

of our commanders to conduct operations in the field and infringe on the President's authority as Commander in Chief.

So this is the same flexibility that allowed the Commander in Chief to surge forces and turn the tide in Iraq. I am one of those who personally observed the changes that took place in Iraq with the surge. It was about a year ago right now. I recall a report where our intelligence was actually attending all the weekly Friday mosque meetings, and at that time, my recollection is 85 percent of those messages given by the imams and the clerics were anti-American messages. That stopped in April, and they realized things are working there. There is so much talk about the political leaders, I kind of look at the religious leaders as part of the reason for the successes we have had.

So I think we have already voted on these. They have been voted down, and we don't need to waste any more time on it. I think common sense—when we sit on the Senate Armed Services Committee, as we did this morning, and we looked at the brilliant generals who were testifying before us, such as General Casey, these people spend a lifetime knowing what is going on and how to negotiate wars. We are winning. Things are good right now. I have often thought—I was honored in 1991 to be on the first freedom flight back to Kuwait. At that time, the Iraqis didn't know the war was over. They were still burning the fields. I remember going into one of the houses that actually was the Ambassador to the United States from Kuwait, a family of nobility, going into their home. They wanted to see what it looked like. Saddam Hussein had used it for one of his headquarters, and the little daughter going up to her bedroom to see what it looked like, they had used her bedroom for a torture chamber. The unimaginable things that were going on over there: Looking into the mass graves. I would think that those individuals on the other side, if nothing more—if that were all there were to it—would say we have to finish. It is our humanitarian responsibility.

We are experiencing a victory, the surge is working, and I hope we will be able to dispose of, in a very quick way, these two bills authored by Senator FEINGOLD.

I yield the floor.

RECESS

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:40 p.m., recessed until 2:25 p.m., and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. CARPER).

PROVIDING FOR THE SAFE REDEPLOYMENT OF UNITED STATES TROOPS FROM IRAQ—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. REID. 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. MCCONNELL. 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. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as we take up the issue of Iraq once again, the question that should be foremost in our minds is this: Has the situation improved since the Petraeus plan was put into place? And if so, if the terrorists who have been murdering coalition and Iraqi soldiers and civilians there for years are now seriously wounded and on the run, as we are told they are, then the obvious followup question is this: How do we ensure that the progress not only continues but actually lasts?

Our friends on the other side never seem to let the facts get in the way of their proposals for securing Iraq. When the President announced a new counterinsurgency strategy last year, many of them said it would not work. Even the plan's most vocal critics voted to confirm the general who would carry it out. The junior Senator from Illinois embodied this approach when he predicted: The President's strategy will not work, and then cast a vote confirming General Petraeus for the job. Then, when General Petraeus returned from Iraq to report that the strategy was bearing fruit, some of our friends on the other side covered their ears and questioned his integrity.

The junior Senator from New York embodied this view when she said the general's report required "a willing suspension of disbelief," then voted against a resolution that condemned an ad accusing him of lies. And now, after months of positive reports on improved safety and even important political progress, some of our friends on the other side once again want to cut funding for the troops.

In the words of the first Feingold bill that we might be voting on, they want to "promptly transition the mission." They want to tear up the Petraeus plan and cut off funds for the very troops who are carrying it out.

The second Feingold bill is just as odd. It would require the Bush administration, now in its final months, to set out a new global strategy for fighting terrorism even as our military fights the terrorists neighborhood by neighborhood in Iraq and even as congressional Democrats continue to block a bipartisan surveillance bill that we know would improve our ability to disrupt terrorist plots. The second Feingold bill would also require reducing the pace of deployments and an increase in overall military readiness. This would mean not only full funding for the Defense Department but also directing an even greater share of the Nation's resources to defense—some-

thing the junior Senator from Wisconsin has not been known to champion in the past.

In other words, the second Feingold bill claims to advance an effective antiterrorist program even though the first one attempts to block a counterinsurgency plan that even early critics of the war are now calling a success. It calls for a new strategy against al-Qaida even while Democrats in the House block one of the most effective tools we have in the fight against al-Qaida.

All of which leads me to wonder, what possible deduction of reason has prompted our friends on the other side to believe either of these bills is a good idea? We already know what will happen to the first bill. Last year, we overwhelmingly rejected it—not just once but four times. It never achieved more than 29 votes. And that was before the success of the Petraeus plan.

But given what has happened since then, the proposal to cut funds, to scrap the Petraeus plan, makes even less sense today. Just consider what has taken place in Iraq over the last year.

Since the implementation of the Petraeus plan, violence in Iraq has fallen dramatically. Over the past year, civilian deaths are one-sixth of what they were in November of 2006. High-profile bombings are down by two-thirds since June. The discovery and seizure of guns and other weapons caches has more than doubled nationally and tripled in Anbar. The worst kind of violence is dramatically down. Ethno-sectarian conflict—the fighting has fallen from a peak of about 1,100 incidents in December of 2006 to about 100 such incidents this past November. That is less than 1 year. Locals are energized about fighting back against terrorists, with between 70,000 and 100,000 ordinary citizens stepping forward to help local police root out terrorists. And the terrorists themselves are becoming demoralized, with even those who share their religious beliefs driving them into hiding.

This kind of progress is changing minds. One harsh early critic of the war, Anthony Cordesman, recently visited Iraq, looked at the new data, and came to a different conclusion.

Here is what Anthony Cordesman says now:

No one can spend 10 days visiting the battlefields in Iraq without seeing major progress in every area. If the U.S. provides sustained support to the Iraqi Government, in security, governance, and development, there is now a very real chance that Iraq will emerge as a secure and stable state.

A very real chance that Iraq will emerge as a secure and stable state. These are the words of a man whose judgment our friends on the other side were appealing to just last year in arguing for withdrawal. Last July, the junior Senator from New Jersey, speaking on the Senate floor, cited the opinion of Mr. Cordesman before declaring: Mr. President, it is over; your

failed strategy, your ill-conceived war must come to an end before more damage is done.

All of this reminds me of something we saw last summer after the New York Times ran an op-ed by two early critics of the war who had begun to change their views on the Petraeus plan once those views became inconsistent with the facts on the ground. About a week after the piece appeared in print, the senior Senator from Illinois concurred with its central point, after early and outspoken opposition to the Petraeus plan.

More American troops have brought more peace to more parts of Iraq. I think that is a fact.

Yet, since those comments, violence in Iraq has gone down even more, and the kind of political progress the authors of that New York Times piece were hoping for is finally taking place.

A provincial powers law passed, with elections set to take place sometime before October. The Iraqi Parliament passed a partial amnesty law for prisoners—a sign of thawing relations between the Sunnis, who make up most of the prison population, and the majority Shias. The Iraqi Parliament has also approved a national budget that allocated Government revenue, most of it from oil, out to the provinces.

