create an overlap of DOD and VA benefits to allow wounded warriors to benefit from the strengths of both systems without having to choose access to one over the other.

In addition to these provisions, at this morning's Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, eight amendments suggested by WWP were adopted into the bill.

"These provisions have grown out of our direct interaction with our wounded warriors", Melia said. "We strongly encourage the Senate to pass this bill and to work with the House of Representatives to ensure these vital initiatives are included in the final version of the bill that will hopefully reach the President's desk. We stand committed to assisting in any way."

ABOUT WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT

Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) is a non-profit organization aimed at assisting those men and women of the United States armed forces who have been severely injured during the war on terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan and other hot spots around the world. Beginning at the bedside of the severely wounded, WWP provides programs and services designated to ease the burdens of these heroes and their families, aid in the recovery proc-

ess and smooth the transition back to civilian life. For more information, please call (904) 296-7350 or visit www.woundedwarriorproject.org.

FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, July 11, 2007.

Hon. CARL LEVIN,
Chairman, Armed Services Committee,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEVIN: The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) strongly supports your pending amendment to the FY 2008 Defense Authorization bill that include the provisions of "The Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act" (S. 1606), to improve the management of medical care, the disability rating system, and quality of life issues for wounded members of the Armed Forces. This amendment is important and will address significant long standing problems associated with the coordination of care between the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

FRA appreciates your leadership on this issue and shares your concern about adequate care for wounded service members. The Association stands ready to assist you in its passage in the 110th Congress. The FRA point of contact is John Davis, FRA's Director of Legislative Programs at john@fra.org.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH L. BARNES,
National Executive Secretary.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I begin by echoing the remarks of the chairman of the committee that we appreciate the partnership with the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, a partnership led by Senator AKAKA and Senator CRAIG. We have worked closely together in trying to come up with one of the most aptly titled pieces of legislation that I have ever been involved in, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act.

It is important to point out that we are making this part of the Defense authorization bill, which we believe has a very good chance of being signed by the President, as the quickest way to get this legislation enacted. There was a great deal of discussion back and forth as to whether it should stand by itself or should be part of the Defense Authorization Act.

I know I speak for all of us, and that is if something happens to this legislation, we would come back with a separate piece of legislation so that we can make sure we act as quickly as possible.

We were all deeply disappointed by the conditions at Walter Reed that were reported in February of this year and the problems that our wounded warriors faced after their inpatient care was complete—living in substandard conditions at building 18, being treated poorly, battling a Cold-War disability evaluation process and, for some, falling through the cracks.

Since February of 2007, there have been many encouraging changes. First and foremost, Secretary Gates insisted on accountability for the leadership failures that led to the tragedy at Walter Reed.

In April of this year, the Army stood up a new warrior transition brigade at

Walter Reed to attend to the needs of wounded and ill soldiers in both Active and Reserve components. This model of soldiers caring for soldiers is now spreading throughout the Army.

I think we are on the right track to address the problems at Walter Reed, but there is much more to be done. And I emphasize, we all recognize there is much more to be done. But I do believe this legislation is a very important and valuable contribution to the effort that must be ongoing. We must match the heroism of the wonderful young men and women who have given so much for our country.

Let me tell you who some of my heroes are: SGT Ted Wade was grievously wounded in Iraq in 2004, who together with his young wife Sara has bravely battled for 4 years the maze of health care and benefit evaluations of the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Social Security; lost medical records, confusing and conflicting medical and physical evaluations, and Sara even lost her job. These brave young people have also lost time. Four years is too much to ask of someone who has given so much for his country.

SFC Jeff Mittman is a brave Army soldier who was wounded 2 years ago by an RPG that tore away a significant portion of his face. Today, Jeff is still on active duty, though he returns to Walter Reed frequently for special surgery. Together with his wife Christy, they have continued to raise their children. Jeff is back at school. As a testament to his heroism, Jeff says of his extraordinary injuries: "I got hit hard, but I'll walk it off." This weekend, he and his family will celebrate the second anniversary of his being alive.

SGT Eric Edmondson, a soldier who suffered severe traumatic brain injury in October 2005 and was thought to be without hope of recovery, today is standing on his own, thanks to the work of his remarkable therapist and his own strong determination to survive.

Petty Officer Mark Robbins is a Navy Seal who lost his eye from a sniper's bullet after saving the lives of his buddies in an RPG attack in Iraq in April of this year. Mark, who walked to the medical evacuation helicopter on his own after being wounded, is recovering today at his home in San Diego. His determination to carry on in the fight in spite of his injury is not the exception among our young men and women, it is a tribute.

I also think it is appropriate from time to time, even though what happened at Walter Reed was a disgrace and a scandal and a source of national shame, and it is important that we continue to emphasize that there are thousands and thousands of people who work in our armed services hospitals and clinics and also in veterans affairs who are present at our hospitals, who take care of our aging veterans from the "greatest generation," Korea, and the Vietnam war. These people labor most of the time without credit, most

of the time without publicity, and do a magnificent job.

The system is broken, not the people—not the people—who serve with dedication and patience and care, and love our veterans in a way which should be an example to all of us, and we should never forget that as we try to fix a broken system.

As I mentioned, these are some of America's heroes, my heroes, who have sustained terrible wounds, whose lives have been saved by the finest medical professionals in the world, and who, with their families, face the challenge of a long recovery and rebuilding their lives.

This legislation, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act, will make a difference in the lives of our wounded warriors and their families. It bridges the gap in health care coverage for the severely wounded and ensures their access to the broadest possible range of health care options.

It authorizes additional care and support for families who are caring for the wounded. It requires the Secretary of Defense and Veterans Affairs to develop and implement new policies to better manage the care and transition of our wounded soldiers. It empowers a special board to review disability ratings of 20 percent or less and to restore to a wounded soldier, if appropriate, a higher disability rating or retired status.

Mr. President, that issue alone, of disability ratings, is one that, frankly, the Senator from Michigan and I cannot understand why it continued; that from one medical evaluation board, a certain level of disability and compensation would be adjudged while on active duty, go directly to the VA, and then another assessment is made with a different level of disability. It is just nonsensical. And I would like to say to all my colleagues, and I know we share a responsibility as well, we blamed the military, we blamed the VA, and we blamed a lot of people, but part of the responsibility lies right here with those of us who are supposed to have been paying better attention than we did. So I wish to make that perfectly clear, that I personally—and the Congress—share in the responsibility for having not fixed this system and some of the problems that have existed for a long time.

This legislation empowers a special board, as I mentioned, to review disability ratings. It authorizes additional funding for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, encouraging public and private partnerships to address these signature injuries of the war, and supports efforts to erase the stigma associated with seeking care.

We found out, much to our sorrow, that in this kind of conflict, brain injuries are probably far more prevalent than almost any other conflict in which our Nation has engaged. We also have found out, thank God, that we are able to save a higher percentage of

those wounded than we have in any other conflict—again, a testimony to the incredible professionalism of those who labor and work with dedication in our military medical health care system.

The legislation improves benefits related to the administrative separation from the military due to injury, increasing severance pay for servicemembers with disabilities incurred in a combat zone, and eliminating the requirement that severance pay be deducted from VA disability compensation for disabilities incurred in a combat zone—another remarkable situation which should have been fixed long ago. It requires the Secretary of Defense to immediately implement pilot projects to test improvements to the disability evaluation systems, to fundamentally change and improve those antiquated systems. It requires the Secretary of Defense to inspect and improve medical treatment in residential facilities and to study the accelerated construction of new facilities at the National Medical Center at Bethesda. The current facilities of Walter Reed have served the Nation well, but we can, and must, do better.

This legislation is an important step toward restoring trust for America's wounded and our veterans, but it is not our final destination. Our work also must be informed by the Presidential Commission on Care for America's Wounded, cochaired by one of my personal heroes, Senator DOLE, an enduring American hero. This report will be filed in another few weeks, and I am confident we will work to implement the recommendations of that report as quickly as possible.

I am pleased that the Senate Committees on Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs held a joint hearing on the care of the wounded earlier this year. On June 27, the Committee on Veterans' Affairs reported a bill, portions of which will be offered as an amendment to the underlying bill. These add new resources for traumatic brain injury and mental health evaluations provided by the VA and extend the eligibility for care for combat veterans from 2 to 5 years.

I believe additional conversation and legislation are needed to ensure that veterans with service-connected illnesses and disabilities have timely access to quality health care service through the Veterans' Administration. Given the strain on the veterans health system and the limits of our resources, I believe this can best be achieved through partnerships with civilian health care specialists, based on the health care needs of our wounded veterans. I don't think there is anybody in the world who is better qualified and better trained to address direct combat injuries. I do believe there are many areas of health care in America that are better at certain types of illnesses, certain types of mental therapy that is required, and other areas where health care specialists exist. Those health

care specialists should be made available to our veterans. I am a fiscal conservative, as everybody knows, but in this area, the care and treatment of wounded warriors and veterans, we cannot retreat, no matter what the cost.

I wish to again thank the distinguished chairman of this committee for his leadership. I again thank Senator AKAKA, Senator CRAIG, and every member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee as well as the Armed Services Committee for our coming together and coming forward with this legislation. I only regret that it was needed.

I repeat the words of President George Washington in 1789, as I have so often during these times:

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country.

Again, I thank all the members of the committee, and I thank Ted and Sara Wade, Jeff and Christy Mittman, Eric Edmondson, Mark Robbins and his parents, and all of our wounded and their families. The solution to your trials requires cooperation among us all—in Congress, within the executive branch, and among veterans in military service organizations. With this amendment, I believe we are on the right path.

Again, I want to add my appreciation for the veterans service organizations—the VFW, the DAV, the AMVETS, the American Legion, and so many veterans organizations that labored day after day, in obscurity but with courage and with dedication on behalf of our veterans. Without them, we would not have received the valuable guidance and information and knowledge they have provided us as they address these challenges every single day.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator from Hawaii would yield for a unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator yield?

Mr. AKAKA. Certainly.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of the Senator from Hawaii, the Senator from Washington and the Senator from New York be recognized on this side to speak, and if there are Senators on the Republican side who wish to speak, that they be interspersed with those three Senators.

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

The Senator from Hawaii.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I thank the chairman and the ranking member for their leadership in bringing about changes that will make a huge difference in the military and in our country as well. Later today, I intend to offer, along with my good friend and

ranking member of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Senator CRAIG, an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 that would complement the outstanding work already done by the Armed Services Committee with the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment.

Our amendment seeks to enhance the care servicemembers receive once they transition to veteran status. It would improve the capability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to care for veterans with traumatic brain injuries. It would also improve access to VA mental health and dental care, address the issue of homelessness among newly discharged servicemembers, and recognize the importance of the National Guard and Reserve in the VA's outreach programs.

This amendment is a direct outcome of the close collaboration between the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Armed Services Committee following our April 12 joint hearing. I was delighted to work with Chairman LEVIN of the Armed Services Committee, Ranking Member CRAIG of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and others on this important amendment. I also thank Senators ROCKEFELLER, MURRAY, OBAMA, BROWN, and MIKULSKI for their cosponsorship of the amendment.

Our amendment includes provisions recently approved by the Committee on Veterans' Affairs at our markup on June 27 and represents the VA Committee's work to address the seamless-transition issues in collaboration with the Armed Services Committee's work on S. 1606, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act. Our actions here today, Mr. President, represent true collaboration between the two committees—a model for how the Department of Veterans Affairs and Defense should be working together.

At the heart of our amendment are improvements to TBI care. Ranking Member CRAIG and I worked on these TBI provisions, and they have garnered the support of many organizations, including the American Academy of Neurology, the Brain Injury Association of America, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and the Disabled American Veterans.

The VA was caught flatfooted by the large number of devastating TBIs resulting from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our amendment would require individual rehabilitation plans for veterans with TBI and authorize the use of non-VA facilities for the best TBI care available. It would require the VA to implement and research an education program for severe TBI through coordination with other Federal entities conducting similar research. There is also a pilot program for assisted-living services for veterans with TBI. This is comprehensive TBI legislation.

The amendment also addresses the amount of time a newly discharged servicemember has to take advantage of the unfettered access to VA care for

which they are eligible. Under current law, any Active-Duty servicemember who is discharged or separated from active duty following deployment to a theater of combat operations, including members of the Guard and Reserve, is eligible for VA health care for a 2-year period without reference to any other criteria. Our amendment would extend this period to 5 years.

There are two primary reasons for allowing a greater period of eligibility: protection from budget cuts and ensuring access to care for health concerns—such as mental health or readjustment problems—that may not be readily apparent when a servicemember leaves active duty. In recent years, funding for VA health care has too often been delayed by the legislative and appropriations process, leading to delayed or denied care for veterans with lower priorities for VA care. Veterans who have served in a combat theater deserve to have their health care guaranteed for at least the 5 years immediately following their discharge.

With regard specifically to mental health and readjustment issues, 2 years is often insufficient time for symptoms related to PTSD and other mental illnesses to manifest themselves. In many cases, it takes years for these invisible wounds to present themselves, and many servicemembers do not immediately seek care. Experts predict that up to 30 percent of OIF and OEF servicemembers will need some type of readjustment service. Five years would provide a more appropriate window in which to address these risks. With over 1.4 million Americans having served in OIF and OEF and with over 600,000 of those members already eligible for VA health care because they have left active duty or, in the case of Reserve Forces, have been demobilized, extending this eligibility will help smooth their transition to civilian life.

To further address the mental health needs of separating servicemembers, we have included a provision in our amendment that would require the VA to provide a preliminary mental health examination within 30 days of a veteran's request for it.

I thank Senator OBAMA for his work on this provision.

We have learned from past wars that the longer mental health needs go unmet, the more difficult and extended the recovery.

Additionally, as servicemembers separate from active duty and become veterans, the threat of homelessness always exists as they reintegrate into society.

We have all heard the sad and shocking statistic that one out of every three homeless persons on the street at any given time is a veteran.

To further assist transitioning service members, our amendment requires the VA to conduct a demonstration project to identify those who are at risk of becoming homeless upon discharge or release from active duty. The demonstration project would provide

referral, counseling, and support services for these individuals.

It has been proven through previous VA efforts that this process can reduce the incidence of homelessness and other problems among veterans.

This amendment also addresses the issue of the VA's outreach to members of the Guard and Reserves.

In the ongoing global operations, the reserve components have been used on an unprecedented scale. When these citizen soldiers redeploy and demobilize it is essential that the VA include them in outreach efforts.

To recognize the importance of the Guard and Reserve, and to acknowledge their contribution to the Nation's efforts, this amendment would redefine the VA's definition of outreach to include specific reference to the Guard and Reserve.

Finally, the amendment also addresses VA dental care for separating servicemembers by extending the window to apply for VA dental benefits following discharge from active duty. This amendment extends from 90 days to 180 days the application period for such benefits.

Recently returned servicemembers face significant readjustment, and dental concerns may not be a top priority. In addition, members of the National Guard and Reserve are often given 90 days of leave following discharge from active duty, and, upon return to their units, the opportunity to apply for dental benefits has passed.

The extension to 180 days would improve access to care and facilitate smoother transition from military to civilian life.

Our amendment touches on many of the issues that are affecting transitioning servicemembers and newest veterans. It truly complements the outstanding work that was done by the Armed Services Committee to take care of wounded warriors. I urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment when it comes before the Senate. Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. I know Senator MURRAY is going to be recognized now under our existing unanimous consent agreement. I ask, after she is recognized and after Senator SCHUMER, who is also in the sequence, is recognized, that Senator CARPER of Delaware be recognized following Senator SCHUMER.

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

The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator ISAKSON be added as a cosponsor of this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. McCASKILL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, it is an honor to me to be here today to speak about the amendment that is currently before the Senate, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors

Act. This is a critically important amendment for the Senate and a critically important action for Congress and for the United States of America in finally making sure that we take care of those who have served this country so honorably, the men and women who are serving us overseas.

Madam President, 4½ years ago, the President asked Congress to go to war in Iraq. I stood on this floor as one of a handful of Senators, 23 of us who, at that time, said no. I said no because I didn't believe we had a clear mission. I didn't believe we should take our eye off the ball of the war on terror and the al-Qaida threat that was confronting our Nation, and I believed we did not have in place a long-term plan for military action in Iraq. I have never regretted that vote.

But when I spoke on the floor opposing the action of the President, I said once our troops were sent to war, no matter how we voted on it, it was our responsibility to make sure we took care of them when they came home. This country has failed to do that.

I had to sit out here on the Senate floor and fight, literally, vote after vote to get this Senate to pay attention to the fact that we had men and women coming home, waiting in long lines to get their VA benefits, who were not able to get an appointment to see a doctor, who were unemployed, who were being sent back to the front time and time again, whose families were falling through the cracks because of the long deployments, and that we had military facilities that were incapable of dealing with the thousands of men and women who were coming home and who were injured.

Today, finally, we are coming to a point where, through the hard work of our VA Committee, Armed Services, and others, we have brought to the Senate a bipartisan amendment that I hope passes overwhelmingly this afternoon, that begins to address the critical needs which our soldiers are facing.

Since this war began 4½ years ago, I have taken the time to stop and talk to our men and women when they have come home. I have seen the tears in their eyes as they wait on medical hold not for days, not for months, but for more than a year, fighting the very service they swore to serve, to get their benefits. They were given ratings that were far too low in order to keep them in the military rather than allowing them to get out and get on with their lives. I have talked to men and women on medical hold, who were trying to get through a complex system of ratings for help, whose advocates themselves, advocates to help them get through the system, were soldiers who had post-traumatic stress syndrome and had difficulty themselves dealing with their own lives, let alone advocating for a servicemember who is trying to get through a complex system.

I have talked personally to men and women who, after not once, not twice,

but maybe dozens, if not more than 100 times, being close to explosives, came home and couldn't understand why they couldn't remember their children's names or where they put their car keys or even where they lived because they had traumatic brain injury, but no one had diagnosed it correctly.

I have talked to too many parents and spouses and family members who have told me horrific stories of their very proud servicemember who has come home, left the service, and been left at home medically dealing themselves drugs because they have post-traumatic stress syndrome and no one had taken the time to find them or their family to educate them about the services they need.

When we agree to this legislation, this amendment today, we will finally have taken a very direct step in helping the men and women who have served this country so honorably.

Madam President, 4½ years ago, when the President asked us to go to war in Iraq, he talked about weapons of mass destruction, he talked about al-Qaida, he talked about the mission to fight the war on terror—but what he has never talked about, in my opinion, is taking care of those men and women who have served us honorably. Today, the Senate is going to talk about those men and women who have served us and what we need to do for them.

Several months ago, Bob Woodruff presented an amazing television series to us about traumatic brain injury and its impact on men and women as they make their way through medical hold and finally go out and get into communities and are lost in the system. Traumatic brain injury is not something that can be treated today and you are fine tomorrow. It is a lifelong, debilitating injury. We do not have out in the country today the capability of making sure those men and women are not lost.

We have seen too many times, when men and women who have post-traumatic stress syndrome can't keep a job, and they find themselves at home and, tragically, cases of suicide because of that.

We have to address the costs and the issues that face our men and women, and proudly stand here and make sure we are doing everything we can. This year, with the Democratically controlled majority, we have finally moved forward for the first time to put in place a strong budget to take care of our veterans. We have finally, for the first time when we passed the supplemental war spending, actually added dollars to care for our veterans.

Today the step we are taking has more to do with the policies these men and women fight when they come home. They are in a system in the service that rates them one way, and when they finally get discharged, they go through a veterans system that rates them in an entirely different way. The two systems do not talk to each other. They do not electronically talk to each

other. Soldiers lose their medical forms. They are fighting systems. They can't get the benefits they deserve because they are fighting paperwork.

No one should fight for our country overseas and come home and have to fight paperwork. That is what this amendment will do, is make sure, finally, that the VA and the DOD speak in the same language and treat these men and women as a single person and not just a pile of paperwork.

This amendment has teeth. It will require the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs for the very first time to come back to us by January 1 of next year with a series of comprehensive policies that will make sure our rating systems are the same; that their electronic systems that track our men and women speak to each other; that no one gets lost because their advocate is dealing with his or her own health care issues. It will make sure we can go back with pride to the men and women who have served us and say we have made a tremendous effort for them.

We have seen partisan battles through many years on the floor of the Senate. Today we are going to see a time when we come together as Republicans and Democrats to say there is one group of Americans who deserve us to speak with one voice, and that is the men and women who have served us. Regardless of how we feel about this war, regardless of how we want to end it—I want to end it more than anyone—I want to make sure the men and women who served us are taken care of. This amendment makes a dramatic step forward.

I think it is important to know, even if we were able to get enough votes to end this war today, the men and women who have served us will need our help and our support and our dollars for years to come—whether they have lost a limb, whether they have traumatic brain injury, whether they have post-traumatic stress syndrome. They have borne the burden of this war. It is incumbent upon this country to bear the burden of their care. This amendment takes a major step forward, and I hope today we have 100 percent of the Senators on the floor saying yes to the men and women who served us so honorably.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, before the Senator from New York is recognized under our unanimous consent agreement, I especially thank the Senator from Washington. She has been one extraordinary advocate for this cause of our veterans. She is a symbol of the effort that so many people in this Senate have put into this legislation, but I just want to especially identify her because she, along with Senator AKAKA and other members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has joined with us as one. I thank her particularly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. I would ask my friend, the chairman, if perhaps we might, after the Senator from Washington is recognized, by unanimous consent, go through the managers' amendments following that and then proceed with the debate, or is the Senator from New York also recognized?

Mr. LEVIN. The sequence is the Senator from New York, then the Senator from Delaware. But how long will this take?

Mr. MCCAIN. For us to go through the package, a maximum of 3 or 4 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Are we ready with the list?

Mr. MCCAIN. If that is all right, maybe between the two Senators we can do it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first, I wish to thank both my colleague from Michigan, who does such a profoundly great effort on these proposals and these bills, for the thought and the care and the sensibility that goes into it. I also wished to say that my colleague from Washington, I wished to add my voice, she has been a clarion voice, talking about veterans and their needs and their care long before the issue was front and center, long before the Walter Reed scandal emerged, long before we were able to take over the Senate and put the money of this Nation where its voice has been, and that is behind our veterans.

Now, the amendment that was offered that my colleague from Washington talked about, the dignified treatment of wounded warriors, to honor those who serve us with medical care and treatment they need is another opportunity to demonstrate our support for our troops.

I hope my colleagues will all join us in this amendment and do what is right for those who serve. Unfortunately, yesterday, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle blocked another effort to support our troops with appropriate time at home between deployments. Yesterday they blocked Senator WEBB's amendment addressing the serious challenges our military is facing both abroad and home.

I am disappointed that most of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle felt it was more important to simply go along with the wishes of the President than support our troops, the brave men and women who are fighting for us in Afghanistan and Iraq.

We are putting our most valuable military resource at risk by failing to provide our troops with the resources they need to complete their mission. By that, I mean we are not allowing them enough time to recover in between their deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

My State is home to one of the Nation's finest military academies, if not the finest in the United States, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

West Point produces many of our military's finest leaders.

But while West Point continues to produce excellent soldiers, the Army is unable to keep them. Unfortunately, graduates of West Point are leaving the military at five times the rate they did before the Iraq war. Roughly half of the West Point classes of 2000 and 2001 have left the Army. That is an extremely severe indictment of the President's policies in Iraq.

When these patriots, these young men and women who want to serve their country and enroll in this great institution leave so quickly, which has been uncharacteristic, it says something very severe about the wrong direction our Nation's military policy is pursuing.

That is not all. This January, 3,200 members of the valiant 10th Mountain Division, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, stationed in Fort Drum, NY, learned that their tour had been extended by 4 months. They had been fighting in Afghanistan for nearly 12 months and found out, right as they were to come home, they would have to remain in Afghanistan for an additional 4 months.

That is why I supported Senator WEBB's amendment. We have asked so much of our brave men and women who continue to sacrifice their lives and place themselves in harm's way to defend our Nation. At the current troop rotation rate, we are simply running our troops into the ground.

This hurts us at home, both in declining retention rates and the rise of mental health issues associated with multiple deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan.

As I have said before, I am disappointed that some have felt it was more important to support the President than to support the troops, the brave men and women who are fighting for us in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But despite the refusal of the other side to join us in the Webb amendment, Congress will not stop supporting our troops, as we carry on the fight to transform our failing policy in Iraq to a mission that reflects the current situation on the ground.

When the President vetoed our supplemental spending bill, we vowed that we would continue to ratchet up the pressure as the President becomes more and more isolated in his views. Well, here we are. This week we in Congress continue to work toward a solution in Iraq that changes our mission from policing a civil war to more on what should be our first and foremost goal, counterterrorism. Now the pressure on this administration is rising as the people speak out and demand change and more and more Republicans are joining with us and the Democratic Congress in looking toward a change in mission for our troops.

As more Republicans join us in our fight to transform the mission on the ground, the President has only responded with threats and empty rhet-

oric. So let me be clear: President Bush has to realize we are not going to give up our goal of changing our mission. We will not back down, we will not be deterred, we will not rest until the mission changes; that mission that costs \$10 billion a month, because this administration has continued to pursue its policy in fear, empty words, charges that people are not patriotic, charges that people are not supporting the troops, even though that is exactly what we are trying to do here and have been doing. That is not going to work. This debate is not going away.

Even though the President continues to stall, telling the country to wait until September when his general issues a report that everyone else in our country and around the world already seems to know, that our current policy in Iraq is not working, we will move now to change the course in Iraq.

The President would be wise to work with us to change the mission now, not wait until September when this report is issued. If the report had any degree of honesty or integrity, it will show that the mission is not working.

I speak to soldiers all the time, from NCOs and privates to one- and two-star generals. So many of them, when they talk to you privately, believe the mission is not, cannot, and will not work. It seems almost everyone knows this. There are many in the military, particularly in the higher ranks, who are loyal to the President, as they should be; he is the Commander in Chief, but in the hearts and minds of so many of our soldiers, they know the policy is not working.

Every day that we wait, our troops continue to be caught in the dangerous crosshairs of a civil war; every day that we wait, the American people grow more dissatisfied with our failed strategy; every day we wait, more members of your party realize we must change course and call for it.

So the Senate, led by Chairman LEVIN and our great military expert in this body, the only West Point graduate in this body, Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island, the Senate has an opportunity to send the President even tougher language regarding our policies regarding Iraq.

This amendment does all the right things. It changes the current mission to force protection, training Iraqi security forces, and performing targeted counterterrorism operations. But it also calls for a substantial reduction in our forces in Iraq by next April, and it requires these changes. It is not laudatory, wishful thinking such as some of the other amendments. It is the only amendment that is before us that requires a change of course in Iraq.

That is the right policy for many reasons. First, our troops are caught in the middle of a civil war in Iraq. They patrol the streets of Baghdad, while Sunnis and Shias shoot at one another. Our soldiers are caught in the crossfire. That is not where they belong; a point

that I, along with many of my colleagues, have been making for a long time.

It is clear the Sunnis, the Shias, and the Kurds dislike each other more than they like any central government of Iraq. No number of American troops will change that no matter how hard they try and how valiant they are. The Sunnis, Shias and Kurds also have to work this out for themselves.

