

tried to have included. Of course, we had to pass the supplemental appropriations bill to fund the war effort. That is it.

I apologized yesterday for calling this a “do-nothing Congress.” After all, we have named 20 post offices. Let’s call it the “post office Congress.” Perhaps in the remaining time this year we will pick up the action. Perhaps we will find ways to accomplish things that the American people really want us to do.

One of the big problems we can see is because we have not done the appropriations bills to fund everything from the military to the Departments of Justice and Commerce, all of the other departments of Government that serve the American people are going to be facing a trillion-dollar-plus Omnibus appropriations bill this winter. That is the worst of legislating. It is kind of the opposite of what we are doing with the Defense authorization bill where we don’t pass the bill, but we pick two or three items that are politically popular and do them by unanimous consent.

In this case, you don’t do anything to fund the Government until the last few days, and then you ball it up into one giant bill, thinking nobody can vote against it because, after all, it is either all or nothing.

That is very bad legislating and something I think we are going to resist because it represents not just an increase in spending but will undoubtedly represent bad policy as well.

Mr. President, my hope is that this “post office Congress” can get on to some other business. I am delighted we have been able to select two items from the Defense authorization bill to adopt by unanimous consent today. But that will not correct the deficiencies. I hope my colleagues, in the remaining time before the August work period, and in the months of September and October, will roll up their sleeves and work on the problems the American people sent us here to resolve.

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

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, how much time remains on this side in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. There remains 17½ minutes.

RECENT SENATE ACTIONS

Mr. CORNYN. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, last week was not a great week in the U.S. Senate. We had an overnight session that was designed to highlight the efforts by the majority to pass a timetable for withdrawal in Iraq, regardless of the consequences of that timeline and that withdrawal.

We then had another episode where I think both sides of the aisle were sort of forced to look in the abyss and to pull back because, as I am sure the Chair and other colleagues will recall, there was an amendment clearly of-

fered to embarrass the President and this side of the aisle based upon the commutation of the sentence of Scooter Libby. There was an amendment offered highlighting the dozens of pardons issued by President Clinton. As you will recall, Mr. President, people paused at where we had gotten to in this debate—the acrimony and incriminations—and decided to figuratively lay our guns on the table and walk away.

That vote on the Scooter Libby commutation was actually vitiated, something I have never seen happen before, but I guess anything can happen by unanimous consent in the Senate, and it did. And there was no vote on the amendment to deal with the Clinton pardons.

I mention those because I think, unfortunately, the Senate has gotten to a bad place, not only in the eyes of the American people, where 16 percent, according to the most recent poll I have seen, believe the Senate is doing a good job, but we have gotten to a bad place in terms of the hyperpartisan atmosphere and the point-scoring that seems to take precedence over all other matters. That is not the kind of Senate I ran to serve in, and I know that a number of colleagues feel exactly the same way.

On Tuesday mornings, thanks to Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER of Tennessee and Senator JOE LIEBERMAN of Connecticut, we have instituted a new breakfast meeting each week. It is a bipartisan meeting. This was the subject of some conversation—the amendments, the hyperpartisan atmosphere, and really the episodes I just mentioned that occurred last week.

Again this morning, on Wednesday morning, one of the highlights of my week, I attended the Senate Prayer Breakfast. It is also bipartisan, obviously. This was brought up again, although I am not going to go into any detail since both of those meetings occur without any policy statements and, obviously, press is not invited; it is a private meeting where Senators can come together on a bipartisan basis, both at the Wednesday breakfast and the Tuesday breakfast, and talk about issues we care about, trying to do things for the American people, in the case of a prayer breakfast to share stories and get to know each other a little bit better.

I will say that there is some recognition that the Senate has too many team meetings—and by that I mean with Republicans meeting with other Republicans trying to figure out how we can win or score points against Democrats and Democrats meeting with Democrats thinking about ways they can score points against Republicans—and not enough meetings where we get together on a bipartisan basis to try to figure out what we can do to get business done for the benefit of the American people.