To most people, the lesson of the last year is obvious: Coalition forces are winning this fight, and they deserve our full support and our thanks. The response from most of us has been a mix of pride and new confidence, especially now that some concrete political progress is being made. For others, however, the lesson to be drawn from success is the same as it was when we faced the strongest adversity: Cut the funds, withdraw the troops, and leave Iraq to the terrorists. Fortunately, most of the Senate will reject this view when we defeat the Feingold bills, hopefully for the last time.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I will use my leader time and ask unanimous consent that the vote not occur at 2:45.

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

Mr. REID. Mr. President, during the recess we had, I was in Nevada. People all across the State of Nevada, just like people all across this country, are committed to ending the war in Iraq.

These are the facts. We need to end the worst foreign policy blunder in our Nation's history, which started with the invasion of Iraq. What has 5 years of war brought to America, to the Middle East, to the world? It has brought thousands of deaths, almost a trillion dollars in debt, catastrophic failure of diplomacy. What has 5 years of war brought to America, to the Middle East, and the world? Debt, depression, and death.

My Republican colleagues, think what this war has done to our Nation's fiscal soundness. It has destroyed it. In

less than a year borrowed money for Iraq will be \$1 trillion—soon \$1 trillion of borrowed money, with the likely Republican nominee for President saying we may need to be in Iraq for another 100 years. We are nearing the tragic milestone of 4,000 dead Americans, more than 30,000 wounded Americans, many gravely wounded, amputations, blindness, hearing loss, untold thousands with head trauma, making life after the war most difficult. This week brings news from the Pentagon that there will be 140,000 American troops in Iraq still in July, 8,000 more than when the surge began in January of 2007.

In Iraq a civil war rages, with the past 2 days bringing us the news of Sunni attacks on Shias while the Shias observe a religious holiday, attacks that killed at least threescore, wounded more than 100. And, of course, the Shias will reciprocate; and just in an off place that you have to search hard in the newspaper, three more dead American soldiers. These are the facts.

In Israel we find the Bush administration has been too preoccupied to be concerned with the volatility of the Palestinian-Israeli situation. Now we have a raging civil war in the Palestinian territory, Hamas versus Fatah. A government can't be formed in Lebanon where some say is also a civil war. Iran is thumbing its nose at us and the world community. Torture, Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, warrantless spying on American citizens—all as a result of this misplaced war. These are the facts.

In an op-ed published in today's Washington Post, three noted writers and foreign policy experts said this:

Republicans will claim that after four years of disastrous mistakes, the Bush administration finally got it right with its troop "surge." Yet despite the loss of nearly 1,000 American lives and the expenditure of \$150 billion, the surge has failed in its stated purpose: providing the Iraqi government with the breathing space to pass the 18 legislative benchmarks the Bush administration called vital to political reconciliation.

To date it has passed only four.

And some say the four passed are for show; they have no substance.

Moreover, as part of the surge, the administration has further undermined Iraq's government by providing arms and money to Sunni insurgent groups even though they have not pledged loyalty to Baghdad.

My high school pal, my buddy, I named one of my boys after him, he named one of his boys after me. I am proud of my namesake. He is a heroic helicopter pilot, having served a very difficult tour in Afghanistan and now Iraq. We exchanged regular e-mails during his time overseas. These e-mails were wonderful. Before going to Iraq, we had the opportunity to meet in Las Vegas for dinner. He was on his way. It was a nice dinner. He proudly told me of his war stories, stories of real-life valor. Now the e-mails have stopped. I had the good fortune of meeting my friend at my home in Searchlight last week, last Monday, a week ago yesterday.

I said: Why don't I get e-mails anymore. His dad told me that his son said: They need to get us out of here. He wants to come home with the rest of our gallant, even heroic troops. These are the facts.

The mission has not been accomplished. We have not been met as liberators. After 5 years of war, we are still an occupying force. Iraq, with untold wealth because of its oil supply, must take care of its own citizens. Americans need to start taking care of Americans. We cannot spend a half billion dollars every day in Iraq. These are the facts.

We will soon vote on two amendments that will begin to change course in the bloody Iraq civil war. Our first vote is on a bill to responsibly begin to redeploy our troops so we can refocus on other threats and challenges around the world. Do we have them? General Casey testified today in a building a short distance from here that the Army is in a state of distress. We heard on the media this morning about what is going on in the Pacific. The admiral in charge there doesn't have the necessary force to do even intelligence. It has been shipped to Iraq.

We need to begin to redeploy our troops. That is what this amendment is about. We can refocus on other threats and challenges, and there are many, and limit the troops to counterterrorism, force training, and protecting our assets.

The other bill we will vote on later is also extremely important. It calls for a report from the administration on the status of the fight against al-Qaida, the fight against terrorism. As the war in Iraq rages, bin Laden remains free, and his terrorist network is gaining power worldwide. This legislation will shine the spotlight on this unmet challenge of fighting terrorism and keeping America safe—today, tomorrow, and beyond.

I urge my colleagues to seek common ground toward a new American foreign policy that strengthens our security, supports our troops, and begins to restore our Nation's ability to once again lead in the way we have in generations past.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order pursuant to rule XXII, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 575, S. 2633, safe redeployment of U.S. troops.

Russell D. Feingold, Edward M. Kennedy, Patrick J. Leahy, Robert Menendez, Ron Wyden, Sherrod Brown, Richard Durbin, Bernard Sanders, Patty Murray, Frank R. Lautenberg, Christopher J. Dodd, John D. Rockefeller IV, Amy Klobuchar, Charles E. Schumer, Tom Harkin, Barbara Boxer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent the mandatory quorum call is waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the motion to proceed to S. 2633, a bill to provide for the safe redeployment of United States troops in Iraq, shall be brought to a close.

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. BYRD), the Senator from New York (Mrs. CLINTON), and the Senator from Illinois (Mr. OBAMA) are necessarily absent.

Mr. KYL. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN), and the Senator from Virginia (Mr. WARNER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) would have voted "yea."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 70, nays 24, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 33 Leg.]

YEAS—70

Akaka	Durbin	Mikulski
Alexander	Ensign	Murkowski
Allard	Feingold	Murray
Bennett	Feinstein	Reid
Bond	Graham	Roberts
Boxer	Grassley	Rockefeller
Brown	Gregg	Sanders
Brownback	Harkin	Schumer
Bunning	Hatch	Sessions
Burr	Hutchison	Shelby
Cantwell	Inhofe	Smith
Cardin	Inouye	Snowe
Chambliss	Isakson	Specter
Coburn	Kennedy	Stabenow
Cochran	Kerry	Stevens
Coleman	Klobuchar	Sununu
Collins	Kohl	Thune
Corker	Kyl	Vitter
Craig	Lautenberg	Voinovich
Crapo	Leahy	Whitehouse
DeMint	Lugar	Wicker
Dodd	Martinez	Wyden
Dole	McConnell	
Domenici	Menendez	

NAYS—24

Barrasso	Dorgan	McCaskill
Baucus	Enzi	Nelson (FL)
Bayh	Hagel	Nelson (NE)
Biden	Johnson	Pryor
Bingaman	Landrieu	Reed
Carper	Levin	Salazar
Casey	Lieberman	Tester
Conrad	Lincoln	Webb

NOT VOTING—6

Byrd	Cornyn	Obama
Clinton	McCaIn	Warner

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 70, the nays are 24.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The clerk will report the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A motion to proceed to the bill (S. 2633) to provide for the safe redeployment of United States troops from Iraq.