Second, we need to focus on Afghanistan, where the planning for 9/11 took place, where al-Qaida is growing in strength. We are not nearly doing enough in Afghanistan to counteract the ever-increasing production of opium there, a problem that threatens the ever fragile Government.

Not only does opium production fuel the heroin trade around the globe, but the heroin funds terrorists who aim to attack the United States and our allies around the world.

Our soldiers have fought long and hard to rid Afghanistan of terrorists and Taliban. However, as the drug trade continues to surge and consume the Nation, their heroic efforts may be undone. The Taliban draws its strength from the drug trade in order to prevent them from reclaiming the country. We need to crack down on the drugs that fuel their regime.

Secretary Chertoff's report said al-Qaida is stronger today than it was before 9/11. That is as severe an indictment of the President's Iraq policy as there could be. The very forces who struck us on 9/11 are growing stronger in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, and around the world, while we are bogged down in Iraq.

Could there be any fact that demands change more than that? We were attacked on 9/11 by al-Qaida. The next day, 2 days, 3 days later, I was there as the President stood on that pile of rubble and took the megaphone from the firefighter and said: We will beat al-Qaida and we will beat the terrorists.

They are now stronger than they were before that day. What is wrong? Characteristically and depressingly, the President said al-Qaida is actually weaker than before 9/11, contradicting the report released by his Secretary of Homeland Security.

The President says al-Qaida is weaker. The Secretary of Homeland Security has issued a report saying they are stronger. This is so typically unfortunate of this administration. This is a rerun of the weapons of mass destruction issue that occurred long ago. Make up your mind on what you want to do, ignore all the facts, and no matter what the people around you say, no matter what the American people say, vote for it.

Unfortunately, we have become bogged down in a civil war in Iraq no one has bargained for, as al-Qaida grows stronger in other parts of the world. Being caught in the crosshairs of a sectarian struggle not only puts our troops in harm's way, it means we are not focusing our resources, our en-

ergy, and our soldiers on what is the most important thing, which is defeating al-Qaida and terrorists.

Our mission today was not the original mission, and that is why we must change, why it must change to put the focus back on counterterrorism. Every day we continue to follow the President's Iraq policy is another day al-Qaida can strengthen.

That is not just my assessment. That is the feeling of this Congress, including more and more Members on the other side of the aisle; it is the feeling of a majority of the American people and so many in the intelligence agencies.

Today, the President claimed there are some signs of success in Iraq. But this administration's sign of success is very different than most peoples'. The Government of Iraq has failed to meet few of the legislative benchmarks set out by the administration itself. Violence in Baghdad and across Iraq continues unabated. Thousands of refugees are fleeing Iraq every day. Iran continues to support efforts to destabilize the region. Yet the administration still refuses to admit we need to change our failing policy in Iraq.

President Bush and his few remaining allies continue to cling to the fiction that our present course can somehow turn the situation around. The American people know better. This Congress knows better. That is why we keep pushing and pushing and pushing to change the mission in Iraq to one that reflects the reality on the ground.

I urge all my colleagues to support the Levin-Reed amendment. It is the only amendment that requires a change in direction in Iraq. All of the others have good intentions, but they are hortatory. They are offered with good intentions, but they allow people to say: I want a change in policy, but I am not going to force the President to do so. The American people know better. They know that if you really want to change the course of what we are doing in Iraq and change the course in the war on terror, then you must support Levin-Reed. You can't stand for something that says: Well, please, Mr. President, consider doing this, as the other amendments do, because the President won't. The President has been intransigent despite all of the facts on the ground. It is clear this administration has lost its way in Iraq, and this amendment charts the right course forward and requires them to follow it. Despite the stubbornness of the administration, despite their continuing to ignore what is happening in this world, we need to transform our mission in Iraq, and we must do it now.

I hope, I pray, for the future of our war on terror and for the future of this country, that the Levin-Reed amendment gets the required 60 votes and we move forward as a nation together and set our policy right once and for all.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, Senator CARPER had to leave the Chamber for a moment. I ask unanimous consent that Senator DURBIN now be recognized and then Senator CARPER be recognized under the sequence previously ordered. That is always subject to a Republican coming because they would be interspersed among the listed Senators on this side of the aisle.

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

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I salute the Senator from Michigan. As chairman of the Armed Services Committee, he brings an important bill to the floor. This is a bill which decides how we are going to authorize funds for America's military. We are enjoying the blessings of liberty in this country because of men and women in uniform who are willing to fight and die and keep this land free. This bill each year tries to make certain they have the resources to fight and be effective, to keep America safe. It is a huge responsibility with which this committee and this chairman have been entrusted. I thank the chairman, Senator LEVIN, and his Republican counterpart, Senator MCCAIN, for their fine work.

I wish to echo the words said by Senator SCHUMER about the amendments before us. One of the most important elements of this debate is what is going to happen in Iraq. If we don't make a decision in Congress to change the direction in Iraq, we all know what will occur. President Bush has made it clear. He has said he will leave it to the next President to start removing troops. That means 18 more months of war. It means 18 more months of American casualties. It means 18 more months of expense for American taxpayers. It means a war that will continue with no end in sight. We have it within our power in the Senate through this bill to change that course, to have a new direction in Iraq.

I will support the amendment offered by Senator LEVIN and Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island. They have been two of our best leaders on this issue because they are so committed to it and study it so carefully. They have it right.

The Levin-Reed amendment says that within 120 days, American soldiers will start coming home. It says that by April 1 of next year, our mission will change. We will no longer have a combat force protecting Iraq. We will have specific, defined missions. Our combat forces will come out. We will be there to fight the al-Qaida terrorists, to train Iraqi soldiers, and to protect American assets and the American soldiers who are coming home. That is it. At that point, the Iraqis have to take over. It is their country. It is their future. At some point, they have to stand up and assume the responsibility. The Levin-Reed amendment says explicitly that is what we are going to do.

There are many other amendments that will be considered. Some of my

closest friends are going to offer amendments. Senator KEN SALAZAR and Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER have a bipartisan amendment to bring in the Iraq Study Group approach. There is nothing wrong with the Iraq Study Group. We praised the Iraq Study Group when they made their report last December. Had the President lived by their recommendations, we might be in a different place at this moment in time. But we are not. We are embroiled in this war, and we need to change it.

I have read the Salazar-Alexander amendment in its entirety. I can tell you that if you vote for this amendment, not a single soldier will come home, not one. They leave to the President the authority to make the decision about when to end this war. We know what his view is. This President is out of touch with the reality in Iraq. He is out of touch with the American people. The Salazar-Alexander amendment will not change that. The Levin-Reed amendment will. It will say to the President that the American people, through their elected representatives in the Senate, want to change this policy, and we will do it by law. That is the way to change it, not by sending a message to the President hoping for the best.

I will support the Levin-Reed amendment. I believe the Salazar-Alexander amendment would have been a good thing to do a year ago when the Iraq Study Group issued its report. Today, it doesn't reach the result we want to reach in an effective time.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019

I would like to thank the chairman and ranking member for their work on the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act being offered today as an amendment to the Defense authorization bill. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this effort.

I also would like to thank Senators WARNER, MURRAY, GRAHAM, OBAMA, WEBB, HAGEL, CANTWELL, CLINTON, and BAUCUS, who are co-sponsors of my Military and Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Act—much of which is included in the amendment before us today.

Traumatic brain injury is the signature injury of the Iraq war. The widespread use of Improvised Explosive Devices, IEDs, has taken a terrible toll. Even those who have walked off the battlefield without visible scars often find they have suffered the internal trauma of a traumatic brain injury.

The provisions from my bill that have been included in this amendment will reduce the number of our wounded soldiers who fall through the cracks and are left to fend for themselves as they struggle to recover from a traumatic brain injury.

We have made tremendous progress in battlefield medical care.

During Vietnam, one in three service members who were injured died. In Iraq and Afghanistan, 1 in 16 who are injured die. But with the changes in war-

fare and in medical technology, more of our service members are coming home with serious brain injuries from Iraq and Afghanistan than from any other recent conflicts.

For some of these wounded warriors, the greatest battle comes at home when they seek care. Many of these returning troops need long-term treatment and rehabilitation long after their discharge from active duty, as they fight to overcome the severe disabilities that a traumatic brain injury can cause.

For others, there is a different story. Some service members don't even realize they have suffered a traumatic brain injury until long after their discharge, because we don't do a very good job of identifying and treating those who may have suffered a brain injury.

Fortunately, many of those who suffer a brain injury are able to recover fairly quickly. But for some, the experience is life-altering, even life-shattering. We must not fail them in their time of need.

Consider the case of SGT Eric Edmundson. In October 2005, he suffered a severe head concussion when a roadside bomb exploded near him. He was cared for at Walter Reed Hospital, but then was transferred to a VA facility where he and his family felt he was not receiving the kind of treatment that would allow him to continue to make progress in rehabilitation.

He would have been stuck there if the family had not found a creative way to obtain the care he needed by ensuring that Eric could receive treatment and rehabilitation at one of the premiere rehabilitation hospitals in the nation: the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. Two weeks ago, I attended a ceremony at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago in which Eric walked out of the hospital.

Now consider the case of SGT Garrett Anderson of Champaign, IL. Garrett went to Iraq with the Illinois National Guard. After 4 months there, an IED exploded next to his armored humvee in Baghdad. The blast tore off his right arm below the elbow, shattered his jaw, severed part of his tongue, damaged his hearing, and punctured his body with shrapnel.

He spent 7 months at Walter Reed, where he received excellent care in Ward 57, the famous amputee ward. However, the outpatient care that followed has been filled with paperwork and redtape. It was months before the VA recognized that Garrett had suffered a traumatic brain injury, and he has not received the kind of treatment for brain injury that could make a significant difference in the trajectory of his rehabilitation.

We need to change the way we handle patients with traumatic brain injury, so that they receive the care they need at the time they need it, and the provisions from my Military and Veterans Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Act that have been included in this amendment will do just that.

These provisions include: requiring the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of the Veterans Administration, to develop a comprehensive program to prevent, diagnose, mitigate, treat, and otherwise respond to traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder; and requiring predeployment cognitive screening as a baseline for evaluating potential brain injuries.

Other principles from my bill have been included in this broader amendment to apply to all service members, and not only those who have suffered from traumatic brain injuries. For example, this amendment would require: a uniform policy and procedures to ease a service member's transition from the DOD to VA; a 3-year period in which a medically retired service member can obtain the same medical benefits as those on active duty; a joint electronic health record for DOD and VA; and outreach to members and their families regarding the benefits to which they are entitled.

Indeed, we must do much more for all of our wounded warriors, and the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment is a comprehensive policy governing their care. This bipartisan amendment also would require: medical care and job placement services for family members providing care for severely injured service members; establishment of Centers of Excellence in the prevention, diagnosis, mitigation, treatment, and rehabilitation of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder; improvements in the disability system for service members; and improved housing facilities for injured patients.

Our Nation's service members deserve swift action on this effort to improve the treatment they will receive if they are wounded or suffer a traumatic brain injury.

I can't imagine the anguish that must be associated with such an injury, but I can imagine the kind of medical system I would like to have in place if it were my son or daughter struggling to recover from such an injury. This legislation reflects that vision.

I thank all of my colleagues who have contributed to this legislation and I urge all Senators to support this measure.

I wish to elaborate on a story as to why I have added provisions in this amendment. This is about American soldiers coming home who are wounded and how they are treated. Those of us—and I think it includes almost everyone in the Senate who has taken the time to go to military hospitals and VA hospitals—know that, sadly, after promising to these men and women that if they will take the oath to defend America, we will stand by them when they come home, we have broken our promise time and again.

This story illustrates why this is needed and why I have added some language which I hope will help. It is the

story of a brave young soldier named Eric Edmundson, 7 years in the Army, 27 years of age, who suffered a traumatic brain injury in Iraq. As a result of that injury, he went through surgery, and during the course of surgery, there was a problem: His brain was deprived of oxygen for a period of time. He was rushed to Walter Reed Hospital, where he went through more surgery and more effort and then finally was discharged from Walter Reed to Richmond, VA, to the VA hospital. Eric went into that hospital in a very bad state. He really hadn't made much of a recovery. His father, his mother, his wife, and his sister were all by his side praying for the best and hoping for the best treatment.

After a period of time, the people at the Richmond VA hospital came to the family and said: We have bad news about Eric. We need for you to pick out a wheelchair because he is going to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair in a nursing home. His father says not only no, but hell no; I am going to fight for my son; he is not going to spend the rest of his life sitting in this wheelchair. His father quit his job in North Carolina and became a full-time advocate for his son, this fallen soldier. He fought the Government to make sure his son had the best. Let me tell you what happened.

Eventually, he went on the Internet and found the Rehab Institute of Chicago, one of the best. He insisted that his son go to this rehab institute. The Government said they wouldn't pay for it. He said: I am sending him anyway. He had him admitted and finally persuaded the Government to start paying for his treatment.

Ten weeks ago, I walked into the hospital room of Eric Edmundson. Here was this bright, smiling young man sitting in a wheelchair. He followed me with his eyes as I walked into the room, and I stood before him and said: Eric, how are you doing? He can't speak. He just smiled, looked at me, and nothing happened.

Four weeks ago, I went back to that hospital room to visit with the family and this young soldier. His mom and dad said: Eric has a present for you. I thought: What could this be? They walked over and they propped him up by his elbows, and he took four steps. There wasn't a dry eye in that hospital room. We were all crying, including Eric. He was walking.

His dad said to me—and this was right before Memorial Day: A month from now, he is going to walk out of the front door of this hospital. I was there on June 30, the day of his official discharge. Eric Edmundson walked out of the front door of that hospital. He had been given up on by a VA system that didn't have the 35 years of experience the Rehab Institute of Chicago has. He had been given up on by so many others. But America can't give up on these soldiers. We can't relegate a 27-year-old soldier to a lifetime in a nursing home because we are afraid to

refer him to the best hospital in America. That is wrong.

This amendment will help. This amendment for our wounded warriors will help them move forward in the system and have greater opportunities. Sad to say, it doesn't go far enough. There has to be a point in this system where the military hospitals of America and the VA hospitals will concede there may be a better hospital for this soldier, this sailor, this marine, this airman, and we cannot deny them that care. We have to give them that care. This bill doesn't include that. I am disappointed.

We asked these brave young men and women to fight our enemies overseas. They shouldn't come home wounded and have to fight their Government. That is what the Edmundson family had to do. We should make certain no other family of any other soldier ever faces that in the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, there was an agreement previously that we would alternate back and forth. If that is what Senator ISAKSON is seeking to implement, they have a right to do so. I would note to Senator CARPER that we did agree that if a Republican did wish to speak, they would be recognized in an alternate way.

I ask unanimous consent that the following sequence be accepted for the Democratic Senators, subject to that same understanding that Republican Senators would be interspersed: After Senator CARPER, Senator MCCASKILL, Senator BROWN, and then Senator LINCOLN would be the order on this side.

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

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, in relation to that unanimous consent, I ask unanimous consent that following the presentation by Senator CARPER from Delaware, Senator HUTCHISON of Texas be the next one recognized on our side.

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

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, we have had a tenuous debate, and it is going to go a while. I first commend Senator LEVIN on this amendment. I am proud to be a cosponsor of it. Although we have differences on many things, I don't think there is a difference in this Chamber on the provision of services and health care to our wounded warriors as they come home. As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have been pleased to work with Senator AKAKA and Senator CRAIG on many of the provisions in this legislation. I thank Senator CARPER for allowing me to take a few minutes.

I appreciate the remarks by the Senator from Illinois about what he has done in this bill. As I listened to many of the discussions about the things we need to fix, I think sometimes we forget to remember all the things we are doing well. I wish to talk about two things.

One, I wish to let the men and women of the U.S. Department of Defense medical services and the Veterans' Administration know how much I appreciate what they are trying to do and what they have been trying to do. Let me illustrate that by telling a very brief story.

I go to Walter Reed periodically anytime there is a wounded Georgia veteran there. I also see other veterans, but I make it a point to make sure that the parents or a spouse of every one of those veterans has my phone number and knows they have an advocate in Washington as long as they are at Walter Reed.

One of my visits to Walter Reed just happened to be on the Monday following the breakout of the story about building 19 or 18, the building that was in bad shape. That was a national story and reflected poorly on Walter Reed and on us.

When I got there, I first went to visit Corporal Pearson, a Georgian, actually from my home county, who had been wounded. I gave him my phone number, and asked for his father's phone number. I left from there to go to see Building 18. I went over there and saw the condition Building 18 was in, and I, too, knew we could do much better.

On the way to my office at Russell, I called from my car on my cell phone to the corporal's father and left a message for him to call me back. He called me that night. I told him how much I appreciated his son's service, and I wanted him to know, while he and his wife were in Georgia and his son was at Walter Reed, they could use me as a family member, if they would, to give them any assistance he might need at the hospital.

He thanked me for that. He said: Senator ISAKSON, just do one thing for me. I have been watching all this on the news about that building, and I am sorry about that, but if anybody asks you, tell them my son has been in Walter Reed for 10 days, and my wife and I were with him every day until yesterday, and I have never seen anybody receive finer care.

I pass that on not to in any way mask those places where we do have difficulties and need improvement—many of them recognized in this particular amendment—but as we talk about things we want to make better, we cannot forget that day in and day out the loyal American service men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces medical corps at Walter Reed and in the VA who are doing a phenomenal, lifesaving job, a better job than has ever been done in the history of warfare. I want to put in that compliment and pat on the back for them.

Secondly, with regard to the wounded warrior amendment, this addresses so many things we have learned from the trauma of the types of wounds that are coming from the type of warfare we are fighting in Iraq. We are saving so many more of our wounded warriors on the battlefield, but because of that we

have many more who need long-time care, long-time attention, and specific attention. This wounded warrior amendment goes a long way toward doing that.

I particularly compliment the authors of the amendment, and all of us on the Veterans Committee, on the new referral system that is put in here for the diagnosis of PTSD, and how that has been greatly improved in the number of people who can actually make that referral back to Veterans Affairs or the Veterans' Administration or back to DOD, if they are still on active duty.

I also want to brag for a second about General Shoomaker at Walter Reed. One of the things we talk about—and Senator DURBIN's remarks addressed this—is the difficulty we have been having with the handoff of health care from leaving DOD to going to the VA. That has been a problem, and we have a record number of people who are being handed off once their service is over, while they still have treatment necessary, from DOD to VA.

General Shoomaker was at Fort Gordon in Georgia prior to coming to Walter Reed, when he was asked to come in and straighten out the difficulties Walter Reed had. While at Fort Gordon, General Shoomaker had been the real catalyst for what is said in the military to be the best seamless transfer of wounded warriors from DOD to the Veterans Administration.

Today, now, for those who are coming home with amputations, who are in need of long-term therapy, long-term treatment, long-term care, who go from active duty, are severed honorably, to go into veterans status, they have created a seamless transfer in that rehab at Augusta, which is recognized as second to none. I know the recommendations in this amendment which will be adopted by this body will go a long way toward improving the systems by which those transfers take place.

I am pleased to rise to thank those in our military and the care they give, and know there are areas where we can do better. I commend Senator LEVIN and the many cosponsors of this particular amendment for all the work and time that has gone into it.

As we have a very tenuous and difficult debate, it is important for the American people to know every Member of this Congress appreciates the care that is given by our military doctors and our military medical personnel and understands we can do better. As we deal with the trauma that comes from the type of conflict we are now in, this wounded warriors amendment will see to it that the care, the referral, the diagnosis, the treatment, and the transfer are better now than they have ever been before.

Mr. President, I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask to be advised when I have consumed 20 minutes of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will so notify the Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Thank you, Mr. President.

I come today to address the Chamber and our colleagues on the subject of cost-effective airlift in the 21st century. Before I do that, though, I wish to preface my remarks with this:

Today, we have received an interim report from the administration on whether progress is being made in Iraq—specifically, progress with respect to the 18 benchmarks that were required in legislation we enacted in May of this year. From the news accounts this morning, there are few surprises. The U.S. military, as expected, is doing its job—a tough job. The problem is, the Iraqi Government and too many of its elected leaders are not.

The Iraqi Parliament remains hamstrung by profound, seemingly irreconcilable differences. Despite months of American prodding, the Iraqi lawmakers have yet to agree on any of the major issues before them: how to share oil wealth, how to share power, when to schedule elections, de-Baathification, how to settle the sectarian differences that so badly divide their country.

We also have news this morning that al-Qaida is once again on the move, bringing to the forefront how the President's policies in Iraq have effectively created not fewer terrorists but more and, unfortunately, made our country, I fear, less safe.

According to U.S. intelligence estimates, al-Qaida has rebuilt its operations to levels we have not seen since just before the September 11 attacks. These reports indicate that the al-Qaida network is regrouping along the Afghan-Pakistani border. The CIA says there is evidence of more training, more money, more communications, and increased activity among al-Qaida. The results of such activity, as we know too well, could be deadly.

This new report tells me we have diverted too many of our resources to fighting a war that simply cannot be won by military might alone, and in doing so we have lost ground on the war on terror. Osama bin Laden remains at large 6 years after 9/11, and has seemingly taken peaceful refuge somewhere in Afghanistan or Pakistan. That is unacceptable.

This week and next, we are going to be taking a series of votes on how best to change the course in Iraq and refocus our energy on where it belongs—rooting out al-Qaida and going after their terrorist networks abroad and at home in a way that makes sense and will better guarantee success.

Part of that means, beginning later this year, that we begin to redeploy a portion of our troops from Iraq to put additional pressure on, and encouragement for, the Iraqi Government to do what it must do to help bring peace to

their nation. Part of that means refocusing our efforts on how to win the war on terror, smoke out Osama bin Laden, and, in doing so, make our world a safer place.

I hope our President will work with our colleagues and with me to chart a winning course on the war on terror. We cannot get there alone. This is something we must do together.

Having said that, I want to now focus on cost-effective airlift in the 21st century.

The Senate is writing legislation this week intended to equip our Armed Forces to meet our national security threats and keep our country safe. Doing so is one of the foremost responsibilities of this body.

Our Armed Forces are charged with providing our Commander in Chief with flexible options for responding to a wide variety of threats across the globe. In Iraq, our Armed Forces are keeping the lid on a civil war and protecting civilians from terrorists.

In Korea, our Armed Forces are charged with guarding an ally's border and deterring aggression on the part of a large conventional military.

In the Pacific and the Persian Gulf, our Armed Forces protect American interests through the projection of naval power and carrier-based air power.

At home, our National Guard provides our Nation's Governors with critical response capability to cope with natural disaster, such as Hurricane Katrina.

At times, it can seem as though the demands on our military are practically limitless. Unfortunately, the resources available for equipping our military to meet these demands are not. At a time when our Federal budget remains mired in the red, we need to be looking for ways to meet our military requirements in a fiscally responsible manner.

I have come to the floor today to talk about one way we can do that. I have come to the floor, as I have said, to discuss cost-effective airlift in the 21st century.

Although the air men and women of our strategic airlift fleet rarely receive the attention they deserve, the reality is our military could not perform any of their missions I described if it were not for their hard work and dedication. Strategic airlift involves the use of cargo aircraft to move personnel, weaponry, and material over long distances—often to combat theaters on the other side of the globe. During Operation Desert Storm, U.S. aircraft moved over 500,000 troops and more than 540,000 tons of cargo. During the current war in Iraq, airlift sorties have made up the majority of the nearly 30,000 total sorties flown by U.S. military aircraft.

Strategic airlift enables our military to respond to threats wherever they occur in the world real time. Not only must our fighting men and women be transported to the fight, they must be continuously resupplied. Airlift makes that possible.

Most of the supplies, materiel, and weaponry moves abroad aboard ships. Almost all of our personnel and a good deal of cargo, however, are transported by aircraft. That airlift is provided by a combination of U.S. military airlift and commercial aircraft. The three military aircraft doing most of the heavy lifting are the C-5, the C-17, and the C-130. Together, they provide what I call an "air bridge"—an "air bridge"—to Iraq, Afghanistan, and to other troubled spots around the world.

Over the past 10 years, the United States has reduced its Cold War infrastructure and closed some two-thirds of its forward bases. Therefore, to maintain the same level of global engagement, U.S. forces must now deploy more frequently and over greater distances. Since 9/11, the scale and pace of operations has increased dramatically.

There have been several efforts in recent years to quantify our military's strategic airlift requirement. The most recent one is the Mobility Capabilities Study, which was commissioned by the Pentagon, and was completed in February of last year. It concluded that the Nation's airlift requirement could be met with a fleet of 112 C-5s and 180 C-17s.

Our current strategic airlift fleet—including aircraft currently flying and aircraft on order—consists of 111 C-5s and 190 C-17s. An update to the Mobility Capabilities Study included in the President's budget this year confirmed that this mix is sufficient to meet our airlift needs.

The problem at the moment is not that we have too few aircraft; the problem is that most of the C-5s in our airlift fleet are not as reliable as they could be. There are two ways in which we could choose to address this problem: One, we could fix the aircraft we have, or, two, we could purchase new aircraft.

Families face a similar choice when they have a problem with their car. Should they fix their car or should they buy a new one? Usually families make this decision based on one of three factors: Can the car they have be fixed? If it can, is it cheaper to fix than buying a new one? If the car can be fixed, and it is cheaper to fix than buying a new one, do they have so much money that they can afford—in spite of the greater cost—to go ahead and buy a new car anyhow?

We should ask ourselves the same question when it comes to paying for military aircraft within the confines of a responsible Federal budget.

Let's look at this first chart about meeting our Nation's airlift needs. We pose on the chart three questions: Can the aircraft we have be fixed? Can they be fixed for less than the cost of purchasing new aircraft? Or, finally, can we afford to buy new aircraft anyhow, even if it is unnecessary and more costly?

The answer to the first question is, yes, the aircraft can be fixed. The answer to the second question—can it be

fixed for less than purchasing a new aircraft—is, yes, it can. Can we afford to buy new aircraft anyhow, even though it is unnecessary and may be more costly? The answer to that, I believe, is no.

First, let's consider the question of whether the aircraft we have can be fixed. There are currently programs in place to fix C-5s. The C-5s are being upgraded with new engines, new hydraulics, new avionics, and more than 70 other improvements throughout the aircraft. The contractor responsible for these upgrades has committed to the Air Force that the improvements to these aircraft will result in at least a 75-percent mission capable rate. That is up from 60, 65 percent today.

If that level of reliability can be achieved, our current fleet of C-5s and C-17s is sufficient to meet our airlift needs now and for the foreseeable future. That is the conclusion of both the military's latest analyses of our airlift needs and an independent study done by the Institute for Defense Analyses. To date, 3 C-5s—one a C-5A and two of them C-5Bs—have received the complete upgrades that are eventually planned for the entire C-5 fleet. General Schwartz, who is commander of the U.S. Transportation Command, has said he is encouraged by the performance of these aircraft and believes the target mission-capable rate of at least 75 percent will be met and possibly exceeded. General Schwartz isn't the only one giving the modernized flights high praise.

One of the modernized B models came to the Dover Air Force Base about 2 months ago for their annual inspection. I had the opportunity to see it and talk to the crew. I asked one of the pilots aboard the aircraft who has some 4,000 flight hours on the C-5, "How does it fly?" His response: "Like a rocket."

