

of the armed services feels that he or she received an unfair rating.

Additionally, the bill requires the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to rapidly move to fundamentally change and improve the disability evaluation systems within the two departments.

I am pleased that the legislation will ensure that as policies and programs are developed to improve care and management of wounded soldiers and veterans, that such policies and improvements will apply equally to members of the Active and Reserve components.

The bill also requires that military personnel continue to receive the best possible care at Walter Reed Army Medical Center until equivalent medical facilities are constructed at the National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda, MD, and the Fort Belvoir, VA, Army Community Hospital—and requires the Department of Defense to study the feasibility of accelerating the relocation of medical capabilities in the National Capital Region required by the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 2005.

The Senate can be proud that it has put the needs of our wounded warriors first and set forth bipartisan jurisdictional boundaries.

I want to thank my colleagues—especially Senator AKAKA, chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, and Senator CRAIG, the ranking member, for their cooperation, and for the work of both our committee staffs—working together—in the preparation of this legislation.

It is my hope that we will proceed expeditiously to conference with the other body on wounded warrior legislation and promptly resume consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2008 when Congress reconvenes in September.

We owe this to our men and women in uniform and their families stationed throughout the world. They deserve nothing less than our full support.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period of morning business for 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak therein up to 10 minutes, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, and with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the second.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to proceed on my leader time.

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT FIRST CLASS JASON LEE BISHOP

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, most of the men and women who wear our country's uniform would not call themselves heroes, but I am afraid I would have to disagree with that. Those who fight abroad for our freedom here at home are, indeed, heroes. I rise to honor one special Kentuckian among them who was lost to us in the line of duty.

SFC Jason Lee Bishop of Covington, KY, was killed by a car bomb while on patrol operations in Siniya, Iraq, on New Year's Day of 2006. A member of the 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, based in Fort Campbell, KY, he was 31 years old.

For his outstanding service as a soldier in the U.S. Army, SFC Bishop was awarded the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart, as well as many other medals and honors of distinction.

Jason was the first of four children born to his parents Frank and Brenda Bishop in the northern Kentucky town of Covington. His mother remembers Jason as a young child standing on the seat in the family car and singing along with the radio, especially to Kenny Rogers.

Riding in the car with his father was a different experience. Frank taught young Jason how to drive by putting him in the driver's seat at the top of a hill, disengaging the parking brake, and issuing one command: "Drive." On a stick shift, no less.

Jason and his dad enjoyed deer hunting and fishing together, something they did whenever the opportunity arose. Playing cards was another way the two enjoyed each other's company. His family says Jason learned to count using playing cards.

Jason graduated from Covington Holmes High School in 1993 with 4 years of junior ROTC experience. He entered the Army immediately upon graduation.

After basic training and assignment at Fort Knox, also in my State of Kentucky, Jason was sent to the Republic of Korea. He also was deployed to Bosnia for a 10-month tour. Later assigned to Fort Campbell back in Kentucky, Jason was promoted to sergeant first class.

Completing Drill Sergeant School was one of SFC Bishop's proudest accomplishments. Earning that drill sergeant badge was physically and mentally grueling, perhaps the toughest of all of his assignments.

Jason became a darn good drill sergeant. A fellow drill sergeant who served with him at Fort Knox, SFC Daniel Webster, says he is not aware of any combat deaths among the 1,000

men Jason trained at Fort Knox—a remarkable record. "There is no doubt in my mind soldiers are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan alive because Jason was so committed to their training," SFC Webster added.

In July of 1999, while stationed at Fort Knox, Jason met the woman he would marry, Katrina Bishop. They took their vows in 2002. "He and I were soulmates," Katrina says.

They had a son, Matthew Franklin Bishop. Only 1½ years old when Jason deployed for the last time, he idolized his father. Matt "quickly became his shadow," Katrina says. "Wherever Daddy was, Matt had to be too."

In September 2005, Jason and his unit deployed to Iraq. They would come home without him in September of 2006.

