

First, we have added several cosponsors to S. Res. 123, which is the earmark disclosure rule. They are Senators ENSIGN, ENZI, MARTINEZ, COBURN, MCCASKILL, and CORNYN. I thank them for their support. Some of these Senators request earmarks, while others do not. But they all support earmark disclosure, and they all support this rule as it is written right now.

We have also added a couple cosponsors to S. Res. 260, the rule that would stop the adding of earmarks in secret conference committees. They are Senators ALLARD and CORNYN. I thank them for their support. A select few Members of Congress and their staffs should not be adding hidden earmarks to bills in the middle of the night when no one has the opportunity to review them and debate their merits. That is very bad practice, and it must end.

There was also an important editorial last Tuesday in the Roll Call newspaper that supports our efforts to protect earmark reform. I will read a couple of excerpts:

Senate Democratic leaders are resisting [Senator DEMINT's] move and are insisting on going to conference on the ethics bill, although they have yet to explain why already agreed-upon earmark rules can't be adopted immediately.

We don't oppose earmarks in principle. . . . But as events last year amply demonstrated, earmarks can be a source of rotten corruption. Full disclosure is crucial, and the Senate ought to institute it forthwith.

We think that on the merits Senate leaders should accede to DeMint so disclosure of spending requests is not delayed until President Bush signs an ethics reform measure that still has not even gone to a House-Senate conference.

Mr. President, the blogging community is watching what we are doing here. Countless bloggers, including The Corner on National Review Online, Instapundit.com, MichelleMalkin.com, the Sunlight Foundation, Porkbusters.com, RedState.com, and many others, have weighed in on the need for the Senate to implement these earmark transparency rules now. I thank them for paying attention to this debate and working to hold us all accountable.

Finally, we have received letters of support from several important taxpayer watchdog groups, including Americans for Prosperity and Citizens Against Government Waste. These groups know how important earmark reform is, and they believe it should be implemented immediately.

These rules need to be adopted immediately. They should not be allowed to go to conference with the House where they can be changed at will. They need to be enacted now before a single appropriations bill comes to the Senate floor.

It has been 180 days since they were unanimously adopted by the Senate. I have asked consent to enact these rules four times, but the other side has blocked them each and every time. Today needs to be the day that this obstruction stops. Today needs to be the

day we end the earmark business as usual in the Senate.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. RES. 123, S. RES. 260, AND H.R. 2316

Mr. DEMINT. With that, I will now propound a unanimous-consent request that would enact the earmark transparency rules and request that we go to conference with the House on the total ethics bill.

I ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be discharged from further consideration and the Senate now proceed to S. Res. 123 and S. Res. 260, the earmark disclosure resolutions, all en bloc; that the resolutions be agreed to and the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table.

I further ask that the Senate then proceed to the immediate consideration of H.R. 2316, the House-passed ethics and lobbying reform bill; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of S. 1, as passed by the Senate, be inserted in lieu thereof; that the bill be read the third time, passed, and the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees at a ratio of 4 to 3.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, on behalf of the leadership, I do object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. President, obviously, I am very disappointed that we continue to obstruct ethics reform and earmark reform.

With that, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 163

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to Calendar No. 139, S. 163; that the committee-reported amendment be withdrawn, and I have a substitute amendment at the desk; that the Bond amendment to the substitute amendment be considered and agreed to, the substitute amendment, as amended, be agreed to, the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that the bill, as amended, be read the third time; that the Senate then proceed to the consideration of H.R. 1361, the House companion, which is at the desk; that all after the enacting clause be stricken and the text of S. 163, as amended, be inserted in lieu thereof; that the bill be read the third time, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table; that the Senate insist on its amendment and request a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses; that the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees, with the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship appointed as

conferees; that S. 163 be returned to the calendar, and the above occurring without intervening action or debate.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. DEMINT. On behalf of the Senator from Oklahoma, I object.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, let me speak for a minute about this legislation. I understand Senator DEMINT's need to object on behalf of the Senator from Oklahoma. This is legislation that has broad—I do mean broad—bipartisan support. It was passed out of the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee on a unanimous vote. It now represents a very broad compromise worked on with the administration and with all of the members of the committee, both Republican and Democrat.

I will review very quickly what this bill does. As everybody knows, when Katrina hit, we had a terrible time getting small business assistance to the countless thousands of small businesses that were impacted, not only in New Orleans but in Baton Rouge and across into Mississippi, Alabama, and elsewhere, where there were many services being provided by other folks. A lot of small businesses were impacted.

We learned there was not an adequate capacity within the Small Business Administration to deliver this kind of assistance in a rapid way. So we have worked now, after a series of hearings and over the course of 2 years, to pull together the Small Business Disaster Response and Loan Improvement Act. It does a number of things.

It creates a new elevated level of disaster declaration, referred to as catastrophic national disaster. That triggers nationwide economic injury disaster loans for adversely affected small businesses.

In addition, it requires the SBA to create an expedited disaster assistance business loan program to provide businesses with expedited access to short-term money.

A lot of the businesses in New Orleans could have survived and might have survived or chosen to try to if there had been some bridge money or available working capital. But the absence of it forced a lot of them to close their doors. If we can provide assistance in a timely fashion, obviously subject to the administration's approval—and there is discretion in the bill—we would have the ability to do a better job.

In addition, there are improvements to the existing loan program which have been written in the bill. There is improved agency coordination and marketing. It directs the SBA to coordinate with FEMA in a more effective way. It directs the SBA to create a proactive marketing plan to make the public aware of the disaster response services.

In addition, it provides improved planning and oversight and directs the SBA to update the hurricane response plan to address all future disasters.

This is, as I say, with bipartisan support. I have a letter from the Administrator of the SBA, Steve Preston. He writes saying:

I am writing to express my thanks for the efforts you and your colleagues have made to work with the Small Business Administration and to address the administration's concerns with some of the provisions in S. 163, the Small Business Disaster Response and Loan Improvement Act of 2007. At this point, if amended by the Bond amendment—

And that is what we just sought to do—the administration has no objections to Senate passage of S. 163. However, the administration would consider a longer extension of the authorization language in section 3 to avoid the need for concern over unintended expiration of programs and activities.

We would obviously love to do that. It appears there is one person in the Senate, the Senator from Oklahoma, who is opposed to moving forward with this legislation. As I say, there was a unanimous vote by our committee, which wants to see if we could achieve this disaster assistance. Nobody understands how critical this is more than the Senator from Louisiana, Ms. LANDRIEU, who has been fighting from the moment Katrina hit to try to get this kind of disaster assistance.

I wish to ask the Senator if she would share with us her observations as to why this legislation is so critical and what specifically we have done to address some of the concerns of those who had previously expressed those concerns in order now to have a consensus about this legislation. I ask the Senator from Louisiana if she would explain the situation in New Orleans, not just then but now, and why this legislation is so critical.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Massachusetts. I begin by saying that his leadership has been on point and so focused for the last 2 years in trying to help lead his committee, with the support and cooperation of his ranking member, the Senator from Maine, Ms. SNOWE, to move Congress to adopt this important legislation.

The Senator is absolutely correct that the SBA was one of several important Federal agencies that was caught flatfooted when Katrina and Rita hit the gulf coast and subsequently when the Federal levee system failed in multiple places, as the Senator from Massachusetts knows because he has walked through neighborhood after neighborhood, mile after mile, having visited with business owners and homeowners who lost everything they had, that took them generations to build. The Senator knows very well that this particular administration was anemic and very slow in its response. In fact, the gentleman leading it at the time was not the appropriate leader. To the President's credit, they have nominated and we have confirmed a new leader for the SBA.

I think the Senator from Massachusetts will agree with me that the Director, Steve Preston, is making some very good and fundamental changes. But there is just so much this administrator can do without Congress doing its job to give him the tools he needs to get the job done.

Why this legislation is being held up by the Republican side I am not sure. It is very disappointing, not just to me but to the millions of people who are affected and are still struggling, having lost everything or having at risk everything they own because we cannot seem to get legislation passed because of obstructionist tactics.

I repeat, this bill is supported not only by the Chair but by the ranking member. In addition, both Senators from Louisiana are cosponsoring this bill, Senator BILL NELSON from Florida, who has experienced the disasters of hurricanes in Florida, and Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON from Georgia, who also has experienced disasters. This is not a Democratic bill being rammed down the Republican side of the aisle. This is a good Government efficiency, effective measure to try to reform the SBA. But because of bureaucratic delays, because of the inadequacy of the current law, we were not able to help the 18,000 businesses that were destroyed, many of them—I would say 97 percent of them—small businesses.

The Senator from Massachusetts and I together visited a cleaning business for hospital bedding and other items that was—I cannot think of the name of the business, but the Senator from Massachusetts and I walked throughout New Orleans East. This is one of hundreds of businesses that not only found themselves flooded, but when the waters receded, the hospitals they had serviced had closed. So basically through no fault of their own, they were struggling as well. This legislation will help them.

This is not only important to the gulf coast and to the 18,000 businesses, many of them small businesses, that need help and assistance, but it is for the future. The Senator from Massachusetts is saying let this Federal Government do better. If we believe business is important, and we do, and if we believe small business is important, and it is, then let's at least have our response honed and tuned to the point where if, God forbid, another huge disaster happens, we will be much more prepared than we were last time.

Our constituents depend on us to be responsive. I say to the Senator from Massachusetts, that is exactly what this bill does. I again thank him for his leadership and express truly my outrage that this is being held up for no apparent good reason at the expense of thousands of business owners who are looking to us for help and support.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Louisiana. She has been not only a terrific member of the committee but has represented to the whole Senate countless numbers of

times on the floor the plight of those folks down in New Orleans and in the immediate surrounding area.

I wish to emphasize what she has said and what I said previously, and that is this has been worked on now for 2 years in a bipartisan way. Senator SNOWE, the ranking member, who was, incidentally, the Chair when we first began working on this legislation, has supported the efforts to try to make certain that we address these concerns. Other Republican members of the committee have contributed significantly to this effort. Senator BOND had concerns about the energy program. We have addressed those concerns.

I hope we can move forward. We tried actually to reach out to whatever opposition there is with respect to this bill. We are happy to sit down and address any legitimate concerns. But at this point, this is long overdue. We are into the hurricane season now, about a month and a half into it. Our predictors have been pretty accurate in these past years, and they are suggesting we are going to have a very significant number of named storms and maybe as many as 10 projected full-blown hurricanes this year, with 13 to 17 named storms.

Last year, they hit the number of named storms and hurricanes, but we were very lucky; they didn't blow into the shore and we didn't get hit. Obviously, we cannot sit around and be lucky all the time. We cannot afford another Katrina-like response. There are specific actions this legislation empowers the SBA to do to take steps proactively, to be in a position to address the concerns of small businesses rapidly. In addition, this bill helps private lenders get in early on and be immediately on the scene and assist in the process of providing those loans. So it streamlines that process.

I wish to comment on Senator LANDRIEU's reference to that cleaning place we visited in East New Orleans. We made arrangements to go down and see that place because we knew it needed help. We had talked with the CEO before going there. About a week and a half later, when we got there, we went into this cleaning facility, which had been completely flooded, as the Senator said. They cleaned it out themselves. They worked diligently to get the equipment up and working, what they could. Much of it was ruined and was going to have to be disposed of. But these folks were working this place.

Since they were dependent on the services of hotels and others for the work they did, they were at the time mostly doing the hospitals that had reopened, and that was it. But the CEO was so despairing in the span of that week and a half or so between our making the appointment and getting there that when we arrived, the CEO had left with his family, taken off; that was it, he had enough, and left in charge was one of the workers who was the "acting CEO" who was desperately trying to hold onto this business.

When people are working like that and run into that kind of desperation, we have to be able to look them in the eye and say we have done everything possible. We put in place the mechanisms they pay for and that they have a right to expect will be there to assist in that kind of an emergency. That is what we are trying to do here, in a bipartisan way, to make certain we don't lose CEOs, lose jobs, lose workers, and lose hope as a consequence of our inaction in the Senate. So I hope we are going to be able to come back to this in short order. As I say, I think we have worked in good faith with every legitimate question that has been raised with respect to this legislation. We will happily sit down if another Senator still has a concern, but we certainly will not tolerate—and at some point I hope the leader will allow us to take the time in the Senate to continue on the floor with this legislation. There is one Senator who is opposing it, without any rationale whatsoever.

Ms. LANDRIEU. May I add something, if the Senator will yield?

Mr. KERRY. I will yield to the Senator.

Ms. LANDRIEU. We have all learned many things since this disaster happened, and one of the things we have learned, I guess rather painfully, is that it is not only the geographic area that is struck by the high wind, the high waters or the flood waters that is impacted by a catastrophic disaster, but it is also the perimeter of the area, the towns that absorb people fleeing to higher ground and trying to settle where they can find work and schools for their children, and businesses that might not have been directly impacted but have lost half or 75 percent of their customer base.

Right now, without Senator KERRY's bill, there is virtually no authorization on the Federal books to allow loans to be made to these kinds of businesses. So because we don't have that authorization, we are, right now, basically making the disaster worse. I hope people can understand this. We, by our inaction, by our hardheadedness—and it is not me, although I can be hardheaded but not on this issue—because of some leadership decision on the Republican side, we are literally, right now, making this matter worse. Businesses are continuing to go out of business; businesses that didn't have a drop of water, businesses that didn't have one shingle let loose from the high wind continue to file bankruptcy and put up out-of-business signs because there is no provision to allow low-interest loans to them if they weren't directly impacted. Unfortunately, they are directly impacted in terms of loss of customers, et cetera.

In addition, it is going to bring in the private sector. We heard a lot from the other side about Government can't do everything; let the private sector be engaged. Well, your bill allows for more private-sector involvement; does it not? It allows the banks that know

these small businesses to be a part of helping them. This is what the business community wants, this is what the banks want, and this is what we recognized was a problem initially.

Yet we are being blocked, I understand, by the Senator from Oklahoma, who has not made his specific objections clear to us. So I hope they can be made clear, and if we can fix it, fine. If not, then the leadership on the Republican side, I would say to the Senator from Massachusetts, has a decision: Do they want to be part of the nonsensical opposition by a Senator who is in Oklahoma, who is never going to have a hurricane or do they want to stand with the people in America from New York to Texas who are threatened every 9 months with a hurricane season.

That is the decision the Republican leader from Kentucky is going to have to answer. Is he going to support a bipartisan piece of legislation that aids businesses that are literally threatened from New York to Texas or is he going to stand with some nonsensical opposition coming from the middle of the country that will never be hit by a hurricane.

I hate to be so pointed about it, but that is basically where it is. This is 2 years after the storm. This isn't 2 months or 6 months after. This is a bill that Senator SNOWE herself started and Senator KERRY is finishing, and the people of the gulf coast are still waiting. So this is a real leadership question, and I hope that as the day goes by and the week goes by, we can make some progress, and I thank the Senator for his leadership.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Louisiana. As I said previously, she has been tireless on this. Louisiana has been lucky to have her intervention every step of the way. The billions of dollars that have gone down there is a consequence of the hard work she has done.

Let me summarize what is being obstructed. First, expedited assistance from the SBA to small businesses injured by a disaster; second, private disaster loans. Private disaster loans. The ability of private-sector lenders to become involved in the process quickly, extending credit to the folks who need it as a consequence of that disaster, which, incidentally, can only occur when the President of the United States has legitimately declared a disaster; third, improvements to the existing program; why we wouldn't want to improve the existing program after we saw how it was incapable of meeting the problems of Katrina is beyond me. That is what we are doing here in a complete and total bipartisan, unanimous committee vote that suggests these improvements are important and will make a difference; improved agency coordination in marketing. These are the things that make a difference. When you can get the bureaucracy out of the way, when you can streamline, you are getting better production for

the taxpayers' dollars, and that is exactly what we are doing; improved planning and oversight and disaster assistance staffing, necessary to be able to deliver the services because we didn't have sufficient personnel to be able to process the loan requests that came in.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter from the Small Business Administrator, Steve Preston.

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

U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, DC, June 29, 2007.

Hon. JOHN F. KERRY,
Chairman, Committee on Small Business and
Entrepreneurship, U.S. Senate, Washington,
DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: I am writing to express my thanks for the efforts you and your colleagues have made to work with the U.S. Small Business Administration and to address the Administration's concerns with some of the provisions in S. 163, "The Small Business Disaster Response and Loan Improvements Act of 2007".

At this point, if amended by the Bond Amendment, the Administration has no objections to Senate passage of S. 163. However, the Administration would request a longer extension of the authorization language in section 3 to avoid the need for concern over unintended expiration of programs and activities. We would also recommend clarifying that the Administrator would have flexibility under section 205 to designate portions of a declared catastrophic national disaster area as a HUBZone area, without extending this designation to an entire disaster area.

We look forward to working with you when the bill goes into conference discussions with the U.S. House of Representatives. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me directly.

Sincerely yours,

STEVEN C. PRESTON.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 20 minutes as in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the next Democratic Speaker be Senator KENNEDY of Massachusetts; with the understanding that if a Republican Member wishes to speak, they would be permitted to do so between any majority speakers.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCAIN. I object. My understanding is that at 11 a.m., we were

supposed to go to the bill. We are now, at 11:15, going to go to the bill, and then we want the regular procedure as we consider legislation, which would be whoever has the right of recognition and any unanimous consent agreements.

So I object to the second unanimous consent request.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Connecticut.

IRAQ WITHDRAWAL AMENDMENT

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I had hoped to offer an amendment today to this year's Defense authorization bill regarding Iraq. I understand the leadership has decided to act on the Levin-Reed amendment before considering other amendments to this legislation. Given the existing parliamentary situation, I am not confident there will be an opportunity to get an up-or-down vote on my amendment or, for that matter, any other amendments that meaningfully mandates a change of course with respect to the administration's policy in Iraq.

It is deeply troubling and it saddens me that in the Senate, on the most critical issue of our day, we cannot consider, debate or vote on amendments affecting the lives and well-being of our servicemen and women and the conduct of U.S. foreign policy in the most troubled spot in the world today. I believe those who refuse to allow this Senate to vote on this critical issue do a grave disservice to the American people by enabling the President to continue with his failed strategy in Iraq.

Every additional day we "stay the course" in Iraq, our Nation is less safe and the people of Iraq get further away from coming together to fashion a political and diplomatic solution to their civil conflict. Our men and women in uniform have served this Nation valiantly in Iraq and Afghanistan, and they will continue to do so, I am confident, until our political leaders see the error of their judgment in this case and begin the process of drawing down U.S. troops in Iraq.

It is imperative, I believe, we change course in Iraq immediately. I think this is vitally important for our country and the well-being of that part of the world. Sadly, the President and his allies stand in the way of that goal. Support for the President's policy erodes as each passing day unfolds with more violence and chaos in Iraq.

I predict the day will come when Congress will have the courage to say enough is enough, but, sadly, it would not be before more American lives are lost or more wanton destruction occurs in the beleaguered nation of Iraq.

Let me speak briefly about the amendment I had hoped to offer—still hope to offer—and which I would like to offer at the earliest opportunity if, in fact, this logjam breaks. My amendment seeks to accomplish two critical

tasks. First, to bring the Iraq war to a close by ending the financing of combat operations, mandating a phased redeployment of combat forces from Iraq, and ensuring the administration actually carries out that redeployment.

Second, the amendment proposes to redirect any savings realized from a reduced military presence in Iraq, to restore the readiness of our very war-battered National Guard and armed services. I strongly believe we must not wait any longer to achieve either task.

Now is the time for us to make difficult choices. Now is the time for the Senate to enact legislation that, I believe, will hold this administration accountable to this policy.

I support the Levin-Reed amendment, and I thank both our colleagues, the authors of that amendment, for demonstrating leadership in trying to move this body one step closer to bringing this disastrous war to a close. It is my hope that their amendment will do that, but I remain concerned about some aspects of that amendment—the extended delay in commencing redeployment and the absence of any funding linkage to redeployment. Based on past experiences with this administration, my concern is the President will simply ignore the legislation proposed by the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and the senior Senator from Rhode Island.

It has been quite difficult to track the ever-changing justifications for continuing our combat operations in Iraq, including the surge, and there appears to be no end in sight.

First, the administration simply refused to admit there was no military solution in Iraq or that Iraq was in a State of civil war.

Then, instead of acting upon a unique chance to implement the bipartisan Baker-Hamilton Commission, which Congress supported, Secretary Rice explained that the administration was implementing a surge tactic, but assured us that it was an Iraqi plan. "Most importantly," she claimed, "the Iraqis have devised their own strategy, and our efforts will support theirs."

Our country was told that despite the catastrophic policy failures of this administration up until that point, that the surge would take time to work and that we couldn't judge its success until U.S. forces had "surged" to their maximum levels—and that would take up to 6 months.

But that the surge is at full force, and we are told yet again that the time isn't right to make a judgment about the success or failure of the administration's policy. Now we are told we must wait until September to determine the success of the surge. I strongly suspect, as I stand here in July, that as September draws near the administration will once again come up with some additional arguments to delay the day of reckoning on the policy in Iraq.

I do not need any more time, or any more reports and briefings to confirm

what most of us already know. The American people and the Iraqi people don't need any more time to realize that the administration's Iraq policy, including the surge, has been a failure. With the exception of a handful in this body, I have not said anything that most of my colleagues do not believe themselves. Why, then, are we waiting? As we wait yet another 2 or 3 months to decide what most of us here have already concluded, while disagreeing about how best to achieve this result, there is a consensus that has emerged that I think is probably more than a supermajority. After all the time waiting here, our servicemen and women and the beleaguered people of Iraq will pay an awful price indeed, as we fool around and dicker while deciding to come to the conclusion we have all basically reached already.

The highly respected International Crisis Group recently released a report on Iraq which examined the complex reasons for the current political violence in Iraq, and concluded that any surge based on a purely military operation with a simplistic view of the bloodshed's origins was destined for failure.

We mustn't sacrifice any more lives, we shouldn't countenance any more bloodshed, and we shouldn't support the continuation of the failed escalation of a disastrous policy. The April-May American death toll is a new 2-month record. The civilian casualty rate in Iraq is at an all-time high. Overall violence in Iraq is up and, according to the Iraqi Red Crescent, the number of internally displaced Iraqis has quadrupled since January. In fact, the Iraqi Red Crescent warns that there is currently a human tragedy unprecedented in Iraq's history."

As recent GAO reports have highlighted what we all intuitively have concluded—that there has been little progress on the key detailed provisions of Iraq's hydrocarbon law, let alone on reforming the Iraqi constitution, on deBaathification, or on a host of other essential political components to a functioning Iraqi government, focused on reconciliation. In fact, Foreign Policy magazine recently released their "failed state index" and Iraq rose to No. 2 on that index, closely behind Sudan.

The President told the American people that the surge of troops into key cities in Iraq was being executed in order to provide the Iraqis with some political breathing space to start the reconciliation process. Secretary Rice explained that "the most urgent task now is to help the Iraqi government establish the confidence that it can and will protect all of its citizens, regardless of their sectarian identity, and that it will reinforce security with political reconciliation and economic support."

But none of that has happened—and falsely claiming that it has, won't make us safer, won't secure Iraq, won't secure our interests in the region, and won't rebuild our military.