While most acknowledge that C-5s can be fixed, there are those who argue that many of them are not worth fixing. I have heard two versions of this argument. The first is that even if most of the fleet can and should be fixed, at least 25 or 30 of the older C-5As are such "bad actors" that they should be retired. Unfortunately, those who have made this claim have done little to substantiate their claim. Congress has asked the Air Force to provide a list of these bad actors by tail number. To date, as far as I know, the Air Force has not done so. A recent analysis by the Congressional Research Service suggests a possible reason why. Perhaps these bad actors do not exist.

Let's look at this chart, my second chart here: The C-5 reliability argument. These are the words paraphrased from the Congressional Research Service: An examination of C-5 reliability and maintainability statistics for the past three fiscal years does not identify any obvious subset of the C-5 fleet that stands out as notably 'bad actors.'

The other version of the "some of the C-5s are not worth saving" argument draws a line in the sand, not between a

set of bad actors and the rest of the fleet but between the older C-5As and the newer C-5Bs. It is a common perception that the C-5As do not perform as well as the C-5Bs, but that perception again is contradicted by the facts. Again, to quote the CRS study, the recent CRS study—I think it was released a couple of months ago:

C-5A performance and reliability is not uniformly inferior to C-5B performance. Over the past three years, for example, the C-5A fleet has averaged a higher mission departure reliability rate of over 83 percent than the C-5B fleet, which is right around 81 percent.

However, some claim that even if C-5As are not uniformly less reliable, inevitably they will incur structural problems because they are older than the C-5B models. This claim continues to be made even after the Air Force established a Fleet Viability Board in 2003 to evaluate the C-5A fleet and render judgment on the suitability for its continued service. The board 4 years ago reviewed all the relevant data and concluded that the C-5A fleet is structurally sound and viable for at least 25 years and probably longer. To be sure—to be sure—the Air Force actually tore a C-5A apart in late 2005 to inspect it from top to bottom and end to end. The aircraft was given a clean bill of health.

The evidence at hand strongly suggests, at least to me, that we could fix the aircraft we have. Here is the question, though: Can we fix them for less than it would cost to replace them with new aircraft? On this point, it is not even close.

Before I go on to explain why that is the case, let me pause for a moment to say that as a former naval flight officer—I served 5 years active duty, 18 years in the Reserve; I have about 3,500 hours in a P-3 Navy aircraft. Let me say I am a great admirer of the C-17 aircraft. I have supported, and I suspect the Presiding Officer has supported, acquisition of additional C-17 aircraft out of the 190 that have been bought so far. Having said that, it is a highly reliable workhorse. Its mission-capable rate hovers around 85 percent. It can land on large airfields and small airstrips, all of which highly commend the aircraft to us, and that is why we ordered and bought so many of them. In my own State, the Dover Air Force Base has begun receiving a squadron of 13 C-17s. We are delighted. We are excited. We are enthusiastic about their arrival.

Having said that, let me add that the cost of modernizing a C-5 is roughly one-third—let me say that again—the cost of modernizing a C-5 is roughly one-third the cost of purchasing a new C-17. Modernizing a C-5 is roughly one-third of the cost of purchasing a new C-17. Moreover, the C-5 can carry twice as much cargo as the C-17. By modernizing a C-5, we buy twice as much hauling capacity for one-third the cost. Let me say that again. By modernizing a C-5, we can buy twice as much hauling capacity for one-third the cost.

Now, I know some dispute these figures. First, they argue that modernizing a C-5 costs more than one-third of the cost of purchasing a new C-17. They do so by suggesting that the C-5 reengineering program is experiencing dramatic cost growth. Again, the facts say otherwise. According to CRS, claims that the cost of C-5 modernization has risen substantially—and this is what CRS says; this is a quote—“appear to be somewhat at odds with official cost reports from the Department of Defense Comptroller.”

The Defense 2006 Select Acquisition Report for the C-5 reengineering program showed average procurement unit cost growth of under 3 percent. Now, it is never good news when a program cost growth goes over expectation, even by a little. However, 2.9 percent cost growth is not particularly remarkable when compared to other Defense acquisition programs.

Moreover, CRS reports that:

Projections of future cost growth are driven in large part by the Air Force's decision to slow down the C-5 modernization production and to extend it by two years.

Over the last 5 years, the Air Force has pushed this program further and further out into the future—not 2 years but 5 years. Because stretching out the program leads to insufficient production rates, costs have increased.

The contractor responsible for modernizing C-5s has offered the Air Force a firm fixed-price contract in order to guarantee no more cost overruns. All the Air Force has to do to nail down a definite, affordable price is not stretch out the program any further. The ball is in the Air Force's court. If the Air Force does not choose to keep the program on schedule, thereby securing an affordable, fixed price, one has to wonder—at least I wonder—whether the Air Force is interested in making the most cost-effective choice for taxpayers.

Advocates of retiring C-5s have also disputed the fact that a C-5 can carry twice as much as the C-17. In fact, they have begun to refer to C-5s as “C-17 equivalents” for purposes of meeting our airlift needs.

However, the C-5 clearly boasts a greater payload capacity than the C-17, as this chart shows. This is the C-5 and C-17 capabilities comparison. Let's look at it: The C-5 and the C-17. MA tanks, the C-5 carries two, the C-17 carries one; Bradleys, the C-5 carries four, the C-17 carries two; Apache helicopters, the C-5 carries six, the C-17 carries three; multiple launch rocket systems, the C-5 carries four, the C-17 carries two. And Patriot missile launchers, the C-5 carries two and the C-17 carries one.

Despite the fact its cargo capacity in cubic feet for the C-5 is only 60 percent greater than the C-17, the C-5 hauls double the load in several cases and actually makes more efficient use of its cargo space when transporting large weapons systems, I think as we see here. Despite the size advantage of the

C-5, advocates of retiring the C-5 still make two arguments to ignore the vehicle's greater hauling capacity.

First, they point out the C-5s currently have reliability problems that negate the C-5s' greater size and capacity. The problem with this argument is we are addressing C-5 reliability problems through the modernization process that our friends in the Air Force continue to delay. The second argument I hear for overlooking the C-5's superior hauling capacity is it doesn't actually matter in practice. Some claim that since both C-5s and C-17s generally fly missions carrying less than the full weight they are capable of carrying, it makes little sense to compare what they are capable of carrying when fully loaded. Well, my office was told the reason C-5s and C-17s generally carry less than the capacity is they “cube out” first. That means the limiting factor is more often the number of pallets these aircraft can carry, rather than the weight they carry. However—here is an important point—this point reinforces that C-5s actually carry twice as much as the C-17s, since C-5s have 36 pallet positions and C-17s have only 18.

So can we fix the aircraft we have for less than the cost of replacing them with new aircraft? I believe the answer is yes.

Let's look at this last chart, some of the benefits of the C-5. This is a paraphrase of the CRS report that came out a couple months ago. This is what the paraphrase is. It says: Current cost estimates of modernizing the C-5 are about one-third that of a new C-17, and the C-5 will carry twice the payload of the C-17.

Not my words but those of CRS.

We can fix the aircraft, the C-5As and Bs that we have, and it is clearly less expensive to do that than to buy new aircraft. But can we afford to purchase new aircraft anyhow, even though it is unnecessary and exceedingly costly? In 2006, the Federal Government, our Federal Government, ran a deficit of just under a quarter of a trillion dollars. OMB tells us the deficit for 2007 this year will be around \$200 billion. We are rapidly approaching the retirement of the baby boomers, which will put unprecedented strain on Social Security, on Medicare, and on Medicaid. In short, we are spending beyond our means, and we are using the Social Security surplus to mask an even larger operational deficit.

The Defense Science Board tells us that:

Each year of additional C-17 production beyond 2008 will represent an additional \$2.4 billion acquisition and \$2 billion to \$3 billion life cycle cost commitment.

I would ask: Aren't there better ways we could use some of this money than purchasing aircraft the military has not requested, credible studies suggest to me—and I think to others—that we don't need?

Even if we confine our focus on the Air Force budget, it is clear there are

better uses for this money. The strategic airlift fleet—C-5s and C-17s—is the youngest of the Air Force's aircraft fleets—the youngest—not the oldest, the youngest. If we have several billion dollars lying around, I would suggest there are other fleets in the Air Force inventory in more urgent need of new aircraft than the strategic airlift fleet, including tankers, C-130s, to name a few. Yet if you ask the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, he will tell you this is the reason the Air Force is not and will probably not put money in its own budget to retire C-5s and replace them with new aircraft.

When we actually sit down and do the math, it is difficult to argue that C-5s, with wings and fuselages that have another 30 or 40 years of useful life, should be retired and replaced with new C-17s. It is even more difficult to argue that it is cost-effective to do so.

The only reason left to consider for why we would possibly want to retire C-5s and replace them with new C-17s is that the C-17s can perform missions that C-5s cannot.

It is true that C-17s and C-5s have different attributes. The C-17 can land on short, austere runways that the C-5 cannot. But it is important to keep in mind that only a small minority of strategic airlift missions involve taking off from or landing on short, austere runways. On the other hand, the C-5 can carry outsized cargo that the C-17 cannot carry.

In fact, the evidence suggests that if we have a deficit, in terms of matching our capabilities with our needs, it is that we have too few modernized C-5s, not too few C-17s. For instance, during Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the Department of Defense has been forced to lease a Russian aircraft called the An-124 to carry outsize and oversize cargo because C-17s cannot carry this cargo, and not enough C-5 aircraft have been available.

An-124s are Russian aircraft that are comparable to the C-5s. Actually, they are a little bigger than C-5s. It is ironic that some are talking about retiring C-5s when the C-5s we have are insufficient to meet our needs and we must rely on an even larger Russian aircraft to help fill the gap.

Mr. President, I have come to the floor on more than one occasion during my time in the Senate to discuss this issue. I want to be honest with you; sometimes we act as though our usual obligation to be careful stewards of the taxpayers' dollars does not apply when it comes to defense spending. I want to remind my colleagues of this: When we spend beyond our needs, there is an opportunity cost. We end up shortchanging our troops in the field, failing to provide them with the body armor and up-armored vehicles they need, or we end up shortchanging our troops when they come home, failing to actually tend to their physical and psychological needs, which is a problem and concern we hope to address by the

amendment that was discussed before me.

Let me finish today by commending the leadership of the Armed Services Committee and its SeaPower Subcommittee, which has jurisdiction over this issue. They have shown a commitment over the years to identifying the facts on this issue and making decisions based on the facts.

The Defense bill reported out of the Armed Services Committee—the bill before us today—retains the requirement in current law that we fully flight-test three C-5s that have been modernized before making any further C-5 retirement decisions. The committee also approved report language requiring the Air Force to provide Congress with a report this year, giving us an up-to-date assessment on the performance of these three C-5s which have undergone modernization upgrades, as well as the projected cost of upgrading of the rest of the C-5 fleet.

I thank the members of the committee and the chairman and Senator McCAIN, as well as their staffs, for their work on this issue. I hope we pass this Defense authorization bill which is before us. I hope the Senate will insist on its position in this regard in the conference with the House.

I yield back my time.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following Senator MCCASKILL's remarks, Senator COLLINS be recognized on the Republican side.

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

The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I thank Chairman LEVIN and Senator McCAIN for making this amendment a priority. I also thank Chairman AKAKA, Senator MURRAY, and many others who worked on this issue for a long time.

I was honored to have the opportunity to be one of the first in the Senate to file a bill on the subject of wounded warriors after the Walter Reed scandal broke. It was an interesting process for me because I spent time at Walter Reed and, of course, I got the official tour. Then I sat down and talked to the soldiers there. It was in those conversations that I learned about some of the problems we are trying to address in this important amendment. Many of the things Senator OBAMA and I included in our legislation have, in fact, been included in this amendment. Overall, it is going to make a real difference in these warriors' lives and their families' lives—how they are treated within our health care system as they return from battle, as they return from their service, while they are still in the Active military.

I won't go into the details of the amendment. Many others have spoken about it. Suffice it to say that, overall, it is going to make a huge improvement in the physical disability system

and being able to maneuver through the system in a way that is not punitive, making that transition from the Active military to the veterans system much smoother and easier to navigate. It is going to support the families of these men and women. That was what struck me. Some of these family members who are going to Walter Reed to care for these men and women who have given so much for us—they were not being treated with consistency, not getting some of the benefits they deserved because, frankly, they were doing us a favor by being there and caring for their loved ones. We also address that.

Certainly, we have more assistance and advocacy for outpatients. That was the meat of the problem at Walter Reed. It wasn't the quality of the medical care they were receiving; it was the way the outpatients were being treated, the facilities they were in, the priority they were being given, and were their needs being met, particularly in the area of substance abuse, and were they being met in the area of mental health care. I think this amendment will go a long way toward correcting the underlying problems in the system that allowed the scandal at Walter Reed to become the focus of the American public for so many weeks early in the year.

I also, with some regret, repeat some words I have said before. The reason I regret having to repeat these words is because when I gave this speech 14 months ago, I believed at the time I gave this speech that there would be change after the election. I believed in my heart that the people in Washington would listen like they had not listened before. But because they have not, I think it is important to repeat part of the speech I gave on Harry Truman's birthday, in May of last year, as I talked about the war in Iraq and the reasons I thought it was important to make a change in the Senate.

I grew up in rural Missouri, in the heart of a Nation that I was raised to love and revere. I grew up surrounded by strong men and women who had won a great world war, a war fought against tyranny. My father was a decorated veteran of that war whom I rarely recall ever hearing speak about combat. As I grew older, his silence spoke volumes to me, not only about the modesty of his generation but about what Dwight Eisenhower later called the "agony of the battlefield."

I grew up in a family of Missouri Democrats, Roosevelt people, Truman people, but one of the first political speeches my father asked me to read was President Eisenhower's farewell address that he gave in 1961. Reading his speech again later in my life, I found myself deeply moved by his words. I respect his eloquence as he spoke of this country's fundamental decency and greatness. He called upon America to live up to its ideals by always using our greatest strength wisely in the service of peace and liberty.

He warned us to be aware of arrogance, yet maintain our readiness to sacrifice.

I was raised to believe that sacrifice in the defense of our freedom is an American ideal and that from our earliest days, Americans have willingly given of themselves in our defense and in the defense of others. I have always known and felt and believed that, through generation after generation, that willingness has made us safe.

So as I grew up in Missouri, our country seemed on the verge of its greatest period, a time of joy and growth and undeniable strength; a time when all would finally share in our Nation's great bounty, when our military would be used wisely to benefit ourselves and the world; a time, too, when long-closed doors would finally open and we would live up to the ideal of America that lit all the continents with hope and promise and made us admired and respected across so much of the globe. I did not think then that an American leader would ever squander the trust of our people or the admiration of the world that had been won with such courage and at such a cost. But that is what has happened.

In the days after 9/11, this Nation was united, as it was after Pearl Harbor. The world bled for us and stood at our side. Our historic allies offered all possible aid. New allies in Asia and the Middle East emerged, all agreeing to support us in a war on terror.

But that has changed. America was misled into a different war, not against al-Qaida. Instead, we went to war with Iraq. Fearful of weapons of mass destruction, we believed they were a threat to the world. We had a plan to destroy the terrorists. We were strong. But there were no weapons of mass destruction. We did not have a plan to destroy the terrorists. We did not even have a plan to take care of Iraq.

Now our strength has been compromised. The President and his administration have led us into a quagmire, alienated our allies, diminished our national morale, cost us billions of dollars, thousands of precious lives, and maimed many thousands more. Even our Nation's top military authorities have cited enormous mistakes, while this administration refuses to listen to them.

Those were words of a speech I gave 14 months ago, and this administration still refuses to listen. I have listened. I have listened to Missourians. I have listened to General Petraeus. I have listened to the President. I have listened to the experts who have come in front of our Committee on Armed Services, including former generals, generals who have served in Iraq, and maybe most importantly, I have listened to brave soldiers in Iraq.

I sat across a breakfast table and looked at a young man and said: But are you worried if we begin pulling out of Iraq that it will be chaos?

And this young man from Missouri, from a State that I love and he loves, and a country that we want to protect

more than anything, looked at me and said: Ma'am, we are in chaos. We need to get out of here.

I implore the Commander in Chief to listen to America, to listen to the people of this country who figured this out months ago. We are stuck in a situation that is squandering the lives of our bravest, and it is also squandering the future of our Nation because of the financial toll it is taking on our budget.

It is time that we change course in Iraq. We have an opportunity to speak louder than any American voice can speak. We have an opportunity to say to the President of the United States: You must change course. It is time to bring our combat troops home from Iraq.

We need to begin that process quickly, and we need to begin to refocus our efforts on fighting terrorism around the world, going after al-Qaida, making our military strong, restoring our prominence in the world with allies that matter, understanding that the strength of our Nation rests with a strong military that we must protect and not wear thin, and, finally, realize that America is speaking with a strong voice. This is a democracy. If we cannot listen to those who sent us here, we have failed our duty in this great Chamber.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WEBB). The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the amendment that is being offered by Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN that will add to this legislation the wounded warriors bill that we worked so hard on in the Armed Services Committee.

I also wish to acknowledge the great leadership of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, Senator LARRY CRAIG and Senator DANIEL AKAKA.

This is an unusual case where two Senate committees worked together in a bipartisan way to produce legislation that will help improve the care of our veterans, our wounded warriors, and their families.

All of us were outraged by the reports of substandard conditions at Walter Reed Hospital. But our investigation of those conditions revealed other problems with the system—disparities in the award of disability ratings, poor treatment of our soldiers and marines after they had left the military hospitals, a lack of a smooth transition into the VA medical system. These are just some of the problems that were uncovered. I believe this legislation contains the reforms that are going to make a real difference in ensuring high quality, consistent medical care for those who have given so much.

I have become particularly concerned about the treatment of those who are suffering from traumatic brain injury. Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, has emerged as the signature injury of the Iraq war. Bomb blasts are the most common cause of injury and death in

Iraq. While improvements in body armor and protective gear have enabled our troops to survive attacks that once would have proven deadly, they still do not fully protect against damage from blasts from roadside explosives or suicide bombers.

As many as 28 percent of the 1.4 million troops who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been exposed to bomb blasts and may have suffered at least some form of traumatic brain injury. Mr. President, 60 percent of the blast victims treated at Walter Reed have been diagnosed with mild, moderate, or severe traumatic brain injury.

I visited one such soldier recently at Walter Reed, a 19-year-old soldier from Maine who is faced with making an agonizing medical decision while he is suffering the effects of a mild case of TBI. I thought: How terribly difficult it was for this brave young man to be faced with making a decision about whether to amputate his foot while his judgment is impaired by a traumatic brain injury, an injury that was not initially diagnosed. And that is one of the problems.

I have worked very closely with the Senator from New York, Mrs. CLINTON, to come up with a better system for screening soldiers for TBI because while the evidence of brain injury may be dramatically clear in some cases, in others there may be no outward or visible sign of the trauma. It can take days, weeks, or even months before the symptoms of TBI are readily apparent. As a consequence, as with this soldier, a mild case of TBI may go misdiagnosed or untreated, particularly if the servicemember has sustained more obvious injuries.

Soldiers with TBI often have symptoms affecting several areas of brain function. Headaches, sleep disorders, and sensitivity to light and noise are common. Attention, memory, language, and problem-solving abilities can be affected. Some of the more troubling symptoms can be behavioral: mood changes, depression, anxiety, emotional symptoms. Moreover, sometimes the symptoms of TBI overlap with post-traumatic stress disorder, making it difficult to distinguish between the two.

Sadly, failure to accurately diagnose or treat TBI can result in frustration, inadequate medical treatment, and a series—an endless series—of hardships for our returning veterans and their families.

So I am very pleased the wounded warriors bill includes an expansion of research into TBI and, perhaps most important, provisions authored by Senator CLINTON and myself that will address problems resulting from the misdiagnosis, or the failure to diagnose at all, cases of TBI. The bill will improve the screening process that our troops go through before deployment to improve TBI diagnoses after deployment.

While many wounded servicemembers receive cognitive evaluations upon their return, if there is no baseline test

conducted prior to the injury, it can be very difficult to assess the injury, and it can lead to questions about the validity of postdeployment assessment. So our amendment requires a baseline assessment to be done prior to the deployment.

I end by saying that the idea for this predeployment assessment came to me from a neurologist in Maine who treated a soldier back from Iraq who had a traumatic brain injury that had been missed. It was severely interfering with his recovery. Fortunately, this neurologist was able to make the correct diagnosis and see that this brave soldier who had sacrificed so much got the care and treatment he needed.

I believe the provisions in the wounded warriors bill, the amendment before us, will greatly reduce the chances of misdiagnosis in the future. There are many other provisions in this bill that are going to improve the treatment and care for those who have served their country so well and sacrificed so much, but I did want to highlight these provisions of special interest to me.

Again, I salute the leaders of the Armed Services Committee and the Veterans' Affairs Committee for their dedication and hard work. All of us have learned so much, and each and every one of us is committed to ensuring the highest quality of care for those who have sacrificed so much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, in November, voters in my State of Ohio and across this Nation shouted from the ballot box: The Iraq war must end. They demanded we refocus our efforts on securing our homeland so that the darkest day in our Nation's history, 9/11, is never repeated. With Democrats in control of Congress this session, we immediately began to work to end the war. We set out to implement the full recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, recommendations that will go a long way toward making our country safer.

By working to end the war in Iraq and passing the commission's recommendations, we are executing a strategy to combat terrorism. Make no mistake, ending the war in Iraq is a counterterrorism strategy. Global terrorist attacks have increased sevenfold since we invaded Iraq—sevenfold. Unfortunately and tragically, our continued engagement in Iraq is the best thing that ever happened to jihadist recruitment.

Democrats brought to this Chamber not just one piece of legislation to re-deploy our troops out of Iraq but many. And each time, every time, either Republicans defeated the measure in Congress by threatening filibuster or the President vetoed it in the White House—each time, every time.

Two days ago, the President was in my State in Cleveland trying to buy more time for this war. The President has yet to define "victory." He has yet to tell us how many years it will take

to achieve whatever his definition of "victory" is. Will we be in Iraq for 5 more years, for 10 more years, for 15 more years? Will more thousands of U.S. service men and women die, tens of thousands? The President has yet to hold himself and his administration accountable for fomenting a civil war and breeding more global terrorism.

The President is proud of his stubbornness. He should be ashamed.

The path he is wed to has simultaneously increased the threat of terrorism and reduced our Nation's capacity to protect against it. Stubbornness is not leadership. Defensiveness is not leadership. Finger-pointing is not leadership. Supporting the President's strategy in Iraq because you support the President is not leadership. Lives are at stake. Our homeland security is at stake. Global stability and security are at stake.

Yesterday we learned that al-Qaida is at pre-9/11 strength. That is frightening news, and it is cause for outrage because it did not have to be that way, and it does not have to be that way.

We learned yesterday that the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is fostering the next generation of al-Qaida at an alarming rate. What kind of signal exactly does the President and his supporters think we send by failing to secure the region where we know al-Qaida lives and trains and plans, according to military analysts, with relative freedom—the same region that served as the breeding ground for global terrorism through al-Qaida before 9/11, the same region we now know that al-Qaida trained in for the deadliest attack on our Nation's soil, the same region where Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind 9/11, is believed to be hiding, free to plot the next attack on our homeland.

Over the objection of military advisers, the 9/11 Commission, and the voice of a nation, the President stubbornly insists upon staying the course with a failed policy in Iraq. Staying the course with the President's failed Iraq policy hasn't forced our Government to take its eye off the ball, it has caused us to drop it.

Prior to World War II, the French built the Maginot Line, assuming this line would prevent Germany from attacking France. History proved the French wrong. The President's strategy in Iraq is the Maginot Line of the 21st century. It imperils our Nation by mistakenly focusing our attention in the wrong direction.

We have dropped the ball on capturing Osama bin Laden. We have dropped the ball on securing Afghanistan. We have dropped the ball on implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations. Anyone who thinks those aren't signals al-Qaida is paying close attention to is sorely mistaken.

Supporting the President's policy doesn't just fail to effectively target terrorism, it puts a bull's-eye squarely on our Nation. Ending the war in Iraq isn't just about bringing our troops

home. It isn't just about ensuring veterans get the health care and the benefits they have long been denied. It isn't just about a new direction in our foreign policy. It is about returning our focus to where it must be if our Nation, our communities, and our families are to remain safe. Ending the war in Iraq is about reengaging in full force on the war on terror.

I applaud my Republican friends who have chosen to stand up to the President. More and more of them have taken steps of bravery with every vote we bring to the floor. But it is not enough. With every lost vote, we add more lives to the list of the men and women lost in Iraq. With every lost vote, we empower al-Qaida.

In the Senate, those of us committed to ending this war of choice and securing our Nation will keep fighting to end the war. I appreciate the leadership of Senator WEBB, of Senator HAGEL, Senator REID, and Senator LEVIN, all of whom have shown courageous leadership on this crisis of a generation. Together, we are going to change this policy. The safety of every American depends on it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. LEVIN. Will the Senator from Idaho yield for a unanimous consent request?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after the Senator from Idaho has completed his remarks, the Senator from Massachusetts, Mr. KERRY, be recognized; after Senator LINCOLN, if there is a Republican here, they would then come next and that, after that, after Senator LINCOLN, Senator KERRY be the next Democrat in sequence.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I would not object, for the purposes of planning, I know we have a vote at 4. Does Senator LINCOLN have an estimate as to how much time she will take?

Mrs. LINCOLN. Ten minutes.

Mr. KERRY. Reserving the right to object, I would not object, but it is my understanding we are trying to go back and forth. Is there a Republican who is lined up at this point? If not, I think the Senator from Arkansas is going to speak for about 10 minutes and if I could proceed after her.

Mr. MCCAIN. Yes. Senator CRAIG is here. I know of no additional speakers. I think it is legitimate, since the Senator from Massachusetts is on the floor. I would agree that following Senator CRAIG, Senator LINCOLN and then Senator KERRY proceed.

Mr. KERRY. I thank the Senator.

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

The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, let me first of all thank the chairman and the

ranking member for bringing this legislation to the floor and for including in it the wounded warrior amendment. Let me also thank the senior Senator from Arizona for his leadership on what has been a critical and important issue for our country and, at best and at worst, very divisive. I have not seen him step back one moment from the defense of our men and women in uniform and the mission they are conducting in Iraq, and I thank Senator MCCAIN for that kind of leadership. It is tremendously important for our country that we have that quality of leadership, knowledge, and understanding; to be able not only to travel there and understand but to come back to this country and articulate it.

I must also say I was disappointed when the Senator from Missouri talked about lives squandered in Iraq. I am sorry, but every young Idahoan who has died in Iraq was not a life squandered. To me, that young man or woman was a hero in defense of their Nation, in defense of a nation trying to be free, and an expression from our Nation of that; for preserving for this generation of Americans a sense of freedom and independence in a very difficult world. Lives squandered? I am sorry, I choose other words. The difference between a life squandered and that of an American hero is a distinct difference.

Today, we are here to talk about wounded warriors. We are also here to talk about something my chairman of the VA Committee, DANNY AKAKA, and I have brought forward in an amendment that will be considered and, we hope, handled by the chairman and the ranking member and our whole Senate in a unanimous way to deal with traumatic brain injury improvements and transitional benefits that I and Senator AKAKA and all our colleagues have worked on for those who are in the active service and about to become veterans.