Jason is loved and remembered by his parents Frank and Brenda Bishop; his sisters Jamie, Lacey, and Julia Bishop; his wife Katrina Bishop; his son Matthew Bishop; his daughter Morgan Bishop, as well as many other beloved family members.

A wall that stands at Fort Knox to honor all of the fallen heroes in Iraq and Afghanistan has been named for the soldier who once served there. It is called "Bishop's Wall of Remembrance."

There is also a Sergeant First Class Jason Bishop Memorial Park at Covington that sits directly across from the house in which Jason grew up.

But the tribute to Sergeant First Class Bishop I can speak to most is this medal.

This medal, this coin was sent to me by Katrina Bishop. The Bishop family had it made in honor of their son. On one side it lists Jason's dates of birth and death, his assignment in the 101st Airborne Division, and his service in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

On the other side of the coin it reads: "Sergeant First Class Jason Lee Bishop" and has a picture of his sergeant's stripes. It also lists seven attributes that the Bishop family chose to remember their son, husband, and father by: loyalty, honor, duty, integrity, respect, selfless service, personal courage.

Mr. President, this medal is the Bishop family's reminder of Jason's life, which was tragically ended, and of their love for him, which will never end.

I thank Katrina Bishop for this gift, and I will be honored to keep it in my office. It will serve as a reminder to me, as well, of how much we owe the men and women of our Armed Forces whose highest calling is to fight for the freedom of others.

I ask the Senate to pause for a moment today and hold the family and friends of SFC Jason Lee Bishop in their prayers. They certainly will be in mine.

I yield the floor.

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

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, first, I want to compliment the distinguished minority leader for not just recalling the sacrifices of the family and members of the U.S. military today, but for his efforts to do that for a long time now on the Senate floor. He focuses on Kentuckians who have a long history of service to their country, and rightly so. I know he would add to that the service of those members of our military and their families from all over this country and add them to our prayers and thoughts as well. We spend time in Washington debating policies that affect them, and they are living it every day, every minute of every day. I appreciate the words he brought to the Senate floor not just on this occasion but on previous occasions as well.

Mr. President, I will talk about the action taken earlier by the majority and minority leaders. We have now, by unanimous consent, approved two key provisions of the Defense authorization bill by unanimous consent in a period of 3 or 4 minutes. Yet it took the last 2 weeks to debate the Defense authorization bill, only to have it pulled from the floor so that we could not vote on it. It was used by the majority leader as a surrogate for the debate on Iraq policy. We have had something like seven or eight different resolutions—perhaps more, I have forgotten the count this year—on policy relating to Iraq. There is no more important national security issue facing our country than the war against terrorists, and certainly the central battle field in that war is the Iraq war.

Republicans do not shy away from the debate about what to do. It is an extraordinarily important debate. On the other hand, I would have two arguments with the way this has been done. First, the time of the debate right now is misplaced because after the Senate unanimously confirmed General Petraeus, after the President had changed his course and consulted with General Petraeus and others about a new strategy, and that strategy was developed, we sent General Petraeus to Iraq to begin executing that strategy. We put together five brigades to represent a surge in troop strength to accomplish the mission, the last of which went into the theater about a month ago.

When we did that, we made a commitment to the soldiers, marines, airmen, and all the Navy personnel to back them in what we sent them to do, not to immediately begin questioning whether they could succeed in their mission. We heard a lot of calls from the other side of the aisle that were very defeatist in nature, saying it was already lost and there was no way they could win. That is, obviously, not a good sendoff for the young men and women you are putting in harm's way to accomplish a mission that is important to the American people.

So the timing of the debate was off. General Petraeus and Ambassador

Crocker will report back here in September. It is an interim report on this new strategy. But we have an idea that it will tell us a lot about the future course of action we should pursue. I think most Americans believe, even though all of us would like to have the troops come home and have our engagement there ended as much as it can, the reality is that Americans don't want to lose, don't want to be defeated. They certainly don't want to see the consequences of that defeat, with al-Qaida having a base of operations in Iraq, perhaps millions of Iraqis slaughtered in the ensuing chaos, and U.S. policy in the war against terror undercut dramatically in that very important region of the world. So the timing was off.