The Senate resumed consideration of the motion to proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be 2 hours of postcloture debate prior to the motion to proceed being agreed to, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; further, that upon disposition of this legislation, S. 2633, the Senate then proceed to a cloture vote with respect to S. 2634.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, and I will object, we now have an opportunity to discuss the issue the majority feels we ought to be talking about. I have a number of speakers lined up on my side. I assume that is the case on the other side. So it is time to debate the Feingold proposal; therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am satisfied that we got cloture on the motion to proceed to this important legislation, and I appreciate the bipartisan vote in this regard. Usually, however, when we get cloture on a motion to proceed, it means Senators are prepared to actually begin consideration of that legislation. However, I have asked consent that we do just that. My minority colleagues have objected.

The only conclusion a reasonable person could have is that they are resorting to a new variation of the old theme. Remember, in 1 year—last year—the Republican minority broke all rules in filibusters. In 1 year, we had to file cloture 68 different times. So it is obvious this is only an effort to stall, as they have done for the entire time we have been in the majority.

Now, we are happy to legislate regarding Iraq, but it is obvious to me what the game plan is. They want us to slow the Senate down from getting things done. It is interesting to note that when the 30 hours is up, we will automatically go to cloture on the piece of legislation that calls for a reporting requirement on the global war on terror. From the statements made by the distinguished Republican leader, they don't like that. So it would seem to me it is very clear that they are going to do everything they can to stop us from getting to the housing legislation, which the American people badly need. I think it is important that we do the housing legislation and that we do consumer product safety. Of course, we are going to do the budget resolution. It is obvious the Republican minority is in their usual stalling tactic.

Now, we have a few people who can speak, too, during these 30 hours, but what we should be doing is legislating on this most important legislation. Remember, the Iraq war is within a matter of days going to be starting the sixth year—the sixth year of this war. It has been reported that in less than a year, this war will cost the American taxpayer \$1 trillion. Remember,

Lindsey was fired because he said it would cost \$100 billion. He was fired. Well, he was a little off.

We know that in a matter of a few days we are going to have a milestone, a tragic milestone. There will be 4,000 dead Americans. Our troops have fought valiantly. We all acknowledge that. But as I indicated in my statement earlier today, they want to come home. Wherever you go, that is what they tell you. The parents tell you that. The troops tell you that. A Capitol policeman came home. He has been over there for almost a year. I talked to him yesterday: When are you going back?

He said: In 2 weeks.

How has it been, Jim?

He said: It has been pretty tough.

He is a different person than he was, having been through what he has been through.

So if the Republicans want to talk about Iraq, we are happy to talk about Iraq and about how this money we have borrowed and continue to borrow—\$1 trillion—is preventing us—I met with the Governors yesterday, the Democratic Governors. They know what they are not doing in their States because they have no money, whether it is infrastructure, the deterioration of roads, bridges, and dams or whether it is health care. They can't take care of some of the basic needs of the people from their States, and they know it is because of this war.

The President doesn't like to borrow money, except for this war. There is a carte blanche: Borrow as much as you need. This war is costing us now about a half a billion dollars a day—a day. So isn't it good that the American people are hearing us talk about this?

As I indicated in an earlier statement I made a few minutes ago, let's not start boasting about the surge. During the surge, we have lost about 1,000 American troops—1,000 American troops. We are glad the violence is down, but that is all a matter of degree. The Shia religious holiday they are trying to finish, in 2 days, more than 60 killed, more than 100 wounded, and this is Sunni on Shia, and you can bet whatever you have to bet, the Shias will be back to inflict equal damage against the Sunnis, and the Sunnis, to whom we have paid huge amounts of money, have not even declared loyalty to the Baghdad Government.

So we are happy to talk about Iraq. It is obvious the Republicans are doing everything they can to stop us from going forward on legislation, something dealing with the economy, of course. What would have been the right thing to do, if they were sincere about moving forward, a motion to proceed. I want everyone who is within the sound of my voice to understand that motions to proceed are routine. No one made us go forward on motions to proceed, until this Republican minority showed up, and then on virtually everything, they are doing the slow walk on everything—everything. If they

were legitimate and genuine about what they want to do, we would be on this piece of legislation that has been introduced and we would be talking about the merits of it. But, no, that can't start.

Understand that at the end of 30 hours, automatically we have a vote on the next cloture that has been filed because everything we do around here, we have to file cloture on a motion to proceed because of the big stalls taking place. So we are ready to talk as long as people want to talk on this issue. We have Democratic Senators who want to talk about this because they know what this war has done to what is taking place in our States, as indicated by the Governors whom I met with yesterday.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, my good friend, the majority leader, seems to regret that we are having a debate on the matter he put in the queue for us to have a debate on. We would not be dealing with this issue this week but for his decision to file cloture on two motions to proceed on two Feingold bills. The first Feingold bill which is before us, we have actually essentially voted on four times already since the new majority took over in January of 2007. In fact, this will be the 35th Iraq vote we have had since the new majority has taken over.

We spent a lot of time discussing Iraq over the last year. During much of that time, the view of what was happening in Iraq was not nearly as positive or optimistic as it is now. Why we should have a truncated discussion of Iraq at a time when things are getting dramatically and measurably better strikes me as somewhat curious.

So obviously the Iraq debate of the moment has commenced. I have a number of speakers on my side who wish to talk about the success of the surge, the improvement in Iraq, the improvement on the Government side as well as the military side. So we are happy to engage in this debate. It was not our decision to schedule it. This was the decision of the majority to devote whatever time was necessary this week to a discussion of these two Feingold bills related to Iraq.

So we look forward to the discussion. I believe we have a number of people lined up who would be happy to engage in the Iraq discussion, and we will continue that until such time as there is a mutual agreement to yield back time, which may or may not occur, depending upon the situation and how many speakers we have. This is the way the Senate frequently operates. It is the way it was when our good friends on the other side were in the minority. There is nothing unusual about this at all. The one thing we know the majority leader can do is schedule, and it was his decision to schedule the two Feingold bills, and the first of which is now being talked about.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am happy to yield to my friend from Illinois in a minute.

We are happy to debate the Iraq issue. We have always been happy to do it. Thirty-five times we have, and that is 35 times more than when the Republicans were in the majority. The war went on for years with no oversight, none whatsoever. We have at least demanded that, and I think it is important we have done that.

I would also ask my Republican colleagues, why don't they ever talk about the costs of this war? The costs in life, bodily injury, and money—money that is keeping this country from taking care of its own?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I rise in support of S. 2633 offered by Senator FEINGOLD.