Certainly, the Presiding Officer, now serving on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, has openly participated with us in making sure the word "seamless transition" is not just something in our vocabulary, but it is a reality of moving men and women from active service into a veteran status; and for those who were injured and are eligible for benefits, to make sure that transition is, in fact, seamless.

I would like to speak for a moment on an amendment we are offering that deals with that. Senator AKAKA a few days ago laid out a number of provisions that are in this amendment and was on the floor earlier to speak to it, and I wish to address some of those on the floor at this moment but not to travel that path again.

First, I am proud of the comprehensive nature of the language dealing with those suffering from traumatic brain injury in this amendment. Enactment of these provisions will ensure that injured servicemembers, veterans, and their families will receive a detailed plan from a VA treatment team

outlining their care and a rehabilitation program. They can be certain the plan will be reviewed and updated often, even at their request.

They will benefit from new investments in research into mild, moderate, and serious traumatic brain injury. Most important to me, they will have the comfort of knowing the Secretary can provide TBI care in a private, non-VA facility anytime the Secretary determines that doing so would be optimal to the recovery and rehabilitation of a patient.

Through time and hearings, we have discovered in the VA Committee that while the Veterans' Administration and their health care delivery systems are, by the nature of what they do, the best in the country, with some of the cutting-edge technology that is available in the private sector, we are not yet up to speed in the VA public sector. So giving the Secretary this flexibility and option says to our veteran, who may well be suffering from TBI: You are going to get the best that is available, private or public, at the time you need it. That is the way it ought to be.

In other words, whenever it is in the best interest of the patient's recovery, then the VA can purchase private care until that care may be available within the system itself.

These are a few of the very important provisions in this amendment that I believe will make the care and treatment of our wounded servicemembers and veterans even better.

I would also like to point out our actions with this amendment reflect a pledge we made a few months ago when the Veterans' Committee and the Armed Services Committee held a joint hearing to receive testimony on needed changes to the transition programs of health care benefits. At that time, many of us stated our intention to make a good-faith effort to work on these issues under our respective committees' jurisdictions and to merge them back together again at the earliest possible opportunity. Senator AKAKA and Senator LEVIN certainly were good to their word as we worked to bring those together, and that is exactly what is reflected in these amendments that are currently before the Senate and will be when we bring the other amendment forward. So I am very proud to tell the Senate that both committees have done their work and lived up to their bargain.

I wish to compliment the Senators from Michigan and Arizona, as I did earlier, for the work they have done on the Armed Services Committee in producing the wounded warrior bill that is now pending to this authorization bill as amendment No. 2019. That bill, coupled with the amendment Senator AKAKA and I are now offering, will provide a comprehensive approach to improving the benefits and services of those who are severely injured in service and those who need transitional assistance.

Finally, I also think this amendment is very important because it dem-

onstrates Congress can break down the walls of jurisdiction and territory and do the right thing at the right time for the right people. In this case, it is America's brave young men and women who are standing in harm's way, and as a result of their bravery and their heroism may sustain some level of injury.

I and other Senators have been very critical of the bureaucratic roadblocks we oftentimes see in DOD or the VA. But I must tell you we see a merging now and a breaking down of those barriers and roadblocks that ought to be done when we find those difficulties arising. So I believe that if we are going to demand these two agencies break down their walls of territory and jurisdiction, then we can demonstrate the same. These amendments recognize and demonstrate that. I am proud we are doing so today.

I wish to thank, again, Chairman LEVIN and Ranking Member MCCAIN for their support throughout the process, and I wish to thank Chairman AKAKA for his leadership. I also wish to compliment the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee—Gary Leeling, Dick Walsh, and Diana Tabler—for working in a collegial way with our staffs on the Veterans' Affairs Committee to make all of this effort very possible in the way that it is being presented on the floor.

Mr. President, to my colleagues, the chairman and the ranking member, I appreciate the opportunity to come speak on these critical issues, and once again the cooperation between the VA Committee and their staffs, and the Armed Services Committee and their staffs, I think, is a model of how we get things done in the appropriate way and in the timely way necessary.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, first, let me thank Senator CRAIG for all the work he and his committee put in on this bill. I know he and Senator AKAKA and members of that committee have played a major role. Their amendment reflects additional work, and we are very grateful. I know every veteran in this country and their families are grateful.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MCCAIN and I, at this time, be allowed to offer six second-degree amendments which have been cleared—they shouldn't take more than a few minutes—prior to Senator LINCOLN being recognized.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2131 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and Senators DURBIN and MCCAIN, I call up amendment No. 2131, a second-degree amendment to our amendment. It requires the Secretary of Defense to develop a comprehensive plan for the provision to members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder. The amendment has been cleared, I believe.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. DURBIN, proposes an amendment numbered 2131 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Defense to develop a comprehensive plan for the provision to members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-Traumatic stress disorder the services that best meet their individual needs)

At the end of section 1631(b), add the following:

(16) A program under which each member of the Armed Forces who incurs a traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder during service in the Armed Forces—

(A) is enrolled in the program; and

(B) receives, under the program, treatment and rehabilitation meeting a standard of care such that each individual who is a member of the Armed Forces who qualifies for care under the program shall—

(i) be provided the highest quality of care possible based on the medical judgment of qualified medical professionals in facilities that most appropriately meet the specific needs of the individual; and

(ii) be rehabilitated to the fullest extent possible using the most up-to-date medical technology, medical rehabilitation practices, and medical expertise available.

(17) A requirement that if a member of the Armed Forces participating in a program established in accordance with paragraph (16) believes that care provided to such participant does not meet the standard of care specified in subparagraph (B) of such paragraph, the Secretary of Defense shall, upon request of the participant, provide to such participant a referral to another Department of Defense or Department of Veterans Affairs provider of medical or rehabilitative care for a second opinion regarding the care that would meet the standard of care specified in such subparagraph.

(18) The provision of information by the Secretary of Defense to members of the Armed Forces with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder and their families about their rights with respect to the following:

(A) The receipt of medical and mental health care from the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(B) The options available to such members for treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.

(C) The options available to such members for rehabilitation.

(D) The options available to such members for a referral to a public or private provider of medical or rehabilitative care.

(E) The right to administrative review of any decision with respect to the provision of care by the Department of Defense for such members.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the amendment has been cleared.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2131.

The amendment (No. 2131) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2154, AS MODIFIED, TO
AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator GRAHAM, I call up amendment No. 2154, an amendment which improves the distribution of benefits under Traumatic Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. GRAHAM, proposes an amendment numbered 2154, as modified, to amendment No. 2011.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading be dispensed with.

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

At the end of subtitle E of title X, add the following:

SEC. 1070. TRAUMATIC SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE.

(a) DESIGNATION OF FIDUCIARY FOR MEMBERS WITH LOST MENTAL CAPACITY OR EXTENDED LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.—The Secretary of Defense shall, in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, develop a form for the designation of a recipient for the funds distributed under section 1980A of title 38, United States Code, as the fiduciary of a member of the Armed Forces in cases where the member is medically incapacitated (as determined by the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs) or experiencing an extended loss of consciousness.

(b) ELEMENTS.—The form under subsection (a) shall require that a member may elect that—

(1) an individual designated by the member be the recipient as the fiduciary of the member; or

(2) a court of proper jurisdiction determine the recipient as the fiduciary of the member for purposes of this subsection.

(c) COMPLETION AND UPDATE.—The form under subsection (a) shall be completed by an individual at the time of entry into the Armed Forces and updated periodically thereafter.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, the amendment, as modified, has been cleared.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2154, as modified.

The amendment (No. 2154), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2115 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of myself, Senators CRAIG, AKAKA, and MCCAIN, I call up amendment No. 2115. It is a second-degree amendment to the wounded warrior amendment that requires the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder collaborates to the maximum extent possible with the National Center for PTSD and the

Department of Veterans Affairs and other appropriate entities.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. CRAIG, for himself and Mr. AKAKA, proposes an amendment numbered 2115 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder of the Department of Veterans Affairs, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate public and private entities)

On page 47, strike lines 15 through 18 and insert the following:

“(b) PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Center collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2115) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2114 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and Senators CRAIG, AKAKA, and MCCAIN, I call up amendment No. 2114, which is a second-degree amendment to the pending amendment that requires the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury collaborates to the maximum extent possible with the Department of Veterans Affairs and other appropriate entities.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. CRAIG, for himself and Mr. AKAKA, proposes an amendment numbered 2114 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Defense to ensure that the Center of Excellence in Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the Department of Veterans Affairs, institutions of higher education, and other appropriate public and private entities)

On page 43, strike lines 8 through 11 and insert the following:

“(b) PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall ensure that the Center collaborates to the maximum extent practicable with the Department of Veterans Affairs, institu-

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2114) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2089 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator LIEBERMAN, myself, and Senator MCCAIN, I call up amendment No. 2089, a second-degree amendment to our pending amendment. This relates to the Center of Excellence for PTSD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. LIEBERMAN, for himself, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. MCCAIN, proposes an amendment numbered 2089 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the development of a program on comprehensive pain management in the Center of Excellence in the Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)

On page 50, strike lines 11 and 12 and insert the following:

“(13) To develop a program on comprehensive pain management, including management of acute and chronic pain, to utilize current and develop new treatments for pain, and to identify and disseminate best practices on pain management.

“(14) Such other responsibilities as the Secretary shall specify.”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2089) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2090 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senators LIEBERMAN, MCCAIN, and myself, I call up amendment No. 2090, a second-degree amendment to our pending amendment regarding the Center of Excellence for Traumatic Brain Injury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. LIEBERMAN, for himself, Mr. LEVIN, and Mr. MCCAIN, proposes an amendment numbered 2090 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the development of a program on comprehensive pain management in the Center of Excellence in the Prevention, Diagnosis, Mitigation, Treatment, and Rehabilitation of Traumatic Brain Injury)

On page 46, strike lines 17 and 18 and insert the following:

“(14) To develop a program on comprehensive pain management, including management of acute and chronic pain, to utilize current and develop new treatments for pain, and to identify and disseminate best practices on pain management.

“(15) Such other responsibilities as the Secretary shall specify.”.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2090) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2162 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator SNOWE and myself, I call up amendment No. 2162, a second-degree to the pending amendment. It requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a report on reductions in disability ratings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Ms. SNOWE, for herself and Mr. LEVIN, proposes an amendment numbered 2162 to amendment No. 2019.

Mr. MCCAIN. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit upon appeal a reduction in disability rating once such rating has been assigned by an informal physical evaluation board of the Department of Defense)

On page 23, between lines 6 and 7, insert the following:

(3) Report on reduction in disability ratings by the Department of Defense.

The Secretary of Defense shall submit a report to the Committees on Armed Services of the Senate and House of Representatives on the numbers of instances in which a disability rating assigned to a member of the Armed Forces by an informal physical evaluation board of the Department of Defense was reduced upon appeal, and the reasons for such reduction. Such report shall cover the period beginning October 7, 2001 and ending September 30, 2006, and shall be submitted to the appropriate Committees of Congress by February 1, 2008.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2162) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. I believe we have done amendment No. 2154. I thank the Chair and thank our good friends from Arkansas and Massachusetts for their understanding and, of course, my good friend from Arizona.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The Senator from Arkansas.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Madam President, I have a special thanks to the chairman and ranking member for their leadership on such a critical issue at such a critical time in our Nation. Their leadership and their ability to work together have certainly brought us together here on this issue and many others. I am grateful to them for that.

I rise today on behalf of the brave men and women of our National Guard and Reserve who have sacrificed so greatly for our freedom. They are the policemen and the doctors, the schoolteachers and mayors in communities all across our great land. They are also the beloved sons and daughters, fathers and mothers and families in our neighborhoods, in mine and yours, all across this Nation. Our Nation has turned to them in unprecedented numbers to help defend our freedoms around the world. With pride and courage, they have answered their Nation's call. We have seen also in their call to duty the great contribution they give in our communities because, as they are deployed, we see in our communities where perhaps our mayors or our school principals or our fire chiefs have to be replaced temporarily as they are gone.

Since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, nearly 600,000 of these citizen soldiers, including several thousand from my home State of Arkansas, have been activated to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 132,000 have pulled multiple tours of duty. In doing so, they have served and continue to serve with distinction in some of the worst conditions imaginable. It is time, now, for us as a nation and as a body here in the Senate to begin providing them with benefits that are more commensurate with their increased sacrifice.

One area in particular is the educational benefits provided under the Montgomery GI bill. These benefits were signed into law in 1984, a time when members of the Selected Reserve were seldom mobilized. Consequently, standard Montgomery GI benefits reflected that reality. But, unfortunately, it is not the same reality we see today. That is why I have offered two amendments to the 2008 Defense Authorization Act. These two amendments are a part of a bill that I have helped work with my colleague from Arkansas, Congressman SNYDER, to put together in the Total Force GI bill that we have introduced on behalf of our Guard and Reserve. These two proposals offer two very big steps toward modernizing the Montgomery GI benefit to better reflect the increased commitment our Guard and Reserve are making to protect our Nation.

I am extremely proud to be joined by 13 of my colleagues, including the Presiding Officer, from both sides of the aisle and over 40 military veterans and higher education groups, working together as the partnership for veterans education. So many of us all well know how critically valuable education is to each and every one of us, to our families, to the success of our economics and our country, and we want to see a part of that a possibility for our veterans.

The first amendment, which is amendment No. 2072, would place both Selected Reserve Montgomery GI programs under the same umbrella in law as the Active-Duty program. Under the current structure, Active-Duty benefits have continued to increase in recent years, while the benefits for our hard-working reservists have remained untouched. As a result, the value of the Montgomery GI benefits has plummeted for members of the Selected Reserve, despite their increased service, from 47 percent of Active-Duty benefits in 1985 to now only 29 percent of those benefits today. This amendment would establish one program with one set of rules that would cut inconsistent and inequitable structuring of benefits by ensuring that all future benefits are upgraded equitably and are easier to administer.

An identical provision has been included in the House-passed version of the Defense authorization bill. My hope is that my colleagues will join me in including this amendment in our Defense authorization bill to truly reflect not only our gratitude but certainly, without a doubt, what our guardsmen and reservists deserve after the incredible and courageous commitment they have made to this country.

The second amendment is amendment No. 2074, and it is identical to an amendment that was passed unanimously by the Senate last year. This amendment would allow operational reservists to have portability of their Reserve Education Assistance Program—it is called their REAP benefit—for up to 10 years upon their separation from service.

In establishing REAP, which is their Reserve Education Assistance Program, Congress took steps to enhance educational benefits for activated members of the Selected Reserve, but we failed to address their lack of readjustment or transition components. As a result, Active-Duty servicemembers have up to 10 years after their separation of service to utilize their Montgomery GI benefit, while operational reservists, whom they are often fighting alongside, without a doubt, must forfeit all of the educational benefits they have earned once they separate from the Selected Reserve.

That is incredible. We have guardsmen and reservists who are serving alongside Active-Duty military. They are seeing the same dangers, the same

challenges, the same pain, the same separation from family, for relatively the same amount of time. Yet when they come home and they leave the Guard, they no longer have access to those educational opportunities. How unfair. How important it is right now for us, as these returning veterans have an opportunity to begin to transition themselves back into their communities, back into their existing jobs or new jobs—the need for education is paramount, and making sure we make it available for them is absolutely essential.

To this day, the Montgomery GI benefits continue to be the only benefits that those who have served Selected Reserve activated duty in the war on terror may not access when they eventually separate or retire. In addition, members of today's Selected Reserve are so busy training and deploying that they have little time to actually use their educational benefits; therefore, their ability to use their benefits while serving is curtailed because of repeated deployment and denied entirely once they finish their service. We are talking about education. We are talking about empowerment. We are talking about something they deserve, they have earned, and we should be making sure we make available to them.

I would like to give an example. Take, for instance, Jamaal Lampkin, who is a 28-year-old native of Malvern, AR, whose story was recently reported in USA Today. Jamaal spent 13 months with the U.S. Army Reserve in Iraq. After his distinguished tour of duty, which included a Purple Heart, he did not have time to utilize the enhanced educational benefits he had earned prior to the conclusion of his service obligation. To do so, he had to reenlist and risk the chance of being redeployed at some point. How unbelievable, for someone who had given of himself and offered himself in service to this great Nation to come back and find that after that tour of duty, those benefits were gone.

In his records, here in this article, he said:

I had the proud opportunity to serve my country in Iraq and I just wanted to move on.

He, and those like him, certainly deserve as much. We must act on behalf of these brave Americans because they deserve a policy more reflective of their sacrifice. Jamal fought and was wounded alongside active-duty servicemembers, but because of an inequity of the law, he is denied the same opportunity to utilize those educational benefits he has rightly earned, benefits that serve as a primary means of helping our service men and women make that difficult transition back into civilian life after serving in combat.

Some have raised concerns this amendment would have an effect on retention because it would provide a postservice portability of benefits. I wholeheartedly disagree. There are many valid personal and family rea-

sons that influence a volunteer's decision to serve. Military analysts have consistently noted that reenlistment bonuses and lump sum cash payments have been effective in meeting and exceeding reenlistment goals in the Active and Reserve forces, not the educational benefits that are deferred over time.

That is why we have seen an unprecedented increase in the amount spent on these bonuses in recent years. At a time when one branch of our military is spending over \$1 billion in cash bonuses, the least we can do is provide a fraction of those costs on investing in our citizen soldiers. After all, doing so only serves to enhance our Nation's competitiveness through the development of a more highly educated and productive workforce.

Young high school graduates in Arkansas and across this great country thinking about furthering their education and whether to join the National Guard or Reserves should know they will earn Montgomery GI benefits by enlisting, and even more if they are called up to duty.

When it is time to reenlist, they can keep all earned educational benefits with the opportunity to earn more by staying in or they can take with them in civilian life the benefits they have earned when they were called up to defend our great Nation.

As the daughter of a Korean war veteran, I was taught from an early age about the sacrifices of our troops and the sacrifices our troops have to make to keep our Nation free. I have been grateful for the service of so many of our brave men and women from the State of Arkansas and across this Nation. On behalf of them and their families, I will continue to fight to ensure they are provided with the benefits, the pay, and the health care they have earned.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD letters of endorsement from the Military Officers Association of America, the National Reserve Association, the American Legion, the Air Force Sergeants of America, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

AIR FORCE SERGEANTS
ASSOCIATION,
Temple Hills, MD, July 9, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
Dirksen Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of our 130,000 AFSA members, I want to express our staunch support of the two amendments you are proposing regarding total force educational assistance enhancement. In recent years our military operations tempo requirements have been shared by members of the active duty, guard and reserve forces. Guard and Reserve forces now train and deploy alongside our active forces seven days a week, 365 days a year; therefore, opportunities for their use of educational benefits are

diminished. These two amendments afford our total force a better balance of educational opportunities.

The first amendment will provide operational reservists with 10-year portability of educational benefits, thus mirroring those of our active duty force. Unlike current restrictive guidelines, this amendment will allow them to use the benefits they have earned after leaving tours of active duty. The second amendment will integrate the reserve MGIB programs into Title 38. This will allow for single source oversight of a more balanced approach to total force educational benefits. Both amendments will serve to enhance educational opportunities for AFSA's growing number of guard and reserve members.

Senator Lincoln, thank you for your continued focus on total force educational benefits. We stand ready to support you in this endeavor and others of mutual concern to our members should the need arise. Please feel free to contact me, or my Deputy Director of Military and Government Relations, Ruth Ewalt.

Sincerely,

RICHARD M. DEAN,
Chief Executive Officer.

THE AMERICAN LEGION,
Washington, DC, July 9, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of the 2.7 million members of The American Legion, I am writing to strongly endorse the amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (S. 1547) that you propose to introduce to provide an extension of the delimiting date for the use of Montgomery GI Bill benefits for those members of the Reserve components who have been called to active duty and to recodify Title 10 Chapters 1606 and 1607 to Title 38.

The American Legion supports passage of major enhancements to the current All-Volunteer Force Education Assistance Program, better known as the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB). This amendment would extend the delimiting date of the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) to ten years after separation from the Selected Reserve and Ready Reserve. Furthermore, this amendment would recodify Title 10 Chapters 1606 and 1607 (MGIB-SR and REAP) to Title 38 and thereby place these two programs under the same authority as the active duty MGIB, but leaving kickers under Title 10. We note that the current make-up of the operational military force requires that adjustments be made to support all Armed Forces members.

As the distinctions between the Active and Reserve Forces continue to fade, the difference between the Active and Reserve Forces of the MGIB should disappear accordingly. Benefits should remain commensurate with sacrifice and service. Today, approximately 40 percent of troops in Iraq are National Guard personnel or Reservists. Many members of the Reserve components would not be eligible to receive benefits while they are members of the Reserve components due to frequent mobilizations and other factors, yet they have honorably served their country in the Armed Forces. By extending the delimiting date to ten years after completion of service, Reservists will have an additional opportunity to use their MGIB benefits. Additionally, by enacting this legislation, future MGIB rates of the Reserve components would increase lock-step with the active duty rates and eliminate any inconsistencies.

The American Legion feels that all veterans should be treated equally regardless of

their Reserve National Guard status. An individual who was called to duty and served honorably should not have to remain in the Selected Reserve to use their earned benefits. We support legislation that would allow all Reservists and National Guard members to use their education benefits after separation regardless of disability status and if their enlistment contract expires.

In closing, The American Legion strongly endorses your proposed amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act and thanks you for your continuing support of America's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,

JAMES E. KOUTZ,
National Economic Commission.

ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NA-
TIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED
STATES,

Alexandria, VA, July 10, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
*U.S. Senate,
Washington DC.*

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) is the only military service association that represents the interests of every enlisted soldier and airman in the Army and Air National Guard. With a constituency base of over 414,000 soldiers and airmen, their families, and a large retiree membership, EANGUS engages Capitol Hill on behalf of courageous Guard persons across this nation.

On behalf of EANGUS, I'd like to offer our letter of support for your amendment to H.R. 1585, the "National Defense Authorization Act of 2008." Your amendment would move Chapter 1606 and Chapter 1607 benefits from Title 10 to Title 38. The amendment is cost neutral, corrects an actuarial budgeting issue in the original language, but keeps educational kickers with DOD under Title 10.

With the active component Montgomery GI Bill under Title 38 and the Selected Reserve program under Title 10, there are inconsistencies and inequities in the benefits for the same level of sacrifice by the service member. This would establish one program with one set of rules under one committee which can do nothing but better the educational future of our service members.

Thank you for your continued support of our military and veterans. If our association can be of further help, feel free to contact our Legislative Director, SGM (Ret) Frank Yoakum.

Working for America's Best!

MICHAEL P. CLINE,
Executive Director.

ENLISTED ASSOCIATION OF THE NA-
TIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED
STATES,

Alexandria, VA, July 10, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
*U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.*

The Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) is the only military service association that represents the interests of every enlisted soldier and airman in the Army and Air National Guard. With a constituency base of over 414,000 soldiers and airmen, their families, and a large retiree membership, EANGUS engages Capitol Hill on behalf of courageous Guard persons across this nation.

On behalf of EANGUS, I'd like to offer our letter of support for your amendment to H.R. 1585, the "National Defense Authorization Act of 2008." Your amendment would allow members of the Selected Reserve who are activated for 90 days or more or have already earned their Chapter 1607 Montgomery GI Bill benefits to have portability of their 1607 benefits upon the conclusion of their service, for up to 10 years from their last date of service. This provision would apply only to

their 1607 benefits (those benefits earned through activated service) and not their 1606 benefits (their standard Selected Reserve educational benefits).

A very small segment of our nation's population has volunteered to defend the remainder of America during this long war. National Guard and Reservists called to active duty to defend the nation in the War on Terrorism are the only group of veterans who have no access to their MGIB benefits after completing their service commitment. It sends a signal that their service and sacrifice are not valued. As our nation's defenders, they deserve the same readjustment benefit as all other service men and women.

Thank you for your continued support of our military and veterans. If our association can be of further help, feel free to contact our Legislative Director, SGM (Ret) Frank Yoakum.

Working for America's Best!

MICHAEL P. CLINE,
Executive Director.

MILITARY OFFICERS
ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA,
Alexandria, VA, July 10, 2007.

Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN,
*U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of the nearly 362,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), I am writing to thank you for your untiring support of our military men and women and in particular for your efforts to establish a "total force" GI Bill that matches educational benefits to service and sacrifice.

MOAA strongly supports your intention to sponsor floor amendments to the Senate version of the national defense authorization act that would forge a Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) that better supports armed forces recruitment and helps our veterans including returning Guard and Reserve warriors to realize their full potential as citizens and soldiers.

Earlier this year, the House favorably endorsed a provision in its defense bill that authorizes the transfer of reserve educational benefits programs from the Armed Forces code to Title 38, the laws governing veterans' benefits. We applaud this action as an essential first step in MGIB reform and respectfully recommend that you and Senate colleagues co-sponsor identical language as an Amendment to the Senate defense authorization.

In addition, MOAA thanks you for your work last year in pressing for a 10-year readjustment benefit for mobilized reservists who earn MGIB entitlement under Chapter 1607 of 10 U.S. Code. We recommend that you again sponsor this critical equity provision.

Guard and Reserve servicemembers called to active duty to defend the nation in the War on Terror are the only group of veterans who have no access to their MGIB benefits after completing their service commitment. That's not only unfair, but it sends a signal that their service and sacrifice are not valued.

A fraction of our population—about 1%—is defending the rest of the nation during this long, difficult and complex war. We, the protected, must do all we can to ensure our National Guard and Reserve warriors realize their full potential as soldiers and citizens during and after their service.

MOAA and our colleagues in The Partnership for Veterans' Educational thank you most sincerely for your leadership in sponsoring amendments that honor the service and sacrifice of our Guard and Reserve warriors.

Sincerely,

NORBERT R. RYAN, Jr.,
President.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS
OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, July 11, 2007.

Hon. BLANCHE LINCOLN,
*U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of the 2.4 million members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and our Auxiliaries, I would like to offer our support for your Amendment providing operational reservists with a 10-year portability of their Chapter 1607 (REAP) MGIB benefits.

Currently, active duty service members have up to ten years after their separation of service to utilize their MGIB benefits, while operational reservists must forfeit ALL of the educational benefits they earned on active duty once they separate. This benefit continues to be the only one that those who have served Selected Reserve activated duty in the War on Terrorism may not access when they eventually separate. Also, members of today's Selected Reserve are so busy training and deploying that they have little time to actually use their MGIB benefits. Their ability to use the benefit while serving is curtailed because of repealed deployments and denied entirely once they finish their service. This amendment would remedy this problem facing Guard and Reserve members.

The original GI Bill helped to create the middle class through easing the transition from active duty to civilian life, improving access to education and creating an unprecedented number of opportunities for millions of Americans. The GI Bill is a central transition tool aiding generations of Americans to reconnect and improve their families' lives.

Thank you for introducing this amendment and we look forward to working with you and your staff on this important legislation. Your stalwart support for America's veterans, and all who stand in defense of our nation, is appreciated.

Sincerely,

DENNIS CULLINAN,
National Legislative Service.

NAVAL RESERVE ASSOCIATION,
Alexandria, VA, July 10, 2007.