Senator KYL mentioned the woeful record of accomplishments so far this

year. I note that beyond the unanimous consent requests that were proffered this morning that passed the Wounded Warrior legislation and the pay raise for our men and women in uniform, the minimum wage increase is the only substantive legislation that has passed so far this year, notwithstanding that being part of the “6 for ’06” part of the campaign our friends on the other side of the aisle made part of their agenda.

I note, as Senator KYL has pointed out, that since taking power more than 200 days ago, the new majority has renamed 20 post offices. But my point is that it has opened more than 300 investigations and held more than 600 oversight hearings. Unfortunately, this has resulted in an effort to try to score political points by looking backward, conducting investigations about matters that have happened in the past or, I fear, too often partisan purposes and at the loss of our ability to look forward and figure out how do we work together to solve problems.

I guess one of the most recent manifestations of this hyperpartisan atmosphere and the kind of point-scoring we see going on, to the detriment of passing good bipartisan legislation, the Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. FEINGOLD, announced recently his intention to submit two resolutions to censure the President, one for his handling of the war in Iraq and the other for antiterrorism policies the administration has established. Of course, if he does follow through with his stated intention to submit these censure resolutions, that would prompt debate on what I believe would be meaningless political gestures and would further delay substantive legislation we should be considering.

Senator KYL mentioned the most direct example of the kind of game-playing we have seen recently with the Defense authorization bill. Of course, that served as the platform for the debate on the withdrawal resolutions and the sense-of-the-Senate resolution offered by Senator LEVIN and Senator REED, but when that did not pass, of course, that legislation was pulled from the Senate’s agenda. Of course, as Senator KYL pointed out, there are a lot of important parts of that bill which will not be enacted because it was pulled down.

I am glad to see that the Wounded Warrior legislation, which I have worked on as part of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has now passed, as well as the 3-percent across-the-board pay raise. But other important parts of that legislation have not been passed, including a \$4.1 billion authorization to procure Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles. These, of course, are a new design of vehicles that are designed to defeat improvised explosive devices, which have been one of the most deadly weapons used against our troops in Iraq. Unfortunately, many of these weapons have been shipped, especially explosive foreign penetrators, from Iran to Iraq.

There are other important parts of this legislation: For example, adding \$2.7 billion for items on the Army Chief of Staff's unfunded requirements list, including money for reactive armor and Stryker requirements; \$207 million for aviation survivability equipment; \$102 million for combat training centers, and funding for explosive ordnance equipment, night-vision devices, and the like.

There is also \$50 million in supplemental educational aid to local school districts affected by the assignment or location of military families, so-called impact aid, which affects my State. A lot of school districts depend on that money which is provided to local school districts because, of course, Federal property cannot be taxed for purposes of local education, and when you have a Federal military installation there with a lot of children going to those schools, the only way they can pay the bills is to get this impact aid.

I could go on and on. Unfortunately, because of what we have seen in this hyperpartisan atmosphere, those important provisions of the Defense authorization bill have not been passed, although I am glad that the Wounded Warrior legislation and the 3-percent pay raise did pass this morning by unanimous agreement.

Then, of course, we see another casualty of the hyperpartisan atmosphere where it took more than 100 days for the new majority to allow the passage of an emergency war funding bill for our troops in combat. This delay caused a lot of dislocation and hardship for our men and women in uniform and their families, the very people we ought to be trying to lighten the burden for rather than burden them further with the political theater and the political wars in the Senate.

Then there is the issue of judicial nominees. The last 2 years of President Clinton's term of office, with a Republican-controlled Congress, there were, if memory serves me correctly, 15 to 17 circuit court nominees confirmed. So far, we have only had a handful confirmed by this Congress, and we have judges stuck in this slow walk of a process—for example, judges such as Leslie Southwick, a nominee for the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Judge Southwick's qualifications and credentials are outstanding. The American Bar Association has given him its highest rating. He was approved unanimously by the Senate Judiciary Committee for a life-tenured position as a U.S. district judge during the 109th Congress. Although he is from Mississippi now and serves on the State courts in Mississippi, he graduated from the University of Texas in 1975. After completing law school, he clerked for the presiding judge of the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals and then for Judge Charles Clark on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. After a few years in private practice, Judge Southwick reentered Government service in 1989 when he became a deputy as-

sistant attorney general for the U.S. Department of Justice. In 1994, Judge Southwick was elected 1 of the first 10 judges on the Mississippi Court of Appeals. He remained on the bench, except for a military leave of absence from 2004 until 2006. During that time, he served as a staff judge advocate for the 155th Brigade combat team in Iraq.