I think it is unfortunate the Republican leadership has once again put the Senate into a stall. It seems as if the Republicans feel that it takes them 30 hours to make up their mind to do anything. They want to burn off 30 hours of Senate time. I don't know why. What Senator REID offered them was a chance to move to this resolution, to debate it, and if amendments are going to be offered, they would be offered. They turned it down. They want to wait 30 hours before we even possibly reach that point. As Senator REID explained it, there may be an intervening motion that slows us down there. But that is what this is all about. This is the Republicans' slow boat for America. They want to slow everything down to a snail's pace, and it is unfortunate that they do.

They know what we want to do. We want to have a good, open debate on the policy on the war in Iraq, followed this week by emergency legislation to deal with the housing crisis in America. So their strategy is to avoid that debate on Iraq, a debate that leads to the actual bill, tie us up in procedural issues, and hope we don't get to the housing crisis by the end of the week. I guess at the end of the week the Republicans will say: Job well done. The Senate went home and didn't do anything for another week. Well, I guess that is what they think the minority is all about, to stop anything from happening. Isn't it unfortunate.

If you listen to Presidential campaigning on both sides, Republicans and Democrats talking about change, they point an accusing finger at us, saying that time and again, Senators and Congressmen dream up ways to avoid facing the important issues in America. Well, it is time for us to face those issues in a timely way, to give ample opportunity to minority and majority, to debate, to amend, to move forward. Yet the Republicans, as they did last year, are doing everything this year again to obstruct, to stall, and to stop.

Why is this important? The minority leader, Senator MCCONNELL of Ken-

tucky, was complaining that we have had 35 votes on the war in Iraq. He is war weary of voting on Iraq. Well, I want to say to him I am war weary as well. I am weary of 3,972 U.S. service men and women killed in Iraq. I am weary of 29,000 injured, many seriously, and with permanent conditions they will struggle with for a lifetime. I am weary of a war this President won't pay for, that costs us \$10 billion to \$15 billion a month. I am weary of the excuses we have made for the Iraqis who have failed to lead their own Nation while we risk and give American lives in this conflict. I am weary of the missed opportunities in America that \$1 trillion spent on this war could have bought us to make our Nation stronger at home—better schools, making certain our teachers are compensated for good work, the technology we need so our children can be successful in this 21st century, medical research funds that have been cut under this administration, funds for extending health care and insurance for families across America, putting infrastructure in place in America so our economy can grow and move forward with good American jobs building those roads and highways and airports and mass transit. I am weary of that too.

No apologies for the Senator from Kentucky for 35 votes on Iraq. That is hardly 1 vote for every 100 Americans who have been killed in that country. It certainly is worth our time to debate this. Even more important, it is worth our time to change this policy in Iraq.

I salute Senator FEINGOLD. He has been a lone voice. There were times I didn't agree with him. I thought he had an approach for this that we weren't ready for. But over time, I have come to understand his wisdom and his insight, and his political courage to bring this issue to the floor. If he didn't fight doggedly to make sure we didn't have this Iraq war debate, we would skate along perhaps month after month without ever facing the music. What we face is a reality.

The Republican plan is to stall and wait 11 months until President George W. Bush, on January 20, 2009, can leave the White House, give a fond adieu to Washington, DC, and say: Well, I left the war; now it is up to the others to try to solve this. Well, it is going to take quite a bit to try to undo the worst foreign policy decision in modern memory in America.

Many of us remember that night in October of 2002 when here in the Senate Chamber we voted on authorizing this President to go to war. I was a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee then. I listened behind closed doors to classified and confidential information, and I couldn't put it together. I couldn't square with the information we received in the Intelligence Committee all of the dire predictions being made by President Bush, Vice President CHENEY, Condoleezza Rice, and Donald Rumsfeld. It didn't square away.

Where in the world were the threats they were talking about—the weapons of mass destruction, the nuclear weapons, the connections with 9/11? It turned out none of them existed—not one. We found no weapons of mass destruction. We found no nuclear weapons. We found no connection between Saddam Hussein and the terrible tragedy of 9/11. All of the pretenses and reasons given by this President to engage us in this war, to risk American lives, and to drag us on for more than 5 years in this conflict turned out to be false; all of it.

There is no greater deception in a democracy than for the leader to mislead the people of a nation into a war, to ask families to offer their children and their children's lives in service to this country for reasons that turn out not to be true. No weapons of mass destruction, no nuclear weapons, no connection with 9/11, and here we are, still bogged down, mired in this conflict.

It is cold comfort to know that as we sent 20,000 or 30,000 more soldiers into Iraq last year that things got better. I am glad they did. I have been there since then. I am glad the surge brought some peace to some sections of Iraq. But that wasn't the reason for the surge. The surge was put in place so the Iraqis could finally take responsibility for their own country, so they could make hard political decisions and govern and lead and defend themselves. Here we are, almost a year later, and what do we have to show for it? An Iraqi Parliament that when we can get them to meet won't even face the serious issues. Time and again they fail to make the decisions they need to make so their Government can govern. Time and again we find excuses from them: They need a little more time. Every day they need is at the expense of American soldiers. Every month they take to finally reach a decision means that more body bags will come home to America and more wounded soldiers will return. So as they take their sweet time making their decisions, we are paying a heavy price as a Nation. And the complaint from the other side is we have had 35 votes on this; haven't we had enough? No, we haven't had enough until we change this policy, until we start bringing the troops home.

You are going to hear a lot of things said about this Feingold resolution. I certainly hope that colleagues and Members will take the time to read it. Here is what it says: It says our future role in Iraq is going to be limited. We are not going to say to the military: Do whatever you like. We are going to say to our military in Iraq: Here is your role. This is what you can do. This is what we will provide funds for.

First: Conduct targeted operations, limited in duration and scope, against members of al-Qaida and affiliated terrorist organizations.

That is certainly something we all agree on. Al-Qaida was behind 9/11, not Saddam Hussein, and we should con-

tinue to target them. They have used Iraq as a land of opportunity now to go in and sow their seeds of division and hatred, to try to kill innocent people and to kill American soldiers. Senator FEINGOLD says we will continue to fight to eliminate al-Qaida in Iraq.

Second: Provide security for personnel and infrastructure of the U.S. Government.

That should never be in question. We should make certain our Armed Forces are always there to protect our people and to protect important installations.

Third: Provide training to members of the Iraqi security forces who have not been involved in sectarian violence or in attacks upon the U.S. Armed Forces.

If the Iraqis are ever going to take over defense of their own country so that we are not in Iraq for 50 years or 100 years or even 1,000 years, as one of the Presidential candidates has said—if we are ever going to avoid that terrible outcome, the Iraqis have to stand and fight and defend their own country. Senator FEINGOLD says that is one of the legitimate reasons we can stay in Iraq. I agree with him.

Fourth: To provide training, equipment, and other materials to members of the U.S. Armed Forces to ensure, maintain, or improve their safety and security.

No argument there.

And finally: The resources to redeploy members of the U.S. Armed Forces from Iraq.