Senator BLANCHE LINCOLN,
*U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR LINCOLN: On behalf of the Naval Reserve Association, and 76,000 current members of the Navy Reserve, I am writing to thank you for your untiring support of our military men and women and in particular for your efforts to establish a "total force" GI Bill that matches educational benefits to service and sacrifice.

NRA strongly supports your intention to sponsor floor amendments to the Senate version of the national defense authorization act that would forge a Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) that better supports armed forces recruitment and helps our veterans including returning Guard and Reserve warriors to realize their full potential as citizens and soldiers.

The House favorably endorsed a provision in its defense bill that authorizes the transfer of reserve educational benefits programs from the Armed Forces code to Title 38, the laws governing veterans' benefits. We applaud this action as an essential first step in MGIB reform and respectfully recommend that you and Senate colleagues co-sponsor identical language as an Amendment to the Senate defense authorization.

In addition, NRA thanks you for your work last year in pressing for a 10-year readjustment benefit for mobilized reservists who

earn MGIB entitlement under Chapter 1607 of 10 U.S. Code. We recommend that you again sponsor this critical equity provision.

Guard and Reserve servicemembers called to active duty to defend the nation in the War on Terror are the only group of veterans who have no access to their MGIB benefits after completing their service commitment. That's not only unfair, but it sends a signal that their service and sacrifice are not valued. Since 9-11, over 585,000 Guard and Reserve members have been called to serve during this critical time.

A fraction of our population—about 1%—is defending the rest of the nation during this long, difficult and complex war. We must do all we can to ensure our National Guard and Reserve warriors realize their full potential as citizens during and after their service as Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Soldiers, and Guardsmen.

NRA and our colleagues in The Partnership for Veterans' Education, and the TMC thank you most sincerely for your leadership in sponsoring amendments that honor the service and sacrifice of our Guard and Reserve warrior-citizens.

Sincerely,

C. WILLIAMS COANE,
RADM, USN (retired),
Executive Director.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Again, I urge my colleagues—I strongly urge my colleagues—to support these amendments. These are the right things to do on behalf of these unbelievable individuals, these unbelievable Americans, these citizen soldiers who leave their homes and their jobs. They leave their communities and their families to go in the bravest of manners to defend this great country, to defend our freedom. It is the least we can do for those we owe so much and to reassure future generations that a grateful nation will not forget them when their military service is complete. And, more importantly, that we will partner with them to reach the ultimate in their potential, the ultimate in their desire to make themselves the best they can be when they return home.

I encourage any colleagues to support both of our amendments.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. KERRY. Madam President, I rise today to speak to the Levin-Reid-Kerry et. al amendment with respect to Iraq. Today the President made a partial report on Iraq. And while it is true there has been some tactical military success, no amount of spinning, no amount of focus on the military component can obscure the bottom line reality in Iraq today.

That reality is clear. There has been no meaningful political progress. In the long run, that is the only progress that matters, that makes a difference to our policy because it is the politics that is producing the killing and the chaos in Iraq.

Unless and until Iraqis resolve their fundamental political differences, any security gains will be temporary at best, particularly given the numbers of troops that are committed to that security, and given the difficulties that

we already understand in terms of deployment schedules.

That is a fundamental underlying reality that colleagues in the Senate need to focus on. Any tactical gain in the short term, whether it is in Anbar Province, Diyala, or elsewhere, is welcome now, but the fact is, it is fundamentally temporary absent the political resolution that is critical to ultimately ending the violence.

So moving the goalposts, dressing up the failure to meet strict benchmarks as progress, those are, frankly, rationalizations for failure over the long term. They are not plans for success. It is hard when you measure the absence of political progress over the course of the last months against these temporary tactical gains. It is very difficult to suggest that we are doing anything except sort of committing American forces, troops, to a kind of holding action for hope, hope that there is some turn and some kind of outcome.

I think most of us would rather have the U.S. military committed to what we all consider to be a winning strategy, not a hopeful strategy. Meanwhile, in the middle of the President's report, partial report today, another, frankly, more chilling and important report tells us that while we have been bogged down and distracted in Iraq, al-Qaida, which the President keeps referring to as the central enemy, al-Qaida has found a safe haven in Pakistan. Al-Qaida has rebuilt its organization.

Today, top intelligence officials tell the United States that al-Qaida is better positioned to strike the West than they have been at any time since 9/11. I think any American hearing this, after these several thousand lives have been sacrificed in Iraq, to hear that al-Qaida, which is the principal focus of the war on terrorism, is stronger today after all of these billions of dollars and lives lost in Iraq, is a stunning turn of events, shocking turn of events, one that ought to stop everyone in the Senate to collectively turn our policy to where it ought to be, which is the focus on al-Qaida and not the focus in Iraq.

In fact, what has happened in Anbar Province proves that al-Qaida can become more of a minimalist kind of threat in Iraq itself when measured against the threat of the political killing that is taking place between Sunni and Shia, Shia and Sunni.

Our principal focus, notwithstanding this report from our own intelligence agencies, is where? It is on Iraq. Not principally where it ought to be, in Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan. Iraq is not just a distraction from the fight against terrorists, it is, frankly, al-Qaida's best fundraising tool. It is al-Qaida's best organizational magnet. You did not have to wait until September in order to understand what is happening today and what will continue to happen in the absence of any measure of political progress.

So what we need is not a step away by the Senate, not some sort of delaying tactic to wait for the magic of hope

to produce itself in September, what we need is the hard work of the Senate to produce a policy for change now. Two days ago I heard some of my colleagues come to the floor and question why we are having this debate now when the White House is going to report on the escalation in September?

I heard the Senator from Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS, say: This is not the time to alter the policy we established about 2 months ago.

I heard Senator KYL from Arizona say: We need to wait for the report in September before making judgments about what to do next.

I heard the senior Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN, ask—and these are his words: Why do we have to keep taking up the Iraq issue when we know full well in September there will be a major debate on this issue?

Well, I have respect for all of the opinions of all colleagues in the Senate. I particularly have respect and know how much my friend, my colleague from Arizona, cares about American troops and understands the price of war. But I think that is the wrong question. Those are the wrong questions.

The American people understand why we ought to debate this issue now. The answer is very simple, and it is very compelling. It is because American soldiers are dying now, and because the escalation, the purpose of the escalation—which was to provide cover for the Iraqi politicians to make compromises—can be judged a failure now.

When a policy is not working, you do not wait for an artificial timeline to fix it; you fix it now. The very same voices who have come to the floor for years condemning artificial deadlines now want to wait for more Americans to die and more Iraqis to kill each other, until the artificial deadline of September, regardless of what the facts tell us today.

I believe they want to do it so President Bush can deliver his report, even though we know today what the heart of that report will be. In fact, the President delivered a partial report today. I think most people understand, because it is obvious, that the facts are beginning to accelerate the need to be able to have a more rapid response.

The report in September, I guarantee my colleagues, will reflect exactly what we see today. Violence will be up in some places, and it will be down in others. There will be some tactical successes. Our military will deserve the credit for those, and our soldiers will have earned those tactical successes the hard way. But no matter what sacrifices they have made, and they will have made extraordinary sacrifices, the fact remains that absent the political differences, which already we are hearing they will not make, and they are not prepared to engage in, absent that, the civil war will be raging on and squabbling Iraqi politicians and sectarian forces will refuse to compromise. And, most importantly, despite the so-called breathing room that

the escalation was supposed to provide, there will be no real political progress.

What is happening now is as disturbing as anything I have seen in the 23 years that I have been in the Senate. I came here in 1985 during the height of the Cold War. President Reagan was at that time leading us in an effort to try to confront the continued nuclear confrontation under which we had lived since the end of World War II. I think all of us remember well what a critical moment of confrontation that was.

But I came here principally on this issue of war and peace. It was also a time when we were deeply caught up in an illegal war in Central America, and the issue of the contras came to dominate the debate in Washington for a period of time. I mention that because the issues of the lessons of war and how America goes to war and what we do has been something that has been at the center of my involvement in public life.

I must say, what I see today happening, I regret, reminds me of what I thought was a lesson that we had learned in the course of the Vietnam war, and something that we had always resolved to avoid.

Many of us remember how then-President Nixon continued our involvement because he didn't want history to judge him as having lost a war, notwithstanding that he didn't begin it, he inherited it. So we continued our intervention in a civil war for pride and to save face, not because we had a winning strategy. Presidents and politicians may have the luxury of worrying about losing face or worrying about their legacy, but the Senate has the responsibility to worry about young Americans and innocent civilians who are losing their lives now for a policy that is failing now.

In recent weeks, some have reminded me of a question I asked when I returned from service in Vietnam almost 40 years ago, when I spoke from my heart about what I thought was wrong with that war. Back in 1971, I was privileged to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and raised the question: How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake? I never thought I would be reliving that question again. I never thought I would have parents of young Americans killed in Iraq look me in the eye and tell me: Senator, my son died in vain.

On a personal level, I happen to disagree with that statement. I think each of my colleagues probably does also. I believe that any American—I heard the Senator from Idaho talking about this—no matter the bad decisions made in Washington, no matter the faults of the policy, any American who gives up life or limb for love of country has never done so in vain. Because service to country under any circumstances is the highest calling there is. I would like to be able to tell those parents that their sons and daughters died for a policy that was equal to their service and equal to their sac-

rific. I thought we had learned something from Vietnam. I thought we had learned something from a war that went on and on, a war that was escalated long after Presidents and policymakers knew that no number of American troops could end the civil war between the Vietnamese. Here we are back in the same place today, where no number of American troops in Iraq can end a civil war between Iraqis.

I think most of our colleagues understand this war in Iraq was a disastrous mistake and the policy being pursued today which doesn't resolve the fundamental differences that are propelling Iraqis to kill Iraqis is itself a mistake. So we are seeing a war prolonged and prosecuted not for a winning strategy. No general has come to us, no administration official has come to us in 407, where we meet for our secret briefings, or in any committee and said: This is a winning strategy. What we have is a hope, a wing, and a prayer that somehow these Iraqis are going to come together and make some decisions.

But we don't even have the kind of leverage diplomacy that war deserves to maximize the ability of those people to come together. We are seeing a war prolonged to prosecute it not for a winning strategy but for a refusal to accept reality.

What is that reality? We have heard it from General Casey, General Abizaid, General Petraeus, from the Secretary of State, from the President, and the Vice President—there is no military solution.

Each Member has to ask themselves in these next days, what is our responsibility to our soldiers and to our country—not to our political party, not to an ideology. What is our responsibility to the soldiers and to country? I think it is pretty straightforward. It is to get the policy right, not in September but now.

The only question on this Senate floor now is whether we are going to have the courage to change the policy and get it right. The only question is whether we are going to stop this administration from adding to the thousands of mistakes compounded one upon the other or whether we are going to say: Well, we would like to do it. We kind of have the responsibility to. We hear people in cloakrooms privately saying: I think it is wrong. Boy, it is screwed up. But it doesn't translate into votes. It is that simple. If you think the policy is broken now, then we ought to fix it now, because lives are at stake, as are the interests of our country. Our security is at stake, and the war on terror is at stake.

If anybody needs a reminder of the urgency, I say to them respectfully: You don't have to wait until September to get a reminder. All you have to do is go out to Arlington Cemetery almost any day of the week. You can see the many military funerals but particularly those of servicemembers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. You can see the precise military honor

given to each of those soldiers, the flags draping the coffin rippling in the breeze. You can see the honor guard folding that flag meticulously into that sharp triangle of blue and white stars and then handing it to the loved ones, the wife, the mother, husband, father. Then hear those words: On behalf of a grateful nation, and watch people crumble.

We are losing about 100 soldiers a month. I ask my colleagues: How many more times is that scene going to be repeated between now and September? How many more times is that scene going to be repeated before this institution does what it is supposed to do? How are you going to feel in September if you finally wind up saying: Well, I think the policy is broken now? And what will happen with respect to the parents of those soldiers and their families, those who gave their lives so we could wait for a report to tell us the obvious, what we know today?

Over a year ago, Senator FEINGOLD and I came to the Senate floor and we asked our colleagues to confront this very reality, to recognize the fact that our own generals knew even then there was no American military solution to an Iraqi civil war, to acknowledge that the political progress necessary for the Iraqis to end their civil war would come only if America compelled them to act by imposing meaningful deadlines and leveraging those deadlines with legitimate diplomatic effort. That was 1 year ago. We got 13 votes. People said at the time: Well, we are not ready. I am not there yet. One thousand Americans have died since then. I ask those folks: What about now? Are you ready now or will it take another thousand?

It is not the numbers per se, because America has lost many more people in other wars. What it is is the numbers measured against the strategy and the progress. That is where our responsibility lies. By any measurement, we have a requirement to respond now. Those 13 votes have now grown to more than 50 votes today, but still the policy is the same.

Today Senator LEVIN and Senator REED, myself and others are asking the Members of the Senate to look hard at what we are proposing. Don't fall prey to the quick hit, easy stereotype, political denunciation of what is happening here. This is a legitimate policy proposal which, if it were joined in in a bipartisan way, would send a critical message to Iraqis and to folks in the region about the dynamic that has to change in order to truly meet all of our strategic interests in that region.

I have heard some people use descriptions that it is a recipe for failure. Well, measured against what, No. 1? No. 2, it is the only way, according to most of the experts outside the Senate, to actually leverage a shift in behavior by the Iraqis who today believe they can continue to play the American presence off for their own political purposes. The fact is, it is only by shifting

to a different deployment, which is what we do. There is no precipitous, complete withdrawal from Iraq, to the chagrin of some people who think there absolutely should be. There is a responsible, calculated, carefully timed process by which, together with our own deployment schedules, we have laid out an ability for the President to continue to finish the training, to chase al-Qaida and prosecute the war on terror, and to protect American forces.

According to the Iraq Study Group, according to all of the outside analyses that have looked at this issue, the fact is, those are the only legitimate things we ought to be called on to do a year from now. Nobody is talking about next month or 2 months from now that suddenly Iraq would be abandoned. The fact is, we have come to a moment where the private hand wringing we see in the elevators and in private conversations has run its course. It is time to speak one's conscience publicly through votes, not privately.

It is legitimate to suggest that to wait until September for a report, where most of the intelligence community and most of the observers we have talked to who have followed this issue closely and report to us appropriately tell us themselves that there is precious little, if any, advance with respect to the political compromise, makes it exceedingly difficult to be able to suggest that. I think we have lost 523 Americans who have died since the escalation started. In the next 2 months at the rate of 100 a month, you are looking at over 200 that we know will die for a policy that remains a mistake over those next 2 months.

Let me lay out for a moment where we are with respect to this political solution, because it makes the picture even more stark. It has been over 1 year now since the Maliki government took power. What have we asked of them? What have they agreed to? What have they accomplished?

Virtually nothing accomplished politically. But it is not the first time the Iraqis have not met any of the requests made of them and items agreed to. The fact is that 9 months ago was the deadline for Iraqis to approve a new oil law and a provincial election law. Neither one has been approved. Eight months ago was the deadline for a new de-Baathification law to help bring the Sunnis into the government. Guess what. It hasn't been approved, and nothing happened as a consequence of its not being approved. Seven months ago was the deadline for Iraqis to approve legislation to disarm the militias. Absolutely no progress has been made on this crucial legislation and the militias continue to wreak havoc. Six months ago was the deadline for Iraqis to complete a constitutional review process. The constitutional committee hasn't even drafted proposed amendments, and the Iraqis remain far apart on basic issues such as federalism and the fate of the divided city of Kirkuk.

So we find ourselves today no closer to a political solution than we were when the Maliki government took power over 1 year ago, but over 1,100 American troops have given their lives since that time. We are no closer than we were in January when the President decided to disregard key elements of the Iraq Study Group and announced the escalation, but over 600 additional American troops have died since then. Without real deadlines to pressure the Iraqis to a new reality, we will not be able to leverage their behavior. If you can't do it that way, having seen that we can't do it this other way, it may be that you can't do it, in which case American troops should not be caught in the middle of what they are determined to pursue.

One-third of the Cabinet in Iraq, including the major Sunni party, is currently boycotting the Government. Iraq's Parliament, which cannot even muster a quorum more than once every week or two, is reportedly still going to go on vacation for the entire month of August without having met their schedule.

It is pretty hard to discern how you turn to the parent of a troop who is maimed or killed in the course of the month of August while the Iraqi politicians are vacationing without even meeting one of the political requirements that has been set out. So I think there is a guarantee they are not going to meet the political progress before September, absent some change that is not currently on the horizon.

The front page of Sunday's Washington Post tells us pretty much all we need to know:

[T]he Iraqi government is unlikely to meet any of the political and security goals or timelines President Bush set for it in January when he announced a major shift in U.S. policy.

So time is not on our side, and it has not been on our side for a long time, and no escalation is going to change that.

The President keeps telling us, and tells Americans, that we must not abandon the fight against al-Qaida in Iraq and leave them with a safe haven. Well, how many times do we have to say it? We all agree with that. That is not even on the table. No one is talking about abandoning Iraq to al-Qaida. No one is talking about not continuing to prosecute the war against al-Qaida.

In fact, in the Levin-Reed-Kerry amendment there is a specific statement with respect to a specific provision with respect to the President's need to continue to prosecute al-Qaida in Iraq. We all agree with that. That is not the issue. What it is is a phony argument, and I think our troops and the country deserve better than a phony argument. We deserve more than a Presidential straw man in a debate while real men and women are fighting and putting their lives on the line for us.

Our bill keeps in place the troops necessary to prosecute al-Qaida. Our

bill keeps in place the troops necessary to complete the training of Iraqis to stand up for themselves. Our bill keeps in place the troops necessary to protect American facilities and forces. And 1 year from now that is all our mission ought to be.

We have troops in many other parts of the region—Kuwait, Bahrain, in the Gulf, and many other places—and we have the ability to do what we need to do to represent our interests with respect to Iran and with respect to the region. But we must redefine our mission and focus on our vital national interests, and chief among those is fighting al-Qaida smartly.

I believe it is fundamentally wrong to sacrifice over 100 American troops per month as we stretch our military past the breaking point for a policy that we know does not address the fundamental issues and resolve those issues. The troops deserve to know they are being asked to sacrifice for real progress. It is wrong to keep spending over \$10 billion each month—\$456 billion in total—for this war of choice. We cannot continue telling Americans that refereeing an Iraqi civil war is worth more in our blood and treasure than it would have been to provide Head Start for a year to 60 million of our children or to provide nearly 4 years of health care to every child in America or to provide a tenfold increase in foreign aid to express the real face and values of America all over the world.

In fact, all of the money that has been spent in Iraq could have funded a Middle East development plan nearly four times as large as the Marshall Plan, a plan that would have helped reduce radicalism rather than enflame it.

We also cannot continue to squander our moral authority and offer al-Qaida a greater recruiting tool than they could ever have hoped to create for themselves.

So my hope is we would work to find a genuine bipartisan majority in the Senate, a majority of conscience, a pragmatic and patriotic majority committed to work across party lines to right a failed policy in Iraq and leave in place a sustainable strategy.

Now, let me say a word about that to my colleagues.

We keep hearing the words "precipitous" and "failure." None of us want failure. We want success. What we are hearing today is—we may have differing views about how you get it; it is not often talked about, but it is clear, and I think it should be talked about—that if we are unsuccessful in seeking the kind of political compromise necessary, there will be a lot of killing that will continue, and there will be people who have put themselves on the line to fight for their own future and for democracy whom we will have obligations to. We need to live up to them.

That is another lesson of Vietnam.

We need desperately to work together in the best traditions of the Senate and the country to find what I

think is real common ground—that we have interests in the region, interests in Iraq, interests with respect to the Middle East peace process, that we will have long-term interests and obligations no matter who is President of the United States or how we approach this and that we need to shift course in order to get to that place.

Now, some have insisted on seeing this entire issue exclusively through the prism of victory or defeat over an enemy in battle. But that simply is not the reality of what we see in Iraq today in a civil war. Iraq is a chaotic society, a failed state. The real question is: How do you work together to craft a strategy that is sustainable militarily, politically, financially, and diplomatically? There are areas of broad bipartisan agreement for those who are willing to do that work of building consensus.

First of all, I think there is agreement there will be some residual presence among at least the majority of the people on our side of the aisle. In addition, all of us are concerned that our redeployment from Iraq must not happen in a manner that draws us back into a greater conflict at a later date. We ought to be working together to lay the groundwork not just for the next few months but for the next years down the road throughout the region.

There is broad agreement that we must refocus our mission on what ought to be our core objective: fighting terrorists. Indeed, in the alternative, we are creating more terrorists daily as a result of our policy than if we were to shift it.

So refocusing the mission means American troops should be hunting and killing al-Qaida and not being killed on patrol through the streets of Baghdad in the middle of a civil strife where they become a target of opportunity for any person who wants to create a headline.

It means training Iraqis to patrol Iraqi streets and refocusing our mission on preventing this war from spreading into a regional conflict.

And finally—and this is perhaps most important of all because you cannot get to any of the other things if you do not do this; and we have not done it—we need to embark on a major diplomatic outreach to restore America's influence and credibility in the Middle East. I will offer an amendment asking the Senate to go on record supporting a standing conference for the region, including the Permanent Five of the United Nations and all the regional partners and neighbors and parties, in order to reclaim the diplomatic initiative in Iraq and throughout the region.

This debate also ought to be part of a larger framework. In Lebanon, the Siniora Government is hanging on by a thread as it confronts Sunni extremists sympathetic to al-Qaida in the north and Shia extremists led by an empowered Hezbollah in the south. Iran and Syria have stepped into the vacuum, leading reconstruction efforts after the

last war and creating a greater connection to the people in the street as a result. Now they are rearming Hezbollah for the next war. The Palestinians have fought a brief civil war that left an emboldened Hamas in control of Gaza, and again Iran and Syria stand poised to take advantage of that.

Never has there been a more important moment to try to move together collectively, diplomatically in that effort. None of these events, frankly, should have taken us by surprise because King Abdullah of Jordan loudly warned of three civil wars last year. Yet time and again we seem to be taken by surprise when events on the ground spin out of control, and then we are left scrambling to patch together an ad hoc response from half a world away. That simply cannot continue. It is not in our interest. It certainly is not in the interest of the region.

So we need a reliable multilateral regional forum for preventing these situations from becoming crises—and for responding when they do. That is why we have to lead the effort to convene Iraq's leaders and key regional players in the effort to do that.

In the end, we need to reach for the best traditions of the Senate and look back to the bipartisan accomplishments of men such as Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg, who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and worked closely with Democratic President Harry Truman, and together they helped to create—were the principal leaders in creating—a new world order and a winning strategy in the Cold War. They cooperated on a series of institutions and treaties—NATO, the IMF, the U.N. Charter, the Marshall Plan—and all of those outlived both of them.

When Arthur Vandenberg passed away in 1951, the Chaplain at his funeral said:

We thank Thee that in the gathering storm of aggression which now rages, Thy servant Arthur H. Vandenberg, in a time that called for greatness, grew into greatness.

This is a long time since the time of Arthur Vandenberg and Harry Truman, but for the Senate to live up to its own obligations and possibilities, I believe we ought to go back to the politics that stops at the water's edge when it comes to foreign policy. I think we ought to grab that opportunity here and now to change our policy in Iraq. Why? Not for partisan advantage but to strengthen our country in the pursuit of our interests in the region and to truly support our troops and provide the kind of direction that will strengthen America and strengthen us in the war on terror.

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, I support this amendment for the dignified treatment of wounded warriors. It creates a comprehensive policy for the care and management of wounded military servicemembers and addresses the health care needs of servicemembers and their families. We urgently need this provision for a seamless transition from military to civilian life.

The policy and standards for the DOD and the Veterans' Administration in this provision will streamline medical and physical disability evaluation processes between the two agencies, allowing for more immediate attention to the care of our wounded instead of focusing on paperwork for the board. This is an exhausting process.

The care of our wounded servicemembers' families is addressed by reimbursing them for related expenses such as travel to medical appointments, or providing medical care to those family members who are providing support to severely injured servicemembers.

This is needed legislation to continue and enhance treatment and diagnosis for traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder, by developing Centers of Excellence, establishing requirements for research, and developing a standard process for pre and post deployment screenings. The amendment will assure a fully coordinated system and it improves the medical tracking process and establishes protocols for quality assurance for deployed servicemembers.

This legislation also directs a jointly integrated policy, created and administered by the Department of Defense and the Veterans' Administration, to better manage and transition servicemembers exiting active service to civilian life.

It requires these two Departments to develop a joint electronic medical record by 2010.

It establishes a joint DOD-VA program office that is responsible for the development, testing, and implementation of the joint health record.

This will expedite the transition of servicemembers to the VA and allow for immediate and uninterrupted treatment by VA clinics and hospitals.

The policies set forth in this amendment will enhance the care for the severely ill or injured by ensuring those former servicemembers who were injured between 2001 and 2012 will receive medical and dental care up to 5 years after separation from the military.

These initiatives are all very much in need to better provide the support and care our dedicated servicemembers deserve, especially after putting their lives on the line.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise today in strong support of the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act. This legislation will bring long needed reforms to the transition process between the Department of Defense and the VA.

The controversy at Walter Reed again brought to light the shortcomings in the process our returning veterans must deal with in their difficult transition from soldier to civilian. Just as the living conditions that came to light are unacceptable, so too are the countless stories detailing the maze of forms, hearings, and medical evaluations that prevent so many of our veterans from getting the health care and benefits they need and a grateful nation wishes to provide them.

Too often, it seems that rather than thanking the soldier for their sacrifice, this system sets up yet another battle of bureaucracy. Too often, it seems that the system is stacked against the very soldiers it is designed to help. Too often, veterans must seek out their own treatment options and benefits or risk missing deadlines and losing benefits. It doesn't have to be this way. We have an obligation not only to fulfill the promises we make to America's fighting men and women, but to do so in a manner that ensures the benefits we owe them are made readily available.

That this bill will push DOD and VA to prepare a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to help the soldier in their transition to civilian is a critical correction to a long-flawed process. Currently, soldiers can be discharged with little more than directions to the nearest VA and a stack of paperwork a team of lawyers would struggle to complete. The chasm that currently exists between DOD and VA has swallowed too many bright and talented individuals trying to put their life back together after sacrificing so much for this great Nation.

This amendment requires a comprehensive policy on the transition of our wounded soldiers back to civilian life. It will push the reform of such problem areas such as the medical hold status, a situation in which soldiers can sit for months on end with their life on hold while DOD decides what to do with them; the medical evaluation process where soldiers' disability ratings are chronically underrated; and improved sharing of records between DOD and VA, amazingly not a common practice even in this day and age.

I am particularly proud to support this bill because of the priority it places on treatment of traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. Medical research still has a long way to go before we can wholly treat TBI's and PTSD, but this bill goes a long way towards creating an extensive strategy for diagnosing and rehabilitating servicemembers afflicted with these conditions.

We must lift the stigma and educate soldiers that these conditions are as real as a bullet wound, and can be just as deadly. This bill does just that. The emphasis on pre-and post-deployment assessments will revolutionize the military's process of diagnosis and treatment.

Due to the unique nature of these injuries and the delay in symptoms that so often occurs, many veterans have gone without treatment and suffered a lifetime of pain and anguish because we have not had these safeguards in place. Thankfully, with this bill the Congress is saying, "no longer." No longer will we stand idly by while veterans are discharged from DOD and fade into the shadows of society. No longer will we turn a blind eye to cries for help from America's bravest. No longer will we ignore the needs of vet-

erans who have sacrificed so much for their country.