Despite his stellar qualifications and strong support from his two home State senators, so far it has been the demonstrated intent of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to block his ability to get a vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee and to prevent him from getting an up-or-down vote on the floor of the Senate.

I should correct that. In fairness, the chairman of the Judiciary Committee has offered to give Judge Southwick a vote in the committee, but we know committee Democrats are poised not only to tarnish the good record of this judge but then to perhaps send him here with a negative vote in committee. I know there are talks that are ongoing.

Unfortunately, I think this is a demonstration again of the hyperpartisan atmosphere that unfortunately poisons relations, not only between colleagues in the Senate but turns off so many people across the country. It is regrettable.

My hope is, as we did last Thursday night, that we can walk away from this hyperpartisan atmosphere, seeing that basically no one wins when congressional approval hovers at 16 percent. It is hard to imagine that it could go much lower. Unless we turn away from the kinds of practices we have seen for the first 200 days under this new majority and unless we try harder to work together, have less team meetings and have more bipartisan meetings where we talk about what we can do to pass legislation for the benefit of the American people, I fear Congress will continue to be held in low esteem by the American people.

It is important that we wake to what should be a wake-up call that is provided by these low poll numbers and the recognition that this serves no one's best interests, certainly not the best interests of the American people.

My hope is that rather than just naming more post offices, rather than passing one or two bills, such as the minimum wage bill and now these bills by unanimous consent this morning, we will seize this opportunity to try to do what is in the best interest of the American people. That is why most of us came to the Senate. Unfortunately, we have been captivated by the partisanship that is insisted upon too often by narrow special interest groups that seem to spend a lot of time at the Capitol and have way too much influence, in my view.

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

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

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

DIGNIFIED TREATMENT OF WOUNDED WARRIORS ACT

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, earlier this morning, the majority leader, Senator REID, asked unanimous consent for the Senate to pass a significant piece of legislation, the Dignified Treatment of Wounded Warriors Act. That was agreed to, and the Senate has now accomplished a major step that I wish to take a few minutes to highlight this morning.

All of us were astounded earlier this year when the Washington Post ran a series of articles about the treatment of our soldiers, our men and women, at the Walter Reed facility. They outlined the horrific conditions that some of our soldiers were living in as they received treatment for their wounds from a war far away. After that, we talked to and heard about many soldiers who were in medical hold units not only at Walter Reed but across the country who were waiting not a few weeks, not a few months, but months on end—and even almost 2 years—to get their disability ratings so that they could be discharged from the military and continue on with their lives once they had been wounded.

I went up to Walter Reed with our majority leader and members of our leadership team to talk to some of the soldiers who were in medical hold at Walter Reed. They expressed complete frustration at what they found themselves in. It was not just the physical part of their living conditions, but it was the fact that they had other wounded soldiers who were their advocates trying to help them work through a disability system that made no sense to them, their advocate or to any of us who were listening.

They talked about their family members who were literally left on hold not knowing when they would be able to come home, get a job, go back to work, and resume being a part of their family again. They talked about long lines. They talked about paperwork that had gotten lost. They talked about not knowing they had traumatic brain injury even a year and a half after they had been wounded and came home.

No one had taken the time to ask them if they had been near an explosive device and perhaps they had some kind of brain injury. Yet they knew that they couldn't find their keys that they had set down, they couldn't remember the dates of their kids' birth, they couldn't remember what they had done a few years ago, much less today. They knew something was wrong, but no one had taken the time to ask them what they had seen on the ground in Iraq or what they had been involved with that might have caused a brain injury.