What is missing from this? What is missing is any unilateral combat operation that opens a new part of this war. For 5 years we have given the Iraqi people all they could ever ask for. We deposed their dictator, we brought the best military in the world to their country, we gave them a chance to elect their own Government, write their own Constitution, and govern and defend themselves. What more could they ask for? We have paid for it mightily, with almost 4,000 lives, the hundreds of thousands who have served, and the thousands who have come home wounded, injured.

I will tell you, for those who think we ought to look the other way for 11 months so President Bush can get out of town, they ought to go to these National Guard deployments and re-deployments and look into the eyes of our guardsmen and their families, their tear-filled eyes as they send their soldiers off for yet another deployment.

We have a young man here on the Capitol Police force who works with my office. He is about to face his second deployment with the Navy Reserve. He is taking it very well, with a smile, but he is going to be gone for 8 months—8 months away from his family, making less money serving with the Navy than he makes serving as a Capitol policeman—taking a pay cut because the Federal Government is too cheap to provide what private corporations do for their activated employees—and he will be away from his family for another 8 months.

Easy for us to say: Well, it is only 11 months. There will be a new President. Maybe there will be a change. But what about those soldiers and sailors and marines, airmen, all of our military who are called to serve? That 11 months will be a lifetime away from their families, and during that 11 months some of them will give their lives. That is why this debate is important and why it is timely and why I am glad Senator FEINGOLD has brought it before us.

It is unfortunate the Republican side wants to stall this debate, stall it for 30 hours in hopes we can drag everything out so we will never quite get to the issue here on Iraq and maybe never get to the issue of the housing crisis in America. That is the Grand Old Party's brandnew strategy: Stall, try to delay, find ways to make sure we don't get to the important issues. It is little wonder that the opinion of the American people of this Congress is low.

What we should do is look to the positive side. If we change this policy in Iraq, if we tell the President on a bipartisan basis that we have had enough of this, that we want to see a change in mission, we have a chance to change this country. We can take the resources that would have been spent in Iraq and spend them in America. We can make sure we are providing health care, job training, and building schools, roads and bridges. We can create an economic stimulus in the United States instead of an economic stimulus in Iraq. I think a strong America begins at home. Wouldn't it be great if we invested our precious tax revenues in that belief?

Let me tell you what the National Intelligence Estimate said about the state of this war in Iraq. Last year, they gravely noted that:

The Iraq conflict has become the cause celebre for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of U.S. involvement in the Muslim world, and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement.

That is a quote from the National Intelligence Estimate. What it says is that as we battle on in Iraq and lose American lives and spend American dollars, we are creating a magnet for the extremists around the world to come and kill our troops and to be inspired in their own sad and devilish ways to kill other innocent people around the world. Did anyone bargain for that when we invaded Iraq? Did anyone think it would make the war on terror more difficult to win? That is what the National Intelligence Estimate tells us.

This administration has recklessly diverted critical military intelligence and civilian assets from Afghanistan in the process. That was a war I voted for, without reservation—a unanimous vote in the Senate, just days after the attack on 9/11. We knew where that attack came from. It didn't come from Saddam Hussein and Iraq, it came from Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, and the al-Qaida forces that were running

rampant through Afghanistan. Well, the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated because we have spent so much on human life and American dollars on Iraq. That is the reality of this administration's priorities.

The Taliban and al-Qaida, sadly, are regrouping in Afghanistan, and we know for sure Pakistan, the neighboring country, is increasingly unstable. In fact, the strongest military on Earth is apparently so overstretched at this moment, the administration can't even find a handful of transport helicopters to help the desperately needed people of Darfur with the U.N. peace-keeping force.

How long will we stand by this failed foreign policy, this disaster in Iraq, at such a high cost in human lives, dollars, reputation, and national security? We are hearing once again that we are seeing progress in Iraq. How many times have we heard this story? At least for 5 years—from the beginning, from Vice President CHENEY's rosy scenario of the troops being greeted with parades and arms laden with flowers to welcome them to Iraq, something that unfortunately did not occur—until the present time, when the so-called surge has turned everything around. And yet 150,000 American lives are still at risk this morning, this afternoon, and this evening in Iraq.

The entire point of the surge was to carve out political space for the Iraqi political leadership. They haven't used the time; they haven't used the surge for that to happen. Does anyone honestly believe we are closer to the day that the Iraqis will take responsibility for their own future? They will if this passes, because they will know our days are numbered in Iraq. We are not going to be there for 25, 50, or 1,000 years. That is not fair to our soldiers; it is not fair to America.

This administration has no strategy beyond "stay the course" until January 20, 2009. We in Congress have a responsibility to change direction. Our responsibility is for those soldiers and their families, it is for those guardsmen and their families, it is for everyone risking their life today in Iraq. They need to come home. And when they come home, we know that we have our hands full.

They come home with serious problems. The suicide rate among soldiers is at a record high. It is even higher among Guardsmen who are activated to serve. Post-traumatic stress disorders of years gone by intensify in the returning soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan.

We know those who suffered serious injuries—amputations, traumatic brain injury—are going to need our help for a long time to come. This administration has shortchanged the Veterans' Administration. When we begged them to put in the billions of dollars necessary to keep our promise to these veterans and those from other wars, they said they did not need it. Then, of course, they were proven wrong.

We continued to put billions of dollars into the Veterans' Administration, and we should and we will for the future, trying to pay the long-term costs of this war, a heavy cost that future generations will carry. And those on the other side say: Well, let's just let this go for another 11 months. Let's see how this all works out, another 11 months of returning veterans, returning wounded, another 11 months of more responsibility to future generations.

Staying with the failed strategy is no strategy at all. Changing course in Iraq is long overdue. Quite simply, we cannot give this administration another blank check because we know what they are going to do with it. They are going to continue this policy as we see more and more American soldiers in harm's way. The bill before us is reasonable, it is measured, it is a thoughtful effort to put before this administration a new approach, a new policy, and a new direction in Iraq.

Starting to redeploy the majority of U.S. troops from Iraq within 120 days is a reasonable thing to do. Certainly, many of them will stay there for those specified responsibilities, but as they start to leave, the Iraqis may wake up to the reality that it is their country and their responsibility. The question is no longer whether the surge, or more accurately a significant escalation of troops, has worked. The question is how we can return our focus to the original al-Qaida threat.

Sad to say, 6 years, more than 6 years after 9/11, Osama bin Laden is still on the loose. He is still guiding in his way the al-Qaida forces that threaten us in the rest of the world. We need to help countries such as Jordan that have been overrun with Iraqi refugees. We certainly have to understand that a country that has been that friendly to the United States deserves a helping hand, and we have to start to rebuild our international image and reputation.

It is unfortunate to hear people around the world, once our friends, once our allies, once our supporters, so critical of the United States because of the colossal mistake made by the Bush administration with this invasion of Iraq. We have to turn that page, and we cannot wait until January 20, 2009, to do it.

Last year, a New York Times-CBS News poll showed that only 5 percent of Americans trust this President to successfully resolve the Iraq war; 1 out of 20 Americans trust President Bush to resolve this war. Well, I do not believe he will either. I would be with the 95 percent. But Congress has an equally important responsibility to oversee this war as it is fought, to do everything we can to protect our troops and to resolve this war so our troops can come home to the heroes, welcome they richly deserve. We need to step into the leadership void that this White House has left and change directions for our policy in Iraq.

I am going to support this bill to bring an end to this war. I was 1 of 23 who voted against it. Of all of the votes that I have ever cast in this Congress in the House and Senate, I look back with the greatest assurance that was the right vote, the right vote for America. I do not think anything that has transpired since that late October night in 2002 has ever made me waiver in my belief that it was a serious mistake for the United States to give to this President and this administration the authority to begin this war, which has cost us so much over the years.

I believe we have to be careful in our foreign policy. Of course, defend America, that is our first responsibility. But never engage in a war when we cannot understand the consequences that might follow, like this war. It is so much easier to get in a war than it is to get out of one.

Senator FEINGOLD is engaging this Senate in a debate that is long overdue for a change in policy that is long overdue. The Republicans are going to stall, try to avoid the vote, try to speechify us to death, not going to face this vote or a vote on the housing crisis. But that is nothing new. As the majority leader, Senator REID has said, last year 68 times they initiated a filibuster. That is a brandnew record in the Senate. Before that it was 61 filibusters in 2 years. That was the record. Well, they managed 68 in 1 year.

It shows you what they are up to. They just want to grind us down, slow us down, and make us avoid the issues that count in America. One of those issues is ending this war the right way, and another which will follow is the housing crisis which plagues our economy.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I am a little confused. About an hour and a half ago the majority leader brought up a bill. He and the Senator from Wisconsin had filed this bill to leave Iraq in 120 days. And he filed cloture on that to see whether enough Senators would agree to debate the bill. So that we can start to debate it, it took 60 Senators to vote yes. The majority leader must have been surprised when we voted yes because he does not seem to want to take yes for an answer.

He filed the bill, wanted to debate it, and presumably have a vote on it. But when we agreed to debate it, he called foul and said: You are trying to stall because you did not vote no so that we can move on to the next bill and then the next bill which will be the economic stimulus package.

So I am confused. Maybe I should not be because almost half of the members of the majority voting voted against cloture; that is to say, they voted against proceeding to the bill that the majority leader had filed. Now, ordinarily members of the majority do not vote against these cloture motions that the majority leader files to take

up a bill. Ordinarily, all of the members of the party vote with their leader on these votes.

I gather that the majority leader must have thought that the bill would not get cloture; that is to say, that we would not start the debate. Then I suppose Republicans would be accused of trying to stall, of not being willing to vote on the bill that he and the Senator from Wisconsin had filed, maybe putting Republicans into a no-win situation, damned if we do and damned if we do not.

If we agree with the majority leader and take up his bill to debate it, we are stalling. And if we do not agree, then I suspect we would have been accused of not being willing to debate Iraq and not being willing to vote on the amendments or the bill that he and the Senator from Wisconsin filed.

So as I say, I am confused. All Republicans did was to say: OK, you wanted to debate the bill that you filed. We will agree to proceed with that. Now the distinguished minority whip just said Republicans are speechifying this to death. Well, Republicans have spoken about 5 minutes out of the last hour. All of the rest of the time has been taken by members of the majority party. The majority whip himself spoke, I think, a little over half an hour. I do not intend to take that long.

But I think it is hard to accuse Republicans of speechifying the bill to death when all we did was, an hour and a half ago, agree to debate, and the minority leader has spoken a total of about 5 minutes. Do you want a debate on Iraq or not? Now that the surge is working, it appears maybe that members of the majority party are not so anxious to have that debate.

But as Minority Leader MCCONNELL pointed out, Republicans are willing to have that debate. A group of Republicans were just in Iraq over the course of the last week. Several of us have been there since the first of the year and have a very positive story to report about the work that our troops are doing there and the effect of their efforts.

There is a positive report that the American people deserve to hear. So I think you will see Republicans agreeing to debate the resolution. For my purpose, I am perfectly happy to vote on it. But under the rule that the majority leader has taken advantage of, as soon as we have had 30 hours to debate this, then automatically we go to the next Feingold-Reid bill.

That is a bill that does not have us get out of Iraq, but rather says we should try to develop a strategy to deal with al-Qaida. Well, of course, the administration's first strategy, as we have discussed on this floor many times, the first, best way to deal with terrorists is to get good intelligence on them to know what they are up to. Maybe we could have prevented 9/11 had we had better intelligence. And so the FISA—this is the law that allows us to listen in on the communications

of these terrorists—that bill, that law expired.

The President said: We are losing good intelligence. You need to act to reauthorize that law.

The Senate did. I think we had 68 votes, a bipartisan vote. We acted in a bipartisan way to support that. Many of our colleagues, I think it was 28 or 29, voted to oppose that. Now the leadership of the House of Representatives has said: Well, let it expire. And they went on the break 12 days ago without having acted to reauthorize the so-called FISA law.

That law needs to be reauthorized. Each day that passes that it is not reauthorized, we are losing intelligence. Now, what happens if there is another 9/11 and we later find out that one of the reasons is because for a period of several weeks we could not listen in to what those terrorists were saying? We are missing intelligence.

Frankly, we ought not to do anything else around here until we get that law reauthorized and the President can sign it into law. But the majority leader said: First, we are going to have a debate on the Feingold-Reid bill to get out of Iraq in 120 days. Then we need to have a debate on developing a new strategy for dealing with al-Qaida.

Okay. Republicans are happy to engage in that debate, as I said. But to be accused by the majority of trying to stall by simply agreeing to the debate that the majority requested, is not correct.

Moreover, nobody is trying to stall consideration of a housing bill or an economic stimulus package. We understand that the majority is going to be bringing such a package to the floor. We have not seen it. We do not know what is in it. We are certainly not stalling it. It is not here yet. The majority leader could have brought that to the floor. He could have told us what is in it. He could have filed cloture on it so that we had the vote on whether we are going to take it up, but instead he brought up the first Iraq resolution. Then that is going to be automatically followed by a second resolution dealing with al-Qaida. Then, only after that, apparently, do we get to the economic stimulus or housing package.

So it is not Republicans who are holding it up. We have not done anything to hold it up. We have not even seen it yet.

So I think this criticism of Republicans for stalling simply because we agreed with the majority leader to take up his bill and debate it is not accurate, and it is not fair to Republicans.

Now what about the surge and this Iraq resolution? I think it is interesting that the first criticism was that we had a failed policy in Iraq. So when General Petraeus developed a new policy, the surge policy, which began to work, the debate suddenly began to shift. Now that it is very clear the surge has worked it is shifting even

more. It is shifting now to, well, OK, maybe the surge is working, but the Iraqi Government needs to do more.

Well, the Iraqi Government is now doing a lot more, too, as we will hear. But I suspect nothing is going to get out of Iraq now because, as the majority whip has pointed out, we really need to improve America's image abroad. And there a lot of people who disagree with us, so that is one of the reasons we need to get out of Iraq.

But he also said—how many times—that we are doing better in Iraq. Well, I do not know how many times, but certainly since General Petraeus reported to the Congress, and every week thereafter, there has been improvement. And all we have to do is listen to our colleagues who have been there recently to see this reported progress in Iraq.

I do not know why people are so afraid of good news when you are winning in a war. Why is that not a good thing? Why are you not proud of that? Why do you not say: That is great; let's finish the job.

I suspect if you ask the majority of our troops: Now that you have got your boot right on the neck of these enemy terrorists, do you think we ought to let it up and walk away or do you think we ought to finish the job? My guess is they would all say: Let's finish the job or you all back in Washington let us finish the job. Do not pull the plug on us so that we have to leave Iraq before we finish the job.

It is interesting there is now a new argument: OK, maybe the surge is working. Maybe the Iraqi Government is going to be taking the action we asked them to do. And, in fact, they have. They are now taking action on the so-called reconciliation there on local elections and the like.

But now the argument is, well, we could actually spend this money on other things. Of course, you can always spend money on other things. When you are in a war, however, it is a little different. You cannot just pull the plug and say we would rather spend the money on housing or transportation or education than we would on the war. You do not have that option. You cannot just pick up stakes and leave because you have to consider the cost of what you leave behind.

Most of the experts who have talked about this have made it crystal clear if we decide we want to leave because we would rather spend the money on something else, the ultimate cost would be far greater than if we finished the job. Because by most estimates, the situation would deteriorate. Al-Qaida would reinfiltate, and the other enemies of the Iraqi people would create more problems. The next thing you know, we would have to come back in and try to clean up the mess that was created because we left prematurely. The bottom line is, the cost of leaving prematurely would be far greater than the cost of finishing the job once and

for all. It is also difficult to put a price on our national security, especially because of those young men and women who have given the ultimate sacrifice. We owe it to them to ensure that what they have done, the sacrifice they have made, is not going to be wasted, is not going to be lost because we were too anxious to get out of there to spend money on something else. That is not good policy. It is not the way to win a war. It is certainly not the way to beat the terrorists.

The final point the majority whip made was we should return to the original al-Qaida threat. I get back to the point I made before. If you want to return to the original al-Qaida threat, there is no better way than, A, to finish the job in Iraq where we have al-Qaida on the run—they are essentially defeated; let's don't let them rise back up again—and B, pass the FISA legislation, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which allows us to collect intelligence on these terrorists abroad. Again, we did that in the Senate, though many on the other side—28—voted against it.

The House of Representatives leadership has an obligation to try to get this done. Therefore, I call upon the Democratic House leadership to bring up the bill the Senate passed and see if it will pass the House of Representatives. I suspect the reason it has not been brought up is because they know it would pass. That is a bill the President would sign. Why wouldn't that be a good thing? That is the appropriate way to move forward.

Let me try to summarize. Republicans have put us into a stall, our Democratic friends say, because we agreed to debate the bill they wanted us to debate. They expected us to say no, that we wouldn't debate it. Then we would have been accused of trying to avoid debate. But we agreed. We will have the debate. It is only 30 hours. That is hardly enough time for all of my colleagues to be able to say the things they want to say, if we have half of that time, but nonetheless we will try to give the report of the truth of what is happening in Iraq. The American people will be better off for that. So I am glad we agreed with the majority leader to proceed to the debate on this bill. I suspect we will want to do the same thing on the next bill.

If and when the Democratic majority puts together an economic stimulus package, then we can take a look at that and see whether we want to debate that as well. But, again, our first priority ought to be to get the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act passed because every day that goes by that that law is not in effect, we jeopardize our national security. We jeopardize our ability to collect intelligence on al-Qaida and other terrorists, and we put the lives of Americans at risk. That is unacceptable.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. McCASKILL). The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, how much time do I have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Each Senator may speak up to 1 hour.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I came to the floor to speak in support of the Feingold amendment. I came purposely to talk about that issue, but I am compelled, having heard some of the remarks made by some of our colleagues, to first preface my remarks as it relates to this debate.

Yes, we are happy to have a debate, but it doesn't take 30 hours to come to the same conclusion the American people have clearly come to in this country: that continual engagement in the war in Iraq and the course we are on is not in the national interests of the United States. They have come through the common sense Americans always show. This is overwhelmingly the conclusion of a great majority of Americans. They understand. It doesn't take us 30 hours to do that. We can have an open, honest, and intelligent debate with a few Members on each side making the case for their respective points of view, but we don't have to take 30 hours in order to get to that goal so that we can move to the other important business of the Senate.

This is important business. It deserves a thorough debate. But, by the same token, it is clear that the whole process of objecting to the majority leader's effort to limit the scope of time so that we can have a robust debate but then go on to the other business before the Senate is to extend the time, is to delay us.

We have seen through a record number of filibusters the Republican minority has used in this Chamber in a way that defies all historic proportions. It is clear that what was intended to be used as a rare occasion to protect the rights of the minority, particularly on exceptional critical issues of the time, has now been abused in such a way in which it is intended to stall the work of the Senate but, more importantly, the work of the American people. That is the framework in which we start this debate. We can have a robust debate, but we don't need 30 hours to accomplish it.

Secondly, I cannot understand how some Members can come to the floor of the Senate and rail against the fact that the foreign intelligence surveillance bill has not been passed by the House of Representatives when they refused to agree to a 21-day extension of the existing law that gives the administration everything they want to do. So if this is such a critical issue, as has been described by Members of the Republican side of the aisle, why would they not have agreed to continue while the Congress debated the opportunity to extend the law that allows you to do all those things you say are critical to the protection of the American people?

I can only come to the conclusion that either it is not as critical as they define, because fear is what we sell, it seems, on the Republican side—we have

been hearing fear for quite some time; the American people have caught up to that—or, in fact, they simply want to have the proposition for a political purpose. If not, we would have had the 21-day extension. Everything the administration claims they needed, they would have had, and therefore we would have been able to move forward. Those two items need to be put in context.

Let me get to the main purpose of what I came to the floor to speak about, and that is in support of the Feingold amendment.

The Senate has an opportunity, once again, to vote to transition our troops out of Iraq with honor and refocus our efforts on defeating al-Qaida. It is long past time for us to make that decision. The administration has never told us the truth about the war in Iraq. Some people want to gloss over that. But if what is past is prologue, then we need to be worried about what we constantly hear.

The budget they submitted to Congress is the latest proof of that. The budget is terrible in a lot of ways. It leaves millions of children without full access to health care. It fails to wean us off our addiction to foreign oil. It fails to adequately address climate change. It fails to repair our education system or shrink the ballooning deficit. Basically, it fails to make a serious effort to tackle the most pressing problems average Americans face in their lives each and every day.

Beyond that, the budget is dishonest about the cost of one of the most expensive wars in our history, a war that has lasted more than America's engagement in World War II. It lists the cost of the war in Iraq for next year at \$70 billion. All the other calculations in the budget, including the debt and the deficit, in some way assume that \$70 billion is all the war is going to cost in the next fiscal year. We have to wonder if whoever wrote the section of the budget on Iraq found their job after leaving their old post at the accounting department of Enron because it is clearly the same type of accounting.

Recently, the Secretary of Defense took a baby step toward honesty and estimated the true cost for next year at another \$170 billion of America's money. He said that was just a rough estimate, because when you have already spent more than a half trillion dollars, I guess you just round up to the nearest hundred billion. This is from an administration that over 5 years of a historical engagement in Iraq knows how many troops we have, knows the projection moving forward, and therefore knows what the consequences in terms of cost are. To send a budget to the Congress that everyone knows in the context of the cost in Iraq is a farce, this type of carelessness—in one can call it carelessness—in accounting is offensive to the American people who are funding the war.

This administration is so dead set on staying in Iraq. I know some Presidential candidates have suggested that

we will do so for 100 years, if necessary. They just don't seem to care how much tax money they spend. They don't seem to care how much money they have to borrow from the Chinese to pay the bills, because we don't pay for this in terms of how we are going to afford the war. We don't domestically decide, well, this is going to be offset by some either revenue stream or cuts in programs. No, under this administration, we just keep adding it to the next generation—more debt, more debt. They don't seem to care how much wind gets knocked out of our economy because the money could have gone to creating jobs, stimulating the production of green energy, or helping families make ends meet.

As a matter of fact, we could use that money to do something that is critically important as well—protect America here on domestic soil. Because as we look at the President's budget, what does it do? It eliminates COPS funding that put 100,000 police officers on the streets of the cities. It cuts homeland security grants to States by 70 percent. It cuts port security by half. It cuts infrastructure security by half. This at a time in which every report, including those of the administration, has al-Qaida reconstituted on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and reports are coming out that they have been reconstituted with the strength and the ability to perform another attack on the United States.

The terrorists have to only get lucky once. We have to be right 100 percent of the time. How can you achieve those goals when you eliminate the very essence of the funding for those who, as we learned on September 11, came to respond on that fateful day? It wasn't the Federal Government, it was local police and firefighters and emergency management and hospital personnel. That is who came. What does this budget do? It slashes the living day-lights out of those very first responders who are critical to our domestic security.

What does it do about one of the gaping wounds we have in the country in terms of security? It slashes port security. Everybody who comes to the Capitol has to go through a security device, 100 percent. Everybody who goes to the White House has to go through a security device, 100 percent. But when we talk about cargo coming from all over the world, only 5 percent has to go through the scanning process. Yet we are going to cut port security by 50 percent.

Mass transit: The Congress spoke in the last session and put mass transit up there, understanding we saw what happened in Madrid and Mumbai and other places in the world. Yet the President cuts mass transit security by 56 percent.

So to those who argue we cannot talk about the consequences of our engagement in Iraq in a financial context here at home, well, in the context of security here at home, at a time of a re-

grouping and restrengthening of al-Qaida on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, with the ability to ultimately commit terrorism domestically in the United States, yes, there is a real causal connection and a real consequence and we have to include that as part of the debate and part of the consequences in our continuing engagement in Iraq in an open-ended way.

Now, with what we heard the Secretary of Defense talk about with the amount of money the Secretary of Defense thinks we might spend in Iraq next year, in a different context we could have more than doubled our package to stimulate the economy this year. When Americans get rebate checks in a month or so, they should imagine them more than twice as big because that is what this year in Iraq would cost.

If we want to imagine the total financial cost of the war in Iraq over almost 5 years, if we want to imagine what \$608 billion means, we could divide that up and send every American a check for \$2,000.

If we want to know what the war will cost over the next decade if we continue the course we are on, that is about \$2.8 trillion. Every American should picture a check for more than \$9,000. That is what the war costs: more than \$9,000 for every man, woman, and child living in the United States of America. If there are four people in your family, that is \$36,000 that potentially could have been put in your family's economy.

When so many hard-working families are struggling to keep their homes, and so many are struggling to help keep up with the rising cost of health care and college tuition and heating oil, when so many have to care for aging parents, put food on the table, and struggle to make ends meet each month, \$36,000 would go a long way. So it is a different way of looking at it.

There are many different ways of looking at the costs of the war. So here is how it all adds up. We cannot think about economic stimulus without thinking about how we can stimulate peace. We cannot heal our economy without closing the financial hemorrhage that is the war in Iraq. It seems to me that in addition to those financial contexts, there is the whole question of security—the security I talked about in a domestic capacity; the security challenges we have by overextending our troops in such a way in which all of our military leadership speaks about the challenges we would have if we had to meet another security challenge in the world; and basically an understanding that, God forbid, we had another security challenge, while we are still engaged in Iraq in the way in which we are engaged, while we have a resurgence in Afghanistan of the Taliban, with some of the latest reports talking about some very fierce fighting and the lack of response by NATO and a pumping up of our troops there; and looking at that scenario and

now looking at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, where al-Qaida has reconstituted. And that is, God forbid, if anything else happens in the world.

That is our challenge, in a security context, if we continue the course: a challenge that those who have the military prowess tell us we cannot meet if we continue in this way.

For 5 years, the administration has parroted the line that: "We're fighting them over there so we don't have to fight them here." But now more than ever we realize that one of the biggest impacts of the war has been we are spending our money over there and, therefore, we cannot spend it here—money that includes billions of dollars that have been misspent, including hundreds of millions of dollars in reconstruction projects that are unaccounted for.

I came back from Iraq about a month ago. I must say, when I see schools going wanting here in America, when I see hospitals closing in my home State, when I see roads that have deteriorated, bridges that have fallen, and see reconstruction in Iraq but no construction here at home, those are real consequences of the war.

When I see us talk about the genocide in Darfur, and we are universally committed to the proposition "never again," "never again," what does "never again" mean? That we will not repeat the legacies of the past, the failures of the past: in the Holocaust, in Rwanda, in the Armenian Genocide. No, no, we will act. Yet because of our present security challenges, and the consequences of being engaged in Iraq in the way we are, we stand by and watch people in Darfur be slaughtered. So much for "never again."

Not long ago, about a month ago, I had the chance to make a trip to Iraq myself. First and foremost, the trip proved something I believed for a long time: We should be incredibly proud of the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States and who are serving there. They do not ask whether this is the right or wrong mission. They just serve with honor and integrity, and they risk their lives every day.

I came away extremely impressed with their commitment, and I felt honored to be able to share some time with them, including many from my home State of New Jersey who are serving there. So we need to give them a mission worthy of their sacrifice. I believe that is what Senator FEINGOLD's amendment does.

Beyond that, one other thing became very clear to me. The solutions to Iraq's problems lie in the hands of the Iraqis. We cannot achieve peace, we cannot achieve reconciliation, we cannot achieve power sharing, we cannot get Sunni, Shia, and Kurd to sit side by side at the point of a military gun.

As long as we continue to, in essence, be enablers of an Iraqi leadership that has become so dependent on the United

States and refuses to meet the challenges of the hard choices, compromises, and negotiations necessary for their Government to ultimately achieve, they will never, ever feel the urgency of now.