I am proud to support this proposal extending health care to medically retired servicemembers for 3 additional years. Sometimes we forget that when these veterans leave the military, they leave behind their career, their pay and their way of life. By allowing them steady access to health care, we give them some sense of normalcy as they begin a new chapter in their lives.

I do believe there is much work left to be done, and as a Congress we must remain vigilant to ensure that the spirit as well as the letter of this legislation becomes law and the reforms are carried out to their fullest. One way of remaining vigilant in the pursuit of a smooth transition from soldier to veteran is to provide resources to outside watchdogs to help ensure transparency and advocacy in the process. That is why I have introduced the Veterans Navigator Act, which will provide \$25 million in Federal grants over the next 5 fiscal years to create a pilot program to fund "Navigators" to help veterans enter the system and will build on existing programs run by veterans service organizations, VSOs, and other experienced organizations. While the dignified treatment of wounded warriors amendment will bring about many long-overdue reforms to the transition process, veteran navigators could be particularly critical as independent nongovernmental sources of information and advice for the veteran during their transition. In fact, navigators could play a vital role in the successful implementation of the changes made in the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act, as they can be watchdog and counsel, whistleblower and advocate. In short, because the veteran navigators will not be part of the government system, they will be better able to advocate for veterans.

The very least that we can do is ensure that all of these brave men and women are able to access the medical benefits to which they are entitled and the care which they require, particularly in this, their time of greatest need. At some point in each of our lives, we might need a guiding hand to help us find our way. These brave men and women went out across the world for us, with this bill I believe we are stepping out for them.

Mr. WARNER. Madam President, providing for our men and women in uniform, and their families, is our highest priority on the Armed Services Committee, and this bill will provide a comprehensive approach to caring for those, who through their courage, have sacrificed greatly for our country. Our Nation owes these brave men and women nothing less than the finest possible care.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent, if it is agreeable with Senator LEVIN, that Senator STABENOW be allowed 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, that, of course, would be fine with me, but we have a vote scheduled at 4 o'clock. If that is going to delay that vote, we better clear that with folks who may be relying upon a 4 o'clock vote.

Madam President, how long will the Senator from Michigan wish to speak?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Ideally, 10 minutes, 8 minutes—somewhere in that range—7, 8 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, then I join in that unanimous consent request that the Senator from Michigan be recognized for up to 10 minutes.

Mr. MCCAIN. So 3 minutes after 4 o'clock.

Mr. LEVIN. Now the vote will be delayed until about 5 after 4 o'clock.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, first, I thank the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts for his eloquence and passion and knowledge and leadership on all of these critical issues related to Iraq and what we need to be doing to keep our country safe.

I thank also Senator CARL LEVIN, our senior Senator from Michigan, for all his wonderful leadership as he has moved this bill and so many other bills through the Congress that deal with supporting our troops, being a strong military, and now making sure we are there for our troops when they come home.

I thank also Senator JOHN MCCAIN for his graciousness today, as well as for his work with Senator LEVIN. I thank Senator DANNY AKAKA, chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and LARRY CRAIG, the ranking member, for their bipartisan effort.

This has truly been an excellent example of what we can do when we work together on something such as the wounded warrior amendment, which I am proud to be a cosponsor of. But the bipartisan effort, the effort between two committees of the Senate, working together, has been wonderful, and we now have an amendment in front of us, the Levin-McCain and others amendment, that is critically important to pass.

I stand here today as a daughter of a World War II Navy vet and the wife of an Air Force vet of 14 years, and I am very proud of what we are doing and what our new majority is doing to advocate for our troops and our veterans.

For too many soldiers and marines, the flight out of Iraq or Afghanistan is the first step in a long journey back to the lives they left at home.

Those wounded in combat face a second tour of duty—a tour of duty marked by long hours of rehabilitation, often painful medical procedures, and a physical or psychological adjustment to a life lived with the scars of war.

When the men and women of our Armed Forces put on the uniform, they

are making a promise to defend America. In return, we promise them that their Nation will be there for them when they come home.

Our Armed Forces truly are the finest patriots our Nation has to offer—truly. As members of an all-volunteer military, charged with defending the greatest democracy on Earth, our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines have proven their bravery, courage, and honor time and again. They don't need more empty promises. What they need and what we owe them is a system that works for them when they are wounded, either physically or mentally, in the service of our country.

I am very proud of the fact that our new majority has made both supporting our troops and our veterans one of our very top priorities. The budget resolution we passed earlier this year places fully funding veterans' health care, working with all of our veterans service organizations, as one of our very top budget priorities. Now we have in front of us another important way to support our troops coming home who are wounded.

We are a nation at war. We know that. We are currently ill-equipped to deal with the human consequences of that war.

The administration's failed planning for this war did not end at the borders of Iraq. It stretched into Walter Reed Hospital and into every veterans' health care facility, into every community that has sent an able-bodied son or daughter off to fight, only to be faced with the realities of an injured veteran returning home. Repeated redeployments have only compounded the problem, as we talked about yesterday, as we debated the important Webb amendment which, I might add, was passed and supported by 56 Members, although we could not break the filibuster of the Republican caucus. Mental health injuries have increased dramatically as troops have been forced to face their second, third, and fourth combat redeployments. The lack of time between redeployments has increased the physical danger to our troops by sending them back on the front lines, overtired, underequipped, and without the increased training they need.

Our heavy reliance on our National Guard has resulted in wounded veterans returning to cities and towns all across our country, often to communities that are far away from veterans' health care facilities or the traditional infrastructure of the military health care system. Our troops deserve better in Iraq, and they deserve better when they come home.

Earlier this year a bright light was turned on the deplorable conditions faced by some of our returning wounded veterans at Walter Reed. The true tragedy of these events is that they are merely a symptom of larger problems with a system that too often has let our soldiers and veterans down. I am very proud of the leadership coming

from our caucus, our leader, Senator REID, and our caucus leadership, in focusing the light of day and taking action that has brought us today to this very important amendment. There is no room for bureaucratic or political squabbling when it comes to the treatment of our soldiers and our veterans. The system should serve one mandate and one mandate only: providing the highest quality service available to all of them, while causing them the least amount of personal hassle and frustration.

Senator LEVIN's wounded warrior amendment is a much needed step, and it is a needed systemwide approach that has been put together on a bipartisan basis. It addresses many problems that plague this far too often burdened and difficult process while enhancing health care for wounded service men and women, including treatment of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder, which has been viewed now as the signature injury of this war.

The number of casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan is growing every day. These brave men and women don't have time to wait. They need their country to step up right now, and that is what we have the opportunity to do together with this amendment.

We have many disagreements in this body. The various pieces of legislation we face on a daily basis require robust debate and oftentimes we find ourselves on different sides of the issue of the day. I can't imagine, though, how any one of us would oppose this amendment. The facts are simple. The system is broken and in need of repair. The ones paying the price are our soldiers, our veterans, and their families. We need to make changes and we need to make them now.

This was a war of choice in Iraq, not of necessity. But dealing with the consequences of this war is unquestionably a necessity. Our troops have done their job and now we need to do ours. I urge my colleagues to support the wounded warrior amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 2024

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there are now 2 minutes equally divided prior to a vote on amendment No. 2024 offered by the Senator from Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, this amendment, which has been modified in agreement with my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle to reach an amendment I think we can all support, would state it is the policy of the United States that we should have a system that will protect the United States and its allies against Iranian ballistic missiles. The findings are that Congress finds that Iran maintains a nuclear program in continued defiance of the international community, while developing ballistic missiles of increasing sophistication and range that pose

a threat to the forward-deployed forces of the United States and to its North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies in Europe, and which eventually pose a threat to the United States homeland.

That is the problem we are dealing with. So we would state with clarity, so there is not any doubt about it—and I think our bill we passed in committee does that, but some have misinterpreted it, in my opinion—that it would state that it is our policy to develop and deploy as soon as technologically possible, in conjunction with allies and other nations wherever possible, an effective defense against the threat of Iran as described in the previous paragraph.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SESSIONS. And to develop an appropriate response.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Madam President, the amendment as modified is within the provisions of the funding in the underlying bill, because the bill would authorize an additional \$315 million to increase or accelerate several near-term missile defense programs that are specifically designed to protect our forward-deployed forces, our allies, and our friends, for example, the Patriot PAC-3, the Aegis BMD program, and the THAAD system. So it is entirely consistent.

I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr. DODD), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. LOTT. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

The result was announced—yeas 90, nays 5, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 245 Leg.]

YEAS—90

Akaka	Coburn	Harkin
Alexander	Cochran	Hatch
Allard	Coleman	Hutchinson
Barrasso	Collins	Inhofe
Baucus	Conrad	Inouye
Bayh	Corker	Isakson
Bennett	Cornyn	Kennedy
Bingaman	Craig	Kerry
Bond	Crapo	Klobuchar
Boxer	DeMint	Kohl
Brown	Dole	Kyl
Brownback	Domenici	Landrieu
Bunning	Dorgan	Lautenberg
Burr	Durbin	Levin
Byrd	Ensign	Lieberman
Cantwell	Enzi	Lincoln
Cardin	Feingold	Lott
Carper	Graham	Lugar
Casey	Grassley	Martinez
Chambliss	Gregg	McCain
Clinton	Hagel	McCaskill

McConnell	Reid	Specter
Menendez	Roberts	Stabenow
Mikulski	Rockefeller	Stevens
Murkowski	Salazar	Sununu
Murray	Schumer	Thune
Nelson (FL)	Sessions	Voinovich
Nelson (NE)	Shelby	Warner
Pryor	Smith	Whitehouse
Reed	Snowe	Wyden

NAYS—5

Feinstein	Sanders	Webb
Leahy	Tester	

NOT VOTING—5

Biden	Johnson	Vitter
Dodd	Obama	

The amendment (No. 2024), as modified, was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, the next order of business we agreed upon will be to dispose of the wounded warrior legislation. There are three pending amendments which have now all been cleared. They need to be prepared and accepted. It may take us 20 minutes or so. Then there will be a vote.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, if I can tell my friend, I think it will only take us about 2 minutes since we are in agreement, and then we can move to wounded warriors, for the benefit of our colleagues.

Mr. LEVIN. Five minutes before a vote can begin, that will be fine. The sooner the better. We are all happy with that schedule. Is Senator DORGAN on the floor?

Mr. LEAHY. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LEVIN. I will be happy to yield. I will be happy to yield in a minute to the Senator from Vermont. The next business, if it is agreeable with the ranking member, will be to dispose of the Dorgan amendment, at which point we are going to Levin-Reed. Is my understanding correct?

Mr. STEVENS. What is the Dorgan amendment?

Mr. LEVIN. The Dorgan amendment is an al-Qaida amendment. We are trying to work out a UC that involves a series of amendments around Levin-Reed, including the Cornyn amendment.

Mr. MCCAIN. If the Senator will yield for a question.

Mr. LEVIN. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. MCCAIN. It is our intention to set it up so there is at least a side by side offered by Senator CORNYN, and there may be additional side by sides, if necessary. Is that our basic agreement?

Mr. LEVIN. Assuming cloture is invoked and we get to a vote on Levin-Reed, at that point there will be a side by side in this UC with the Cornyn amendment, but we have to leave open the possibility, then, of a side by side for an amendment with Cornyn.

Now I will be happy to yield to the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I wonder if the Senator will just give me 4 minutes. Vermont has lost per capita more men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan than any other State. One is

being interred tomorrow. I wonder if I may have 4 minutes to speak about that person in morning business because the family will be here tomorrow for interment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, reserving the right to object, the distinguished bill managers and I have been talking about a procedure whereby I was under the understanding that I would be allowed to lay down my amendment. It would be then set aside, and then later there would be an attempt to structure a side by side with the Reed-Levin amendment and the Cornyn amendment perhaps for next week, but it will have to be done by unanimous consent.

Mr. LEVIN. If the Senator will yield, the staff is preparing a UC which covers the entire subject. It is too complex for us to say something and get into more trouble. Let's just get the UC.

Mr. MCCAIN. If I may respond, it is the intention to make sure there would be a side by side if the procedure, if it comes up—

Mr. LEVIN. If we get to a vote on Levin-Reed, it is our intention, and it will be implemented in a UC, that Senator CORNYN's amendment, which he wanted to be voted on side by side, would be voted on side by side, but we then need to have the opportunity to have a side by side with the Cornyn amendment. I am just cautioning everybody, because we have already had enough confusion on this subject, that we should wait for the staff to prepare that UC so everybody is satisfied.

Mr. CORNYN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LEVIN. I will be happy to yield.

Mr. CORNYN. My question, Madam President, is, my understanding is the Cornyn amendment would be laid down this evening perhaps, then set aside while we work on the UC that the distinguished chairman referred to and perhaps set it up for a vote next week. Is that correct?

Mr. LEVIN. My understanding is the current procedure, where we are, we alternate amendments. So the Senator from Arizona, the ranking member, can designate anybody he wishes on his side to offer an amendment. But in terms of laying aside what comes up, when it is voted on, and side by sides, that part has to be resolved by a UC.

Mr. CORNYN. If I may ask one more question, Madam President, is it the Senator's intention that following the disposition of the wounded warriors amendment that it would be in order for the distinguished ranking member on our side to lay down the Cornyn amendment?

Mr. LEVIN. We are going to try to dispose of the Dorgan amendment immediately afterward. But the next time the Senator from Arizona can designate a Member on his side, it is his intention to have the Senator from Texas recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, before the Senator from Vermont speaks, I assure the Senator from Texas that there is no intention of depriving him of a side by side; that the intention is to frame the UC such that there is a side by side, but there is a little parliamentary side of it. I hate to take the time of all of our colleagues, but that is the intent and the agreement between the two of us to get it done. I will have the next amendment after the Dorgan amendment, and I will recognize him at that time. Then we will work out the modalities.

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the distinguished Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in that regard, while the two managers are on the Senate floor, on Tuesday, the distinguished senior Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SPECTER, and I came to the floor to offer our amendment—at least to get it filed—on habeas corpus, which has been joined by many Senators on both sides of the aisle. That was objected to.

I am just wondering: We have been trying every day since. Can the managers give me some idea of when Senator SPECTER and I may begin the debate on that amendment?

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, may I say this is one time I am glad I am not in the majority.

Mr. LEVIN. I am trying to figure out how to respond to Senator MCCAIN. I am not sure I have a good response.

Mr. LEAHY. The amendment is filed.

Mr. LEVIN. We are going to move to the Iraq legislation immediately after the disposition of the Dorgan amendment, subject to the Cornyn amendment, which will be next which is being figured out in a UC. We are then going to go to the Iraq legislation, the Levin-Reed legislation, so I cannot tell the Senator from Vermont how long the debate on that legislation is going to last. There are many people who wish to be recognized thereafter, and I cannot at this time tell him which one from our side will be the one to be selected. I don't want to make that choice now.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I understand the response of the distinguished senior Senator from Michigan, but I wonder if he might give some indication to this Senator whether he believes that at some time an effort can be made to bring forward—the amendment has been filed. I was erroneous. It has been filed. But assuming it is germane, some time the amendment, Specter-Leahy, et al, amendment will be brought forth.

Mr. LEVIN. It is certainly my intention that Senators have that opportunity. The Senator from California has asked, a number of other Senators have asked, and it is my hope and intent that Senators will have an opportunity to offer amendments.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I would renew my unanimous consent request. Back to where I started.

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

VERMONT FALLEN

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, this week, the Senate is engaged again in an intense debate about one of the most pivotal issues facing our Nation and its families right now—the ongoing war in Iraq. There is great division in the country and in the Congress on many of these issues, but I believe there is one area where we remain united, and that is in support and appreciation of our troops and their families and friends here at home.

The Nation shares the sorrow and grief over the loss of so many fine Americans in war. Our military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have come at the cost of precious American lives. No one knows that pain more than those loved ones left behind—the spouses, the parents, the sons, and the daughters who are left to pick up the pieces. A gaping hole of unimaginable proportions opens with each and every one of these family losses.

Families in Vermont have gone through more than their share of the pain. Vermont has suffered the highest per capita casualty rate of any State in the Nation during these ongoing operations. We are a State of just over 600,000 people, and many of our State's sons and daughters are part of the Vermont National Guard, the Reserves, and the Active-Duty Forces. Twenty-six servicemembers with Vermont ties have given their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. Behind the names of those Vermonters are dozens of families and hundreds of friends facing that all-too-real and perhaps unknowable loss. When I go to these funerals and I look around in the church or the synagogue where the funeral is being held, I see so many people I have known from childhood days and realize they, too, are members of the family of those who have died.

Earlier this year, dedicated students at Vermont's Norwich University produced a documentary about these families coping with the loss of their loved ones. Titled "Vermont Fallen," the film documents how many of these family members have reacted, how they have tried to cope. In the darkest and saddest of times, this project has helped a new Vermont family to emerge, brought together by community screenings of the film. They have been able since then to turn to each other for comfort.

The Norwich students' project has offered a glimpse into the searing and highly personal grief and mourning that has touched thousands of American families and scores of American communities across Vermont and across the country. They have produced a tribute that speaks directly to each human heart.

Tomorrow, at Arlington National Cemetery, one of our fallen, 1LT Mark Dooley, will be interred. Lieutenant Dooley selflessly died in the line of duty in Iraq in 2005. He was a member

of the police department in Wilmington, VT, a lovely town that is nestled right in southern Vermont, almost on a midline with the Green Mountains. My wife Marcelle and I went to the police station after his death just to sign the condolences and to announce our condolences. Lieutenant Dooley's parents will also be there, as well as other members of his family, and in a sense, every Vermonter will be there.

Joining the Dooleys, lending their unique understanding of the special bond that comes from it, will be the families of the "Vermont Fallen." I hope the Dooleys and what has now become their extended family will find comfort in one another. They deserve to be in the thoughts, the hearts, and prayers of all Vermonters and every American as they gather at Arlington. They are in the thoughts and prayers of the Members of the Senate.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a list of the "Vermont Fallen."

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

VERMONT CASUALTIES IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

Twenty-four American servicemen with ties to Vermont have died in Iraq since the war began. One Vermonter has been killed in Afghanistan. A 26th Vermonter died of natural causes in Kuwait while training to go to Iraq:

2007

Marine Cpl. Christopher Degiovine, 25, who graduated from Essex Junction High School in 2000 and Champlain College in 2005, was killed in Anbar Province, Iraq, on April 26.

2006

U.S. Army Sgt. Carlton A. Clark, 22, of Sharon, was killed Aug. 6 when an improvised bomb detonated next to the vehicle in which he was riding in Baghdad.

Marine Lance Cpl. Kurt Dechen, 24, of Springfield was killed Aug. 3 during fighting in Iraq's Anbar Province.

Vermont National Guard Sgt. 1st Class John Thomas Stone of Tunbridge was killed March 29 in southern Afghanistan, when the forward operating base he was in was attacked.

Vermont National Guard Spc. Christopher Merchant of Hardwick was killed March 1 in a coordinated attack on Iraqi police headquarters in Iraq, roughly three miles northwest of Ramadi.

Vermont National Guard Sgt. Joshua Allen Johnson, 24, from Richford, where he lived with his grandparents, was killed Jan. 25 in Ramadi. Johnson was born in St. Albans.

2005

Army National Guard 2nd Lt. Mark Procopio of Burlington was killed Nov. 2 by a homemade bomb while on patrol. Procopio and his patrol were responding to a downed Marine helicopter in Ramadi.

Army National Guard Spc. Scott P. McLaughlin of Hardwick was killed Sept. 22 after a sniper's bullet pierced the seams of his body armor near Ramadi.

Army National Guard 1st Lt. Mark H. Dooley, was killed Sept. 19 when the Humvee he was riding in was destroyed by a roadside bomb in Ramadi.

Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Chris S. Chapin, 39, of Proctor, was killed by small arms fire Aug. 23 while performing a civil affairs mission near Ramadi.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael Benson, a Minnesota native, who married a woman from Colchester, was wounded by a roadside bomb in Iraq on Aug. 2. He later died in a military hospital in Washington. He was buried in Belvidere.

Marine Sgt. Jesse Strong, 24, of Albany, was one of four Marines killed Jan. 26 during an ambush in Iraq's Anbar Province.

2004

Marine Lance Cpl. Jeffery S. Holmes, 20, of Hartford, was killed on Thanksgiving Day while conducting house-clearing operations in Fallujah.

Army Staff Sgt. Michael Voss, 35, of Carthage, N.C., was killed Oct. 8 when a roadside bomb exploded in a convoy he was leading back to base near Kirkuk. He was a native of Enosburg;

Marine Lt. Col. David Greene, 39, of Shelburne died July 29 when the helicopter he was piloting was hit by ground fire in Anbar Province.

Army National Guard Sgt. Jamie Gray, 29, of East Montpelier died June 7 when a bomb exploded south of Baghdad.

Army National Guard Sgt. Kevin Sheehan, 36, of Milton died May 25 in the same attack that killed Alan Bean Jr.

Army National Guard Spc. Alan Bean Jr., 22, of Bridport died May 25 during a mortar attack about 25 miles south of Baghdad.

Maine Army National Guard Spc. Christopher D. Gelineau, 23, who graduated from Mount Abraham Union High School in Bristol, died April 20 after the convoy he was in was ambushed in Mosul.

Army National Guard Sgt. William Normandy, 42, of East Barre, died March 15 of natural causes while training in the Kuwait desert.

Army Spc. Solomon C. Bangayan, 24, of Jay, died Jan. 15 after his convoy was ambushed in Baghdad.

2003

Army Capt. Pierre Piche, 29, of Starksboro, died Nov. 15 when the helicopter he was in went down in Mosul.

Army Pvt. Kyle Gilbert, 20, of Brattleboro was killed Aug. 6 in fighting in Baghdad.

Army Sgt. Justin Garvey, 23, who graduated from Proctor High School, was killed July 20 when the convoy he was in was attacked near Tal Afar.

Army Chief Warrant Officer Erik A. Halvorsen, 40, of Bennington died April 2 when the helicopter he was in crashed near Karbala.

Marine Cpl. Mark Evnin, 21, South Burlington, died April 3 after a firefight near Kut.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I know the chairman is on his way here, and while he is on his way, I would just like to urge all Senators who have amendments to this bill to please get them in. We have approximately 100 pending. Obviously, most of those can be dispensed with without debate and votes, but we really need to stop submitting amendments because there has to be a time where we just have had enough amendments approved. So I would urge my colleagues to get their amendments in tonight—before tomorrow, if they can, but tomorrow at the latest—so that next week we can begin the process of approving or deciding to debate and to vote on various amendments.

Madam President, I note the presence of the distinguished chairman, so I yield the floor.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I join my good friend from Arizona first of all in urging people to get their amendments in to us. I don't know the time that was suggested by the Senator, but I want to repeat it—what was it? Well, the earlier the better because we have a lot on our plate.

Madam President, these are the three second-degree amendments—we referred to them before—and as soon as these amendments are disposed of, we are then going to move to vote on the wounded warriors legislation, and I believe we should have a rollcall on that legislation.

AMENDMENT NO. 2132 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

(Purpose: To provide and enhance rehabilitative treatment and services to veterans with traumatic brain injury and to improve health care and benefits programs for veterans)

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, on behalf of Senators Akaka, Craig, Rockefeller, Murray, Brown, Mikulski, and Obama, I call up amendment No. 2132, an amendment to provide and enhance rehabilitative treatment and services to veterans with traumatic brain injury and to improve health care and benefits programs for veterans.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. AKAKA, for himself and Mr. CRAIG, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BROWN, Ms. MIKULSKI, and Mr. OBAMA, proposes amendment numbered 2132 to amendment No. 2011.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2132) was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2160, AS MODIFIED, TO
AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, on behalf of Senators NELSON of Nebraska and GRAHAM, I call up amendment No. 2160, a second-degree amendment to our pending amendment; and on behalf of Senators NELSON and GRAHAM, I send a modification to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, for himself and Mr. GRAHAM, proposes amendment numbered 2160, as modified.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

(Purpose: To provide extended benefits under the TRICARE program for the primary caregivers of members of the uniformed services who incur a serious injury or illness on active duty)

On page 34 after line 5, of the amendment insert the following:

SEC. 1627. EXTENDED BENEFITS UNDER TRICARE FOR PRIMARY CAREGIVERS OF MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES WHO INCUR A SERIOUS INJURY OR ILLNESS ON ACTIVE DUTY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1079(d) of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (2) and (3) as paragraphs (3) and (4), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (1) the following new paragraph (2):

“(2)(A) Subject to such terms, conditions, and exceptions as the Secretary of Defense considers appropriate, the program of extended benefits for eligible dependents under this subsection shall include extended benefits for the primary caregivers of members of the uniformed services who incur a serious injury or illness on active duty.

“(B) The Secretary of Defense shall prescribe in regulations the individuals who shall be treated as the primary caregivers of a member of the uniformed services for purposes of this paragraph.

“(C) For purposes of this section, a serious injury or illness, with respect to a member of the uniformed services, is an injury or illness that may render the member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member's office, grade, rank, or rating,” and that renders a member of the uniformed services dependent upon a caregiver.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect on January 1, 2008.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

Amendment (No. 2160), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table. The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2159, AS MODIFIED, TO
AMENDMENT NO. 2019

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, on behalf of Senators NELSON of Nebraska and GRAHAM, I call up amendment No. 2159, a second-degree amendment to the pending amendment regarding travel reimbursement for specialty care; and on behalf of Senators NELSON and GRAHAM, I send a modification to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN], for Mr. NELSON of Nebraska, for himself and Mr. GRAHAM, proposes amendment numbered 2159, as modified, to amendment No. 2160.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

On page 31, after line 14 of the amendment insert the following:

SEC. 1622. REIMBURSEMENT OF CERTAIN FORMER MEMBERS OF THE UNIFORMED SERVICES WITH SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES FOR TRAVEL FOR FOLLOW-ON SPECIALTY CARE AND RELATED SERVICES.

(a) TRAVEL.—Section 1074i of title 10, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (b) as subsection (c); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (a) the following new subsection (b):

“(b) FOLLOW-ON SPECIALTY CARE AND RELATED SERVICES.—In any case in which a former member of a uniformed service who incurred a disability while on active duty in a combat zone or during performance of duty in combat related operations (as designated by the Secretary of Defense), and is entitled to retired or retainer pay, or equivalent pay, requires follow-on specialty care, services, or supplies related to such disability at a specific military treatment facility more than 100 miles from the location in which the former member resides, the Secretary shall provide reimbursement for *reasonable travel expenses* comparable to those provided under subsection (a) for the former member, and when accompaniment by an adult is determined by competent medical authority to be necessary, for a spouse, parent, or guardian of the former member, or another member of the former member's family who is at least 21 years of age.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by subsection (a) shall take effect January 1, 2008, and shall apply with respect to travel that occurs on or after that date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate on the amendment, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2159), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider.

Mr. MCCAIN. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I believe we have now disposed of all the known amendments to the wounded warrior legislation, and I know that I am speaking on behalf of all of us, at least 50 cosponsors, that a lot of work was put in by a lot of Senators on this legislation. Both committees, Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services, have worked together, so thanks to all of the Senators for all of the work that has gone into this. In all the bills that have been filed, ideas have been taken from so many of those bills, and those Senators are a part of this legislation, so I hope we can now promptly, and even unanimously, in a very bipartisan way, adopt this legislation.

Mr. MCCAIN. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Delaware (Mr. BIDEN), the Senator from Connecticut (Mr.

DODD), the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE), the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. JOHNSON), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

I further announce that, if present and voting, the Senator from Hawaii (Mr. INOUE) would vote "yea."

Mr. LOTT. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 246 Leg.]

YEAS—94

Akaka	Domenici	McConnell
Alexander	Dorgan	Menendez
Allard	Durbin	Mikulski
Barrasso	Ensign	Murkowski
Baucus	Enzi	Murray
Bayh	Feingold	Nelson (FL)
Bennett	Feinstein	Nelson (NE)
Bingaman	Graham	Pryor
Bond	Grassley	Reed
Boxer	Gregg	Reid
Brown	Hagel	Roberts
Brownback	Harkin	Rockefeller
Bunning	Hatch	Salazar
Burr	Hutchison	Sanders
Byrd	Inhofe	Schumer
Cantwell	Isakson	Sessions
Cardin	Kennedy	Shelby
Carper	Kerry	Smith
Casey	Klobuchar	Snowe
Chambliss	Kohl	Specter
Clinton	Kyl	Stabenow
Coburn	Landrieu	Stevens
Cochran	Lautenberg	Sununu
Coleman	Leahy	Tester
Collins	Levin	Thune
Conrad	Lieberman	Voinovich
Corker	Lincoln	Warner
Cornyn	Lott	Webb
Craig	Lugar	Whitehouse
Crapo	Martinez	Wyden
DeMint	McCain	
Dole	McCaskey	

NOT VOTING—6

Biden	Inouye	Obama
Dodd	Johnson	Vitter

The amendment (No. 2019) was agreed to.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator CORNYN now be recognized to call up amendment No. 2100; that after his statement of 20 minutes, his amendment be laid aside; that Senator DORGAN then be recognized to offer his amendment No. 2135.

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

AMENDMENT NO. 2100 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up amendment 2100 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Texas [Mr. CORNYN] proposes an amendment numbered 2100 to amendment No. 2011.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To express the sense of the Senate that it is in the national security interest of the United States that Iraq not become a failed state and a safe haven for terrorists)

At the end of title XV, insert the following:

SEC. 1535. SENSE OF THE SENATE ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF A FAILED STATE IN IRAQ.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Senate makes the following findings:

(1) A failed state in Iraq would become a safe haven for Islamic radicals, including al Qaeda and Hezbollah, who are determined to attack the United States and United States allies.

(2) The Iraq Study Group report found that "[a] chaotic Iraq could provide a still stronger base of operations for terrorists who seek to act regionally or even globally".

(3) The Iraq Study Group noted that "Al Qaeda will portray any failure by the United States in Iraq as a significant victory that will be featured prominently as they recruit for their cause in the region and around the world".

(4) A National Intelligence Estimate concluded that the consequences of a premature withdrawal from Iraq would be that—

(A) Al Qaeda would attempt to use Anbar province to plan further attacks outside of Iraq;

(B) neighboring countries would consider actively intervening in Iraq; and

(C) sectarian violence would significantly increase in Iraq, accompanied by massive civilian casualties and displacement.

(5) The Iraq Study Group found that "a premature American departure from Iraq would almost certainly produce greater sectarian violence and further deterioration of conditions. . . . The near-term results would be a significant power vacuum, greater human suffering, regional destabilization, and a threat to the global economy. Al Qaeda would depict our withdrawal as a historic victory."

(6) A failed state in Iraq could lead to broader regional conflict, possibly involving Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

(7) The Iraq Study group noted that "Turkey could send troops into northern Iraq to prevent Kurdistan from declaring independence".

(8) The Iraq Study Group noted that "Iran could send troops to restore stability in southern Iraq and perhaps gain control of oil fields. The regional influence of Iran could rise at a time when that country is on a path to producing nuclear weapons."

(9) A failed state in Iraq would lead to massive humanitarian suffering, including widespread ethnic cleansing and countless refugees and internally displaced persons, many of whom will be tortured and killed for having assisted Coalition forces.

(10) A recent editorial in the New York Times stated, "Americans must be clear that Iraq, and the region around it, could be even bloodier and more chaotic after Americans leave. There could be reprisals against those who worked with American forces, further ethnic cleansing, even genocide. Potentially destabilizing refugee flows could hit Jordan and Syria. Iran and Turkey could be tempted to make power grabs."

(11) The Iraq Study Group found that "[i]f we leave and Iraq descends into chaos, the long-range consequences could eventually require the United States to return".

(b) SENSE OF THE SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) the Senate should commit itself to a strategy that will not leave a failed state in Iraq; and

(2) the Senate should not pass legislation that will undermine our military's ability to prevent a failed state in Iraq.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, as we debate the so-called new strategy in Iraq, and as we once again engage in more than a little political posturing that has become so redundant, that has already delayed important legislation, not the least of which was the emergency appropriations bill to get proper funding and equipment to our troops, it appears once again that some of my colleagues in the Senate feel we should retreat, thus abandoning what al-Qaida views as the central front in their global war of terror, and in so doing, allowing Iraq to become a safe haven for al-Qaida, the same terrorist organization that hit this country on September 11, 2001.

I ask my colleagues who want us to abandon this critical fight now, if we leave Iraq before the Iraqis can defend and govern themselves, then will they answer this question: Will that action strengthen or weaken al-Qaida and other foreign jihadists in Iraq and across the region? If there is one thing all of us should have learned by now, it is that al-Qaida and organizations that emulate it are the face of evil. These organizations and the individuals who subscribe to their ideology are dedicated to the destruction of the United States, to the destruction of Israel, and to committing the most barbaric and incomprehensible assaults on innocent civilians that any of us can possibly imagine.

Without a stable government in Iraq, it becomes increasingly likely that the training and equipping of terrorists and the planning and execution of terror operations can proceed in both Iraq and throughout the region with impunity, and that our adversaries will operate with little fear of discovery or disruption.

I also ask my distinguished colleagues who believe that we ought to leave Iraq before it is stable: Will al-Qaida and other terrorists then follow us here into the United States, even while expanding their influence in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Africa? We have already seen numerous attacks occur throughout Europe and Africa from al-Qaida-linked or al-Qaida-inspired terrorists. With a firm foothold in Iraq, al-Qaida would have a safe and unthreatened sanctuary to serve as their new base of operations from which they can expand further into the Middle East or Africa or Europe, spreading chaos, fear, and strife.

How long would it be before al-Qaida is able to continue unabated with further attacks against the United States including operations into and within our country?

I ask my distinguished colleagues who believe we should retreat and surrender before stabilizing Iraq, before

providing them the opportunity to govern and defend themselves: How will we address Iran's continued support of Iraqi insurgents and terrorists now that we have definitive evidence of their involvement in activities such as the training of terrorists and Shiite militias in Iran; operations in Iraq by terrorists trained in Iran by Al-Quds and other Iranian special military forces; alliances with Hezbollah and other groups, including Iranian-trained and equipped Hezbollah fighters operating in Iraq; the provision of the explosive formed penetrator and other improvised explosive devices that are killing American soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen; and other aid and assistance directly resulting in the death of American citizens serving us bravely in Iraq?

We must be especially concerned as Iran spreads its power and influence in the region, considering their insistence on developing nuclear capabilities. I ask my colleagues who subscribe to this proposed policy of retreat and surrender: What will Iran do to expand their influence in Iraq through their Shia alliances if we stage an immediate withdrawal?

We have seen the impact of Iranian-supported terrorist activity in Iraq. Not only have we lost hundreds of American servicemembers due to Iranian involvement, not to mention those who still live but live with grievous injuries, but scores of Iraqis have died too, including innocent civilians who have been the victims of these savage attacks.

I ask my colleagues who believe we ought to retreat and surrender regardless of the circumstances on the ground, regardless of the ability of the Iraqis to govern and defend themselves: Will Sunni majority nations outside of Iraq, including Saudis and others, stand by and let Shiites massacre Sunnis in Iraq? Conversely, will Iran, Hezbollah, and others stand by when Sunnis then massacre Shiites in retaliation? It is clear that this situation could rapidly deteriorate into a full-scale civil war, a massive religious conflict or, at worst, uncontrolled genocide on both sides.

I ask my distinguished colleagues who believe we ought to withdraw from Iraq before that country is able to defend and govern itself: What is the resultant impact with the Kurds in northern Iraq and with Turkey if we stage an immediate withdrawal?

Cross-border incursions by both PKK elements operating from Kurdish safe havens in northern Iraq, and retaliatory attacks by Turkish forces could become routine, further destabilizing Iraq, Turkey, and the region.

I ask my distinguished colleagues who believe we ought to withdraw from Iraq before that country is able to govern and defend itself: What will happen to our Iraqi allies who have fought alongside of us? How will this affect America's ability to conduct future multinational operations?

Some have argued we should have shaped and relied upon a stronger coalition before undertaking operations in Iraq. Clearly we lose the ability to build such a coalition in the future if we leave our allies behind as we precipitously withdraw from Iraq.

I ask my distinguished colleagues who believe we ought to withdraw from Iraq before that country is able to govern and defend itself: What is the scope of humanitarian and refugee crisis that will ensue if we suddenly depart from Iraq? Where and how will the United States address that consequent crisis? It was not that long ago we experienced the largest scale humanitarian and refugee flow after the first Gulf war. We were able to eventually deal with that situation through a substantial commitment of forces to Joint Task Force Provide Comfort in northern Iraq. Under this new scenario, it would be difficult if not impossible for us to adequately help the large segments of the Iraqi population trying to flee from unrelenting terror when our forces suddenly withdraw.

I ask our colleagues who believe we ought to withdraw from Iraq before the Iraqis are able to govern and defend themselves: Are the Iraqis ready to assume full responsibility and control of their own security, economic development, reconstruction, and governance? If not, how can we posture the Iraqis for that desired end state, while at the same time withdrawing under continued enemy pressure?

Finally, I ask my colleagues on the other side this important question: What is your plan? What is your plan for the way forward in Iraq and in the region?

Our presence in Iraq is not about pride. It is not, as some have suggested, solely to benefit the Iraqis. Instead it is about our own vital national security and our ability to address the threats to our Nation. Our success is not just about providing the people of Iraq a safe environment to develop and provide for their own self-governance, it is about America's national security, the stability of the Middle East, and our partners in the war on terror.

We have to do what is right for America's national security, which means helping to stabilize the Middle East and supporting our partners in the war on terror. These 10 concerns have caused me to draft an amendment which I believe must be added to this bill. This amendment expresses the sense of Congress that "the Senate should commit itself to a strategy that will not leave a failed state in Iraq." It also states that "the Senate should not pass legislation that will undermine our military's ability to prevent a failed state in Iraq."

The Iraq Study Group, National Intelligence Estimates, and even the New York Times have all repeatedly warned against the consequences of a failed state in Iraq. Instability in the region could lead to genocide, retaliatory attacks against our allies, invasions from

neighboring countries, and the proliferation of global terrorism. We cannot allow these possibilities to become realities. Withdrawing our troops now or on the expedited basis proposed by Senators REED and LEVIN, when Iraq is not yet able to sustain itself, will only sink the fledgling nation into further chaos and disorder while ensuring that either we will recommit our troops later to a more tumultuous and dangerous battle or that we will leave ourselves open to future attacks from a fortified terrorist network.

I urge all my colleagues to reject any notion of a premature troop withdrawal and join me in expressing the importance of a stable Iraqi nation, not just for the benefit of the people of Iraq but for our own national security. We can't talk about ideas such as withdrawing our troops without looking at the consequences. I know all of us join in believing that we want to get our troops home as soon as we can. The only difference between us is those who believe we ought to do so based on an arbitrary timetable and those who believe we ought to do so after we are able to leave the Iraqis in a position to govern and defend themselves, not just, again, for their security and safety but for ours as well. Because a failed state in Iraq is a clear and present danger to the American people. It would be terrible, indeed, if, having let that happen and seeing more Americans die as they did on 9/11 as a result of al-Qaida's strength and its ability to recruit, train, and then export terrorist attacks to the United States and around the world, that more people in this country and other countries around the world had to die. That is at stake.

If we are going to talk about ideas such as those proposed in the Reed-Levin and other amendments, we need to confront directly the consequences of our actions. This amendment expresses the sense of the Senate that we will take no action that will make it more likely that Iraq will end up a failed state, again, in the national security interest of the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

AMENDMENT NO. 2135 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2011

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I have an amendment at the desk, No. 2135, and I ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from North Dakota [Mr. DORGAN], for himself and Mr. CONRAD, proposes an amendment numbered 2135.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: Relating to bringing Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al Qaeda to justice)

At the end of subtitle B of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 1218. JUSTICE FOR OSAMA BIN LADEN AND OTHER LEADERS OF AL QAEDA.

(a) ENHANCED REWARD FOR CAPTURE OF OSAMA BIN LADEN.—Section 36(e)(1) of the State Department Basic Authorities Act of 1956 (22 U.S.C. 2708e)(1)) is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “The Secretary shall authorize a reward of \$50,000,000 for the capture, or information leading to the capture, of Osama bin Laden.”.

(b) STATUS OF EFFORTS TO BRING OSAMA BIN LADEN AND OTHER LEADERS OF AL QAEDA TO JUSTICE.—

(1) REPORTS REQUIRED.—Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, and every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense shall, in coordination with the Director of National Intelligence, jointly submit to Congress a report on the progress made in bringing Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al Qaeda to justice.

(2) ELEMENTS.—Each report under paragraph (1) shall include, current as of the date of such report, the following:

(A) An assessment of the likely current location of terrorist leaders, including Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and other key leaders of al Qaeda.

(B) A description of ongoing efforts to bring to justice such terrorist leaders, particularly those who have been directly implicated in attacks in the United States and its embassies.

(C) An assessment of whether the government of each country assessed as a likely location of top leaders of al Qaeda has fully cooperated in efforts to bring those leaders to justice.

(D) A description of diplomatic efforts currently being made to improve the cooperation of the governments described in subparagraph (C).

(E) A description of the current status of the top leadership of al Qaeda and the strategy for locating them and bringing them to justice.

(F) An assessment of whether al Qaeda remains the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to United States interests, including the greatest threat to the territorial United States.

(3) FORM OF REPORT.—Each report submitted to Congress under paragraph (1) shall be submitted in a classified form, and shall be accompanied by a report in unclassified form that redacts the classified information in the report.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I offer this amendment on behalf of myself, my colleague Senator CONRAD, and my colleague Senator SALAZAR. My understanding is we will vote on this amendment in the morning. I don't know whether there has been a unanimous consent order on that matter, but my understanding is it will be voted on at 9:30. I wanted to spend a few minutes talking about what this amendment is. Let me begin by pointing out the following.

It has been nearly 6 years since Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida ordered an attack on our country on 9/11/2001. Thousands of Americans were killed, innocent Americans murdered by Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida. Nineteen terrorists with box cutters using commercial airliners loaded with fuel attacked this country. Thousands died. Six years later, Osama bin Laden is still free. He has not been brought to

justice. Six years later, we are told in reports by senior officials in the newspapers—and I will read some of them—that al-Qaida is stronger than it has been in years. Six years later, we are told that al-Qaida and the Taliban are rebuilding terrorist training camps in northern Pakistan and the region between northern Pakistan and Afghanistan. Six years later, we are told that the leadership of al-Qaida has a secure hideout in Pakistan. Six years later, we are told that al-Qaida, with its leadership, remains the greatest terrorist threat to our country. All of this after 6 years, two wars in two countries, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars spent at home and abroad, thousands of American soldiers dead, and tens of thousands wounded.

That is a failure. The fact that those who attacked us on 9/11 have not been brought to justice and, in fact, are now planning additional attacks against this country and other countries and doing so in secure and safe harbors in northern Pakistan, the fact that that exists is a failure. We have troops going door to door in Baghdad in the middle of a civil war. Yet the leadership of al-Qaida, the greatest terrorist threat to this country, is apparently living free in a safe harbor in northern Pakistan.

Let me describe some of the reasons I bring this discussion to the floor. This is testimony by John Negroponte, then-Director of National Intelligence on January 11, 2007, before the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence:

Al Qaeda continues to plot attacks against our homeland and other targets with the objective of inflicting mass casualties. And they continue to maintain active connections and relationships that radiate outward from their leaders' secure hideout in Pakistan.

Think of that, 6 years after 9/11, after they engineered the murder of innocent Americans, our Director of National Intelligence says the leadership of al-Qaida “continues to plot attacks against our homeland” from their “secure hideout in Pakistan.”

Further, the Director of National Intelligence, in the same testimony said this:

Al Qaeda is the terrorist organization that poses the greatest threat to U.S. interests, including to the homeland.

That is from the Director of National Intelligence. Al-Qaida is the greatest terrorist threat to our country. He said that in January of this year.

Let me fast forward. The McClatchy newspapers, June 26, 2007. Senior U.S. intelligence and law enforcement officials in this administration said:

While the U.S. presses its war against insurgents linked to al Qaeda in Iraq, Osama bin Laden's group is recruiting, regrouping and rebuilding in a new sanctuary on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Al Qaeda, its allies in Afghanistan's Taliban movement and Pakistani radicals “have free rein there now,” said Marvin Wenibaum, a former State Department intelligence analyst.

That is last month.

July 11, “Officials Worry of Summer Terrorist Attack.”

... Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff told the editorial board of the Chicago Tribune that he had a “gut feeling” about a new period of increased risk.

The next day, July 12:

Six years after the Bush administration declared war on al-Qaida, the terrorist network is gaining strength and has established a safe haven in remote tribal areas of western Pakistan for training and planning attacks.

The report, a five-page threat assessment compiled by the National Counterterrorism Center, is titled “Al-Qaida Better Positioned To Strike the West.”

We have seen some of this before. Mr. Chertoff says he has a gut feeling. The fact is, we have a lot of intelligence-gathering capability. Mr. Chertoff, Director of Homeland Security, has a gut feeling.

Let's go back 6 years to August of 2001, from the President's daily briefing. I have it in my hand. It was released in 2004. In August of 2001 the intelligence gave the President a document titled: “Bin Ladin Determined to Strike in U.S.” On 9/11, bin Laden and al-Qaida struck the U.S. with devastating effect.

July 2007, secret intelligence assessment from the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center:

Al Qaeda better positioned to strike the west.

Six years ago, the President's daily briefing said bin Laden was determined to strike the United States, and he did. Six years later:

Al Qaeda better positioned to strike the west.

So much money spent in lives, in treasury. So much done, so much action in Iraq, where US troops, now go door to door in Baghdad. What has happened to the leaders of those who continue to plan attacks against our country? What has happened to the leaders of the organization who our National Intelligence Director says represent the greatest terrorist threat to our country? They live free, able to speak to the world. Al Zawahiri last week spoke to the world. They live free. They are creating new terrorist training camps, and they are talking to the world about their plans to inflict damage and to attack other parts of the world. That is called failure.

Let me go back again a few years, September 15, 2001. I will not ever forget sitting in the Chamber of the House of Representatives in a joint session of Congress when President Bush came to speak. This country was one at that point. They weren't Republicans and Democrats. This was a country that had been victimized by a devastating attack by terrorists who were perfectly content to give their own lives as long as they could kill innocent others. The President came and spoke to a joint session of Congress. Here is what he said:

We will not only deal with those who dare attack America, we will deal with those who harbor them and feed them and house them.

On August 31, 2006, at the American Legion National Convention, the President said:

We have made it clear to all nations, if you harbor terrorists, you are just as guilty as the terrorists. You are an enemy of the United States, and you will be held to account.

The question most people ask is: What has happened in 6 years that those who planned and executed the attacks against this country now live free and apparently have reconstituted their strength and are planning further attacks against us? We have committed 150,000 or so American troops over a long period of time, so far a period of time longer than the Second World War lasted, and they are now going door to door in Baghdad in a civil war, where Shia are killing Sunnis and Sunnis are killing Shia, and they are both killing American troops. Sometime, we are going to leave Iraq. That is not the question. The question isn't whether. The American people and this Congress are not going to allow American soldiers to be in the middle of a civil war in Iraq for years ahead. That is not going to be the case. The question isn't whether we leave Iraq. The question is when and how.

But even as we discuss and debate that—and we will this week and next week and perhaps the week after—even as we deal with those issues, the American people have a right, through this Congress, to ask the President: Why is it that those who engineered the attacks are still able to engineer and plan further attacks? Why is it that those who engineered the attacks of 2001 are still active, are still apparently in safe harbors, immune to whatever efforts might or might not have existed to bring them to justice? The President was asked about this at one point, and the President said: I don't think much about Osama bin Laden. Well, he should. We should.

The amendment we offer is very simple. Six long years later, this amendment would require the President every 3 months, every single quarter, to send a classified report to this Congress telling us what has been done in this administration, what has been done to apprehend and bring to justice the leadership of al-Qaida.

If, in fact, this is the greatest terrorist threat to our country—if that is the case—and that does not come from me, that comes from the head of intelligence in this country, John Negroponte, in January of this year—if that is the case, why isn't this our primary objective and our most important objective?

This amendment says the following: It doubles the reward money for the apprehension of Osama bin Laden. It also requires a quarterly classified, top secret report to be provided to Congress to tell us what is being done to attempt to make this a priority and apprehend the leadership of al-Qaida.

I understand it is much easier to recognize failure than to recognize suc-

cess. I understand that. But it does not take much looking to understand this failure.

Now, Senator CONRAD and I have offered this amendment before, and it passed the Senate before and then was quietly dropped in conference by those who do not want this amendment to survive.

But it seems to me we ought to as a country understand, if we are waking up in the mornings these days and reading, as I read this morning in the newspapers—and yesterday morning and the morning before—that our Homeland Security Secretary has a “gut feeling” about this, that or the other thing, and there is a meeting down at the White House to assess these increased risks—we need to understand it is all about al-Qaida. It is all about the leadership of al-Qaida planning additional attacks. It is about the reconstitution of terrorist activities in training camps with the Taliban and al-Qaida. And—guess what—we are going door to door in Baghdad trying to figure out how we deal with the Sunnis and the Shias.

Yes, there are some al-Qaida in Iraq, but those who tell us that is the central fight against terrorism are wrong, and they ought to know it. Go have a secret briefing upstairs. I tell you, if you believe that is the central fight against terrorism, go have a classified, secret briefing, and then you come back and tell me that is what you heard. You will not hear that.

An honest, level look at what is going on in Iraq will describe, unfortunately, a civil war in Iraq. Yes, there is some al-Qaida in Anbar Province and some other al-Qaida influences, but the principal issue in Iraq is sectarian violence or a civil war, and this Congress, at some point, is going to tell this President we are not going to keep American soldiers in the middle of a civil war for any great length of time. But we will insist that we make a priority as one of our significant objectives to bring to justice those who murdered thousands of Americans on 9-11-2001, and we will insist that those who are now planning additional attacks from a secure hideaway—as Mr. Negroponte points out, a secure hideaway—we will insist that some effort be made in this country to deal with that issue.

Let me ask one question. I do not want five reasons or three reasons. I want somebody to give me one good reason why there ought to be any secure hideout anywhere on this Earth for the people, the leaders of al-Qaida who committed this atrocious act against this country in 2001 and who are now planning additional attacks against this country. I do not need five reasons. Is there any reason there ought to be a secure hideout anywhere on this planet for these people? The answer ought to be no.

Getting the terrorists who attacked us on 9-11 has not been our objective, in my judgment. We have gotten side-

tracked. It has not been our objective to make this the central issue, and I believe it ought to be the central issue. Senator CONRAD believes that. Senator SALAZAR and others believe it. I expect and hope that tomorrow, when we have a vote at 9:30 in the morning, the Senate will go on record saying it is time—long past the time—for this country to demand that the leadership of al-Qaida be brought to justice and that we interrupt the opportunity of those to be in a secure hideout in Pakistan, planning additional destruction and planning additional deaths against innocent Americans in attacks on our homeland.

That is the amendment. It is simple. No one can misunderstand that amendment. No one can misinterpret it. My hope is, at the end of the vote tomorrow, the Senate will have expressed itself as forcefully as I hope it can on this subject.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SUNUNU. 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. SUNUNU. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the amendment that has been offered by Senator DORGAN and I have a second-degree amendment, which I will then offer. I also wish to speak about the broader issue before us, the Defense authorization bill, but specifically Iraq and an amendment I have cosponsored with Senators SALAZAR and ALEXANDER dealing with the Iraq Study Group recommendations.

First, I rise in support of the amendment by Senator DORGAN. I certainly agree with him that it is critical we focus on the threat posed by al-Qaida—whether it be in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Iraq, or the under leadership of al-Zawahiri or Osama bin Laden. That needs to be a focus of our intelligence and security efforts, as well as the efforts our special forces, because of the threat they pose not just to American citizens but to our allies around the world.

We cannot forget they are committed to the death and destruction of innocent civilians around the world. Under no circumstances should we allow any secure area, hideout, or haven to be reconstituted or recreated in the way it was created in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule.

So I am pleased to support his amendment. No one should underestimate the complexity of the challenge of tracking down the leaders of al-Qaida, wherever they are around the world, but the American people should know the greatest effort and the greatest commitment is being undertaken to deal with these terrorists.

AMENDMENT NO. 2184 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2135

Mr. President, at this time, I would, however, like to offer a second-degree

amendment. In the drafting of Senator DORGAN's amendment, he speaks about "the capture, or information leading to the capture," but I certainly believe most Americans would agree we should also provide support, assistance, and a reward if information leads to the death of al-Qaida's leadership.

To that end, my second-degree amendment would simply amend that line to ensure this amendment provides support for the capture or death or information leading to the capture or death of Osama bin Laden, where the \$50 million reward is allowed.

Mr. President, at this time, I send the amendment to the desk. It is a second degree to the Dorgan amendment, and I ask for its consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from New Hampshire [Mr. SUNUNU] proposes an amendment numbered 2184 to amendment No. 2135.

Mr. SUNUNU. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

Strike page 2, line 2 and insert in lieu thereof: "for the capture or death or information leading to the capture or death of".

Mr. SUNUNU. The amendment, as I have described it, is a simple, single line that inserts that additional contingency. I think the reporting and the assessment of the threats that are included in this amendment make sense. Members of Congress along with members of our intelligence agencies need the most accurate information available to understand what work is being undertaken, what efforts are being made, and what progress is in tracking these terrorists. I think that, in turn, will help us make much better policy decisions.

So I am pleased to support the amendment. I hope the Senator from North Dakota will accept my second-degree amendment, and I look forward to the adoption of this change to the Defense Authorization bill.

Second, Mr. President, I wish to address the Salazar-Alexander amendment that has been filed, which we certainly hope to have a vote on next week. This is a piece of legislation that I worked with Senators SALAZAR and ALEXANDER on addressing the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group.

The Iraq Study Group was a bipartisan effort covered extensively in the media since the release of their recommendations in December 2006. I made the point at the time, 7 months ago, that those recommendations—there were over 70 different proposals and recommendations in the report—represented the most complete assessment that had been made of the situation in Iraq. That it was a comprehensive framework, and that it did not just deal with security issues but included recommendations addressing

political reforms that need to take place within the country with the political dynamics of Iraq. That it included diplomatic efforts that could make a real difference in stabilizing Iraq, supporting the efforts of neighbors and other countries in the region, as well as changes that ought to be made to our intelligence-gathering operation to support not just our effort in Iraq but our effort to deal with al-Qaida in Iraq and around the world. This is something that Senator DORGAN spoke about.

I said at the time that, that framework and those recommendations should be embraced and implemented to the greatest extent possible, first, because it is a comprehensive effort, and second, because the Iraq Study Group proposals recognize the importance and responsibility of the Iraqi Government implementing a series of reforms. They include economic development, reconciliation, the sharing of oil revenues with peoples of all regions and ethnic groups across the country, the deBaathification process—designed to bring the country closer together, to create greater unity among the different ethnic factions across Iraq. Only the Iraqi Government, given time, can accomplish these goals which are essential to improving the stability within the region, reducing the level of violence and creating the environment where our troops can be brought home as soon as possible. No American soldier should serve in Iraq a day longer than is absolutely necessary.

This plan is comprehensive in its approach. It recognizes the importance and the responsibility of the Iraqi Government to take steps to improve the situation, and it places an emphasis on the coalition mission, the mission of U.S. forces, in addressing the threat of al-Qaida, focusing on the counterterrorism mission within the country, and training Iraqi security forces.

This is one of the few and perhaps the only truly broad bipartisan effort we have had before us in the last several months. We have seen a series of relatively partisan votes dealing with hard withdrawal dates, criticizing the Pentagon policy in one area or another. On this legislation right now we have seven Democratic sponsors, six or seven Republican sponsors, and I think the support we would receive from both sides of the aisle is even more dramatic than that. So it is a bipartisan effort that attempts to implement or help encourage the implementation of the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. I think that provides a very sound and strong framework, not just for improving the situation in Iraq but for also addressing a lot of the regional problems that are contributing to its stability in the other countries in the region.

I would encourage all of my colleagues to take a hard look at this legislation. I don't think anyone would agree with 100 percent of all of the recommendations in the Iraq Study Group

Report, but I think we can recognize that it is the product of a great deal of effort to understand the situation, assess the climate in Iraq, and make substantive recommendations that will move us forward.

I encourage my colleagues to support the amendment.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, today I have submitted an amendment that would help tackle an alarming problem with our men and women who serve in the Armed Forces, the Heroes Helping Heroes Act.

I have introduced the Heroes Helping Heroes Act in the Senate this year to provide funding for peer support programs so that trained veterans can help returning veterans navigate the sometimes perilous transition to civilian life.

My intention is to expand the use of peer-support approaches to assist the reintegration of America's veterans as they return from active duty to their homes and communities. We hope that this legislation will demonstrate the effectiveness of peer-support approaches and ease the burden of the social, economic, medical and psychological struggles our veterans face.

Fortunately, "peer-support" approaches offer a low cost and effective adjunct to traditional services by allowing the heroes of our country to help each other. Veteran peer-support offers two things that no kind of professionalized service can ever hope to: the support of someone who has had the same kinds of experiences and truly understands what the veteran is going through; and the potential of a large pool of experienced volunteers who can assist and support returning veterans at very little cost.

Last week I held a hearing on the issues surrounding older veterans in my home State of Oregon. I also held a series of roundtables in both Portland and White City to discuss how we can improve the current mental health system, be it through the VA, Department of Defense, or within the community mental health structure.

What we now refer to as post-traumatic stress disorder was once described as "soldier's heart" in the Civil War, "shell shock" in World War I, and "combat fatigue" in World War II. Whatever the name, it is a serious mental illness and deserves the same type of attention and care provided for a physical wound.

In recent reports, we have heard that 20 to 40 servicemen and women are evacuated each month from Iraq due to mental health problems. In addition to those who are identified, there are many more who will return home after their service to face re-adjustment challenges. Some will need appropriate mental health care to help them adjust back to "normal" life. While others will need medical assistance to heal more serious PTSD issues. Yet others will need help to mentally cope with their physical wounds.

The effectiveness of these approaches has been documented in a variety of

domains. Specifically, for mental health disorders like PTSD and depression, peer-support programs have shown that participation yields improvement in psychiatric symptoms and decreased hospitalizations, the development of larger social support networks, enhanced self-esteem and social functioning, as well as lower services costs. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, SAMHSA, and even the President's new Freedom Commission on Mental Health, have recognized peer-support approaches as an emerging practice that is helping people recover from traumatic events.

So many of our veterans from previous conflicts, such as World War II and the Korean and Vietnam Wars, needed similar programs once they returned home. Yet I fear that we didn't do enough to help them. With proper and early supports systems in place, we can work to prevent the more serious and chronic mental health issues that come from a lack of intervention.

As our country faces new waves of veterans with mental health illnesses, many of whose issues arise from combat stress, we must ensure that we learn from the lessons of the past. We must ensure that they are cared for, and we must not leave behind those who fought for Nation in previous generations.

I ask my colleagues to support this important amendment.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am in strong support of the fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act. This legislation will provide essential resources to our troops as they engage in combat overseas and training at home. It also offers an important opportunity at this crucial time for continued debate as to our Nation's future presence in Iraq. This is the most important challenge facing our country, and I will address this issue in subsequent remarks.

Let me begin by thanking my colleagues, the distinguished chairman and ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, Senator LEVIN and Senator MCCAIN, for their leadership in crafting this bill and for their strong commitment to our Nation's Armed Forces.

This legislation includes a strong commitment to strengthen Navy shipbuilding by including \$13.6 billion for shipbuilding programs. The declining size of our Navy fleet is of great concern to me, and this legislation is an important step toward reversing that troubling decline.

The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Mullen, has proposed a 313-ship Navy shipbuilding plan that seeks to address longstanding congressional concerns that Navy shipbuilding has been inadequately funded in recent years. The resulting instability has had a number of troubling effects on the shipbuilding industrial base and has contributed to significant cost growth in Navy shipbuilding programs. The

CNO's plan—combined with more robust funding by Congress—will begin to reverse the decline in Navy shipbuilding.

I strongly support the provisions authorizing the funding for construction of destroyers for the 21st century, the DDG-1000 *Zumwalt* class destroyers. The DDG-1000 represents a significant advance in Navy surface combatant technology. Its capabilities include: superior precision naval surface fire support; advanced stealth technologies; engineering and technological innovations allowing for a reduced crew size; and sophisticated, advanced weapons systems, such as the electromagnetic rail gun.

In addition, it is important to note the tremendous cost savings that will be realized over the lifecycle of a DDG-1000 destroyer compared to that of a DDG-51 destroyer as a result of various innovations and technological advancements.

It is critical that the construction of the first two DDG-1000 destroyers in 2007 and 2008 continue as scheduled without further delays. The dedicated and highly skilled workers at our Nation's surface combatant shipyards, such as Bath Iron Works in my home State of Maine, are simply too valuable to jeopardize with further contracting delays.

That is why I am concerned that the House version of this bill includes a provision to prohibit the start of construction on lead ships until the Secretary of Navy certifies that detailed design is complete. This provision, if enacted, could further delay the Navy's awarding of the construction contract for the first two DDG-1000 destroyers.

The House version would also require that the next-generation class of Navy cruisers, which will be the follow-on to the DDG-1000 destroyer, be powered by nuclear propulsion systems, even though neither of the U.S. Navy's proven surface combatant shipyards, Bath Iron Works and Ingalls Shipyard, has the facilities or certifications required to construct nuclear-powered surface combatant ships. This provision could dramatically increase the costs of future surface combatants, thereby reducing the overall number of ships built at a time when the Navy is seeking to revitalize and modernize its fleet.

Of further concern is the fact that the Senate version of this legislation, as drafted initially, eliminated all funding for the Littoral Combat Ship Program for fiscal year 2008, despite the fact that this ship is an integral part of the CNO's 313-ship plan. Fortunately, I was able to work with my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee during the mark up of this legislation to restore \$480 million to ensure continued development of this important program.

I am pleased that the Senate Armed Services Committee also agreed to my request for \$50 million in funding to continue the modernization program

for the DDG-51 *Arleigh Burke* class destroyers. This program provides significant savings to the Navy by applying some of the technology that is being developed for the DDG-1000 destroyer and backfitting the DDG-51, which may reduce the crew size by 30 to 40 people.

The Senate's fiscal 2008 Defense authorization bill also includes funding for other defense-related projects that benefit Maine and our national security. Funding is provided for machine guns and grenade launchers, both of which are manufactured by the highly skilled workers at Saco Defense in Saco, ME.

All of the Senate Armed Services Committee members are concerned about improving the protection of our troops in harm's way. As such, this bill includes \$4 billion above the President's budget request for accelerated procurement of Mine Resistant Ambush Protected, MRAP, vehicles for the Armed Forces and \$4.5 billion for the Joint Improvised Explosive Defeat Organization.

In addition, the legislation provides \$5 million to the University of Maine's Army Center of Excellence for the production and demonstration of lightweight modular ballistic tent insert panels. The panels provide crucial protection to servicemembers in temporary dining and housing facilities in mobile forward-operating bases in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The legislation also provides \$6.9 million for the Maine Army National Guard to field the Integrated Disaster Management System, developed by Global Relief Technologies in Kennebunk and Portsmouth, in support of critical medivac operations in Iraq. This system provides near real-time data management and analysis to and from field operators via state-of-the-art, hand-held devices.

The bill also authorizes \$9.7 million for construction of a Consolidated Emergency Control Center at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. This facility will consolidate all of the shipyard's emergency response entities into one centralized location, which will provide a comprehensive communications and response capability in the event of an emergency.

Finally, I am pleased that this bipartisan Defense bill also authorizes a 3.5-percent across-the-board pay increase for servicemembers, half a percent above the President's budget request. This bill provides the necessary resources to our troops and our Nation and recognizes the enormous contributions made by the State of Maine. The bill provides the necessary funding for our troops, and I offer it my full support.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is recognized.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be granted 30 minutes to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. ENZI. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Senator ENZI pertaining to the introduction of S. 1783 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ENZI. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, is there a preestablished time limit?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is not.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I will speak roughly, if any Members are interested, 15 minutes or so.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in October 2006, the North Korean regime of Kim Jong Il culminated years of provocative military action by conducting a nuclear test. In the years preceding that test, North Korea expelled international inspectors, restarted nuclear facilities, and reinvigorated its plutonium production program, this, following the pledge by North Korea, under the agreed framework in 1994, to freeze and dismantle its nuclear weapons program in exchange for our assistance.

I am glad that following this test in 2006, the international community joined the United States in condemning that test, and the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution requiring North Korea to halt their nuclear tests and dismantle their nuclear weapons program.

In February of this year, our State Department negotiators and Bush administration officials heralded a breakthrough agreement with North Korea. On February 13, the six-party negotiators, including the countries of the United States, Russia, South Korea, Japan, China, and North Korea, concluded an agreement to end North Korea's nuclear programs.

President Bush stated he was "pleased with the agreement reached" by the six-party talks. He acknowledged that under the agreement, North Korea committed to take several specific actions by a 60-day deadline, and President Bush made clear that the cooperation on economic, humanitarian, and energy assistance to North Korea would be provided "as the North carries out its commitments to disable its nuclear facilities." In other words, there was going to be a step-by-step process by which they disabled their nuclear facilities, that they would then get economic, humanitarian, and energy assistance in North Korea.

Pursuant to the February 13 deal, North Korea was required to take a series of actions within 60 days. This included a freeze of its nuclear installations at Yongbyon, including shutting down a nuclear reactor and plutonium processing plant. The International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna was to be allowed to monitor the freeze at Yongbyon. To no one's surprise, that 60-day deadline that was negotiated

passed with no action by the North Koreans. The Yongbyon facility was not shut down. The International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors were not admitted, reminiscent of the pussyfooting with North Korea that went on during the 1990s.

Rather than comply with their commitments under the agreement—then we know what North Korea did, something that was not even negotiated—North Korea proceeded to demand the release of assets frozen at the Macaubased Banco Delta Asia.

The approximately \$25 million was frozen by the United States Treasury Department in 2005 once it was discovered that these funds came from a range of fraudulent and illegal activities by the North Koreans; simply stated, counterfeiting of U.S. currency and money laundering.

So what was our response to the North Korean demand? Did we refuse to negotiate the BDA funds until North Korea demonstrated their commitment to follow through on their obligations? I am sorry to say the answer is no. We allowed them to pussyfoot around, as they have done so often.

Our team of negotiators began working on a way to yield to Kim Jong Il's demands, once again accepting their pussyfooting.

Keep in mind, under the terms of the February 13 agreement, North Korea had the unambiguous responsibility to take the first step, which North Korea did not do. In addition, the BDA frozen funds were not stated in or a part of that February 13 agreement. So how do we get to the point of responding to their pussyfooting that they demand something that is not in an agreement that was already agreed to? What good are agreements? Not only had the North Koreans not followed through on their commitment by the 60-day deadline, they were now reopening the agreement by demanding the release of these frozen funds.

So rather than force North Korea to fulfill its commitments, our negotiators were looking for ways to respond to their pussyfooting, their unwillingness to act, and then work to get those frozen funds unfrozen.

Here again Uncle Sam becomes Uncle Sucker for some tinhorn dictator. And we wonder why we are not respected around the world.

In June, after weeks of back and forth between the State Department and Pyongyang, the funds were unfrozen and our own Federal Reserve System was called in to transfer the funds. How illicit these funds were in the first place is the fact that they went to banks all over the world to try to transfer them. They even went to Russia, and Russia would not touch it. But once again Uncle Sam is Uncle Sucker and our Federal Reserve System was willing to pass on that tainted money.

Before North Korea showed even an inkling of followthrough on their obligations, we conceded on an issue that

wasn't even a part of the agreement that they were supposed to start dismantling their nuclear program. So it begs the question of whether the BDA funds were part of a side deal that our State Department negotiators had chosen to agree to but not include in that formal agreement.

In addition, in pushing the BDA issue as a precondition for implementing the initial phase of the six-party agreement, Kim Jong Il had succeeded in rendering the timelines of the agreement useless. In other words, what was supposed to happen in 60 days after the February 13 agreement did not happen in 60 days, and more pussyfooting by Kim Jong Il, as we saw in the 1990s and we are seeing again now. Do we ever learn a lesson?

In addition to pushing the BDA issue as a precondition of implementing the initial phase of the agreement, he had in fact pulled one over on the United States. These deadlines, starting February 13, were touted by the six-party negotiators as evidence that North Korea would finally comply with the demands to give up its nuclear program and that they would be held accountable to strict deadlines. Neither of these things happened, and people in North Korea are laughing at Uncle Sucker again.

In recent days and weeks, North Korea has begun to signal that they will take concrete steps to shut down and seal the Yongbyon facility and accede to verification and monitoring procedures of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill recently visited North Korea and described his positive discussions with the North Koreans and their intentions to fulfill their obligations.

I wonder if he bothered to discuss with them why they didn't keep their word. Is their word worth anything? I mean, after all, you have an agreement. Can you trust people who sign a name to a document?

It is difficult to understand the positive reaction to the signals now being sent by North Korea 3 months after they were required. In other words, in 60 days things would start to happen. Nothing happened until 3 months after the 60 days. Nonetheless, the International Atomic Energy Agency has, in recent days, determined the scope of its inspection regime and is expected to be back in North Korea within weeks.

But once again, there is no target date for shutting down the Yongbyon facility. It appears that all we are getting from North Korea's leadership is the same old footdragging—pussyfooting around. And while the North Koreans have said they intend to shut down and seal the Yongbyon facility in the near future, do you know what they are doing now? They are putting more demands on us ahead of time. They are now tying those actions to the delivery of heavy oil.

Now, this bears repeating, because, here again, we have more pussyfooting.

Before shutting and sealing the nuclear facility at Yongbyon, North Korea is demanding the delivery of heavy oil, and even other assistance, without any significant action on their part. Mr. President, to use a quote from baseball's great Yogi Berra, it's *deja vu* all over again.

My great concern is that North Korea is in the process of exploiting, time and again, our willingness to concede to their demands for assistance, regardless of whether they ever actually comply with their commitments of the February agreement in the first place. In other words, if they can sucker us again, they want to sucker us for all they can get out of us.

I understand the angst of North Korea with allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors in and the freezing of the Yongbyon facility, but these steps are rather small compared to the future requirements. If Kim Jong Il ever complies with the first phase of this agreement, the next phase will require them to make a complete declaration of all nuclear programs, including their uranium enrichment activities.

It also requires the complete disablement of all nuclear facilities. Keep in mind, no timetables, no deadlines have been agreed to for the implementation of this phase. It is during those future steps, when the real heavy lifting will be required, that we will see the true nature of Kim Jong Il.

I haven't seen any change, and I don't expect a lot of change, but I expect the United States to just continue to be suckered and suckered and suckered. And if Kim Jong Il has no intention of giving us his nuclear weapons program, which many believe, it will be crystal clear at that point when real commitments come due.

I am afraid we will likely see more of the same patient back and forth, so-called confidence building—those are words our people use—that our negotiators seem so compelled to pursue. It seems that nothing has been learned during the process with North Korea. Have the diplomats at Foggy Bottom not learned anything from the mistakes made by this administration now, by the Clinton administration previously?

Have we learned nothing from Kim Jong Il's perpetual tactics of agreeing to terms, only to demand then further concessions, as though written agreements mean nothing? We have been down this road before. When are we going to recognize we are being made a sucker, much the same way President Clinton was played along with? When will we say to Pyongyang that enough is enough? When will this Bush administration stand its ground?

I support the international effort towards a diplomatic solution on this matter, but I also think it is imperative we learn from past mistakes. I was deeply skeptical of North Korea's willingness to follow through on the 1994 Agreed Framework, and I am deeply

skeptical they will follow through on the February 13 agreement.

If Pyongyang continues to demand assistance without complying with the terms of the February 13 agreement, I hope the President—the present chief executive, President Bush—will quickly realize the *deja vu* tactics of Kim Jong Il and put an end to the policies of concessions without compliance. If not, President Bush will have done nothing more to address North Korea's nuclear problems than President Clinton.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

TRADE WITH CHINA

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of the senior Senator from Iowa and his terrific work on North Korea and what we need to do, and I thank him for that.

Today, new trade figures were released by the Department of Commerce. The news continues to be bad, as our trade policy continues on its merry way. We saw the numbers—\$20 billion trade deficit in May, the most recent number they released—\$20 billion, leaving us for the year, at this point, a \$96 billion trade deficit with China. That is a 15-percent increase over last year. That means we are buying \$96 billion more from China than we are selling to China, and that is just through the first 5 months of 2007.

To understand a billion dollars, which is pretty hard to do, if you had a billion dollars and you spent a dollar every second of every minute, of every hour, of every day, it would take 31 years to spend \$1 billion. The pages who sit in this Chamber, Mr. President, have lived about a half billion seconds. They are a little older than half of 31 but not much. So our trade deficit with China, so far this year, up through the first 5 months since January 1, is \$96 billion.

Our trade deficit with the whole world, just in the month of May, was \$66 billion. President Bush the first said a trade deficit of a billion dollars translates into 13,000—mostly manufacturing jobs—13,000 jobs for a \$1 billion trade deficit. You can do the math and see what this continued persistent insidious trade deficit is doing to our economy.

Those are just numbers. Last week, in my State of Ohio, just to put faces with those numbers, I was in the town of Lima, the town of Mansfield, where I grew up—my mother had her 87th birthday—I was in Lorain and Marion and Zanesville. Each of those are medium-sized cities of 30,000, 40,000, 50,000, and 60,000 people. Each of those cities contributed so much to the muscle of this country, to our war effort in World War II, to the building of a middle class, and to doing all that industrial America has done, and in each of those communities—Lima, Zanesville, Mansfield, Lorain, and Marion—and I could add Springfield, Xenia, Findlay, Ravenna and Ashtabula—my wife's home-

town—I could add all those cities, and in too many cases the growth in this economy that the President trumpets when he comes to Cleveland—a more prosperous area—the President trumpets this economic growth, an economic growth that is passing by too many of these communities.

When I grew up in Mansfield, we had the international headquarters of Tappan-Stowe, Westinghouse, General Motors, and we had a Mansfield Tire Company, and the corporate headquarters of Ohio Grass, and tens of thousands of industrial manufacturing jobs. Today, of those companies I mentioned, only General Motors is still there.

Mr. President, we know what that kind of job loss does to communities when a company closes and lays off 2,000 people to move to Mexico, to China, or whatever happens. When 2,000 people lose their jobs, or 200 people lose their jobs, we know what that does to the community and to the families and to those individuals. We also know it means layoffs for teachers, police officers, firefighters, and that the community is less safe, less prosperous, and there is less opportunity for young people in those communities to go to school and get a good education in hopes of achieving the American dream.

The President's answer to this—and I don't put all of this decline in manufacturing, where my State of Ohio has lost literally hundreds of thousands of jobs, onto the Bush administration. I don't put all of this at the President's feet nor at the feet of failed trade policy, but clearly NAFTA, PNTR with China, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, trade agreements that are now on the table, all of these clearly have contributed to the decline of manufacturing in a big, big way.

So what is the President's answer? We had NAFTA, we had PNTR, we had CAFTA, and so the President's answer is let's do four more trade agreements. Let's do a trade agreement with Panama, let's do a trade agreement with Peru, let's do a trade agreement with Colombia, and let's do a trade agreement with South Korea. Again and again it is the same NAFTA failed model.

This time the President said it is going to be better because we are going to include labor and environmental standards in Peru and in Panama.

First, if that is the case, why today, literally this week, were workers in Peru demonstrating on the streets? Because they think these trade agreements are bad for workers in their country too. The fact is, these trade agreements might be good for some investors short term but they are never good for the workers in Peru, they are not good for workers in Panama, they are not good for the workers in the United States, and they are not good for our communities or families.

The President says: Well, this trade agreement is different because we have labor and environmental standards

that are going to be negotiated alongside them. But the fact is that is what they said about NAFTA. They passed labor and environmental standards in a side agreement and it did nothing to raise the labor and environmental standards in NAFTA, but it did turn a trade surplus that we had with Mexico in 1993 into a trade deficit into the tens of billions of dollars. We know that.

We also know what happened when we signed a trade agreement with Jordan—one I voted for when I was in the House of Representatives—a trade agreement that had solid labor and environmental standards in the middle of the agreement, at the core of the agreement. We also know that happened in 2000.

In 2001, when President Bush took office, his trade representative, Robert Zoellick, wrote a letter to the Jordanian Government saying we were not going to use the dispute resolution and not going to actually enforce the labor and environmental standards. What has happened? Jordan is now a sweatshop with a whole lot of Bangladeshi workers exporting textiles and apparel all over the world and has undercut all that trade agreement has been. It has undercut all that trade agreement should have been. So when I hear the President say we are going to do a trade agreement with Peru and Panama and South Korea and Colombia, it is the same old story. The trade policy is not working. We need something different.

We need to go back and relook at NAFTA, relook at PNTR, relook at CAFTA. We also need a trade policy that will have strong labor and environmental standards and strong food safety standards. Look at what has happened with China in the last few weeks. Look at the news stories about China—contaminants or worse in toothpaste and dog food, defective consumer toys for children. We are exposing American children, American families, Americans generally to the products coming from a country with no regulation, with no health and environmental standards, with no consumer product safety standards—none of those. Yet our market is wide open for them to sell into this country and just end run all the protections we have built to raise our standard of living and to protect our families and our children.

As Senator DORGAN said, we also need trade agreements with benchmarks to allow us to gauge whether these serve the national interest. We should have objectives of opening markets and creating jobs ensuring these benchmarks, so each year we have a report card whether this trade deal is actually helping us export or is this actually exporting jobs. Is this trade deal helping American workers bring their wages up or are these trade agreements pulling wages down? Are they helping to build a middle class or are they, like they have in the past, taking them piece by piece and pulling apart the middle class in this country?

We know what we need to do. We know, unfortunately, what the Bush administration wants to do on trade policy. Now is the time to start by rejecting these trade agreements the administration continues to push down our throats.

At the same time, when we pass trade agreements that work for workers and work for the middle class in this country and work for poorest workers in the developing world, we also need a manufacturing policy in our country. We need a tax system that rewards work, a tax system that encourages production in this country, the enlargement of the manufacturing extension partnership Senator KOHL from Wisconsin so eloquently spoke about, and we need a real alternative energy policy in this country, one that really will mean more manufacturing of wind turbines—the University of Toledo does some of the best wind research in the country—and of solar panels. My State has a variety, a whole bunch of manufacturing capabilities. There is simply no reason we can't help to turn my State into a Silicon Valley of alternative energy.

It is an opportunity whose time has come. It is an opportunity for us, as a Senate and a House, and for Governor Strickland in Ohio and Lieutenant Governor Fisher and all of us to work together, not just to change the direction of trade policy or change our tax system to help the middle class and help American workers but to embark on an alternative energy policy that will help stabilize energy prices, that will help wean us off Middle Eastern oil, and ultimately will help produce good-paying industrial jobs in our State.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2184 TO AMENDMENT NO. 2135

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate on the Sununu second-degree amendment, No. 2184? If not, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 2184) was agreed to.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

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

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for morning business, with Sen-

ators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

REMEMBERING LADY BIRD JOHNSON

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise to celebrate the life of Lady Bird Johnson. She was one of the most beloved First Ladies in our Nation's history.

Lady Bird Johnson represented the best of Texas and the best of America. Since the days that I attended the University of Texas with her daughter Lynda, I have known and admired Lady Bird Johnson. I knew her as a woman of dignity, kindness, and graciousness.

Through the years, I have also come to know Luci, one of the most thoughtful people I have ever met. And, of course, most of us in the Senate know Lynda and her husband Chuck Robb, a former Senator from Virginia.

Claudia Alta Taylor Johnson was a Texas original. She was born in Karnack, TX, on December 22, 1912. During her infancy, a nursemaid commented, "She's as pretty as a lady-bird," and that nickname virtually replaced her given name of Claudia Alta for the rest of her life.

Lady Bird graduated from Marshall High School in Marshall, TX, studied journalism and art at St. Mary's Episcopal School for Girls, and graduated from the University of Texas.

In 1934, she married Lyndon Baines Johnson, another young, smalltown Texan, who would go on to serve our State in the U.S. House and Senate and then our country as Vice President and later as President of the United States.

In her role as First Lady, Lady Bird shared her love of the outdoors with the American people, becoming the strongest advocate for improving our public spaces. She was instrumental in promoting the Highway Beautification Act, which enhanced the Nation's highway system by limiting billboards and planting roadside areas. I will never pass wildflowers on a median of a highway without thinking of her. She was also a champion of the Head Start Program.

Even after her husband left office in 1969, she remained active in public life and especially in Texas. She served on the University of Texas board of regents. On December 22, 1982—her 70th birthday—she and Helen Hayes founded the National Wildflower Research Center, a nonprofit organization devoted to preserving and reintroducing native plants in planned landscapes at the University of Texas. In 1998, that center was officially renamed the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

As the U.S. Senator from Lady Bird's home State, I have consistently worked to strengthen and promote her outstanding legacy. Over the years, I have worked to preserve the LBJ office