Secondly, using the Defense authorization bill as the surrogate for that debate was wrong. This is a little bit of an inside-the-beltway discussion, but the American people need to know why this is wrong. Each year, for 45 years, the Senate has passed a Defense authorization bill setting the policy for our national security for the following year and establishing the authorization for troop strength, military weapons acquisitions, policy related to missile defense, and you name it. The President has signed the Defense authorization bill. That then enables the Congress to appropriate the money to pay for the things that we believe are necessary for the military.

But this year, instead of having the debate and amending that bill and passing it, it was simply used as a vehicle to debate Iraq. Then when the last Iraq resolution was defeated, the bill was not passed. It was pulled from the floor. That left extraordinarily important policy hanging—policy on which our military troops rely.

This is not the first time the Democratic majority has had second thoughts about action it has taken on the Senate floor. I am glad it is having second thoughts about this bill. But by the action that has been taken, we are still not going to be adopting good policy in the right way. There are consequences to this piecemeal approach.

Let me illustrate my point. What we have just done this morning is to do two very important parts of that bill: to adopt a 3.5-percent, across-the-board pay raise for uniform military service personnel, and to adopt the language from the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act, both of which were critical components.

Senator JOHN McCAIN, my colleague from Arizona, spoke eloquently regarding both matters on this floor on numerous occasions. I know were he here now, he would be pleased at the action the Senate has taken.

Let me cite a few of the things that have been left on the cutting room floor as a result of not passing the Defense authorization bill, but rather simply taking a couple of provisions that are obviously popular with our constituents and leaving the remainder

behind. Here are a few of the things we are not adopting as a result of this piecemeal approach: Senator JOE BIDEN noted that the MRAP, or Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, “are the best available vehicle for force protection” for our troops. He is right. There was \$4.1 billion in the act to authorize payment for this equipment. Not adopted.

It authorizes the new hiring and bonus authorities to assist the Defense Department in recruiting and retaining needed, quality health and mental care professionals in the military. Not adopted.

It authorized \$50 million in supplemental educational aid to local school districts affected by the assignment and location of military families. That is something all military families know about. Not adopted.

It authorized payment of combat-related special compensation to service-members who are medically retired due to combat-related disability. Not adopted.

It included provisions to examine and strengthen security forces at defense sites storing weapons-grade nuclear materials. That is a very important provision relating to nuclear deterrent. Not adopted.

It would have satisfied the Army Chief of Staff's unfunded requirements list by authorizing an additional \$2.7 billion for items such as reactive armor, aviation survivability equipment, combat training centers, and machine guns—a variety of things the Pentagon said were necessary to support the missions of our men and women in the military. Not adopted.

My point here is that when you use the Defense authorization bill for the purpose simply of having a debate on Iraq, there are a lot of bad consequences to not passing that bill. You cannot cure them by simply picking a couple of the more politically popular items, such as we have done today, and getting those adopted by unanimous consent. I am delighted that we have done it, but that is not the end of the story if we are really going to support the mission of our troops.

Mr. President, let me conclude on this thought. To some extent, this debate we had in the last 2 weeks just on the Iraq war is a manifestation of what has gone on in the Congress for the last 200 days. It is hard to believe that 200 days is gone. What does this Congress have to show for its actions and being in session for these 200 days? I cannot say nothing because the reality is, we have approved and named 20 post offices. That is a post office every 10 days. It is not exactly heavy lifting, but it is something. As a matter of fact, it is the main thing this Senate can point to in terms of accomplishment. The only other thing of substance was the minimum wage increase, which, unfortunately, did not include the benefits to small businesses that have to pay the minimum wage in terms of tax relief, which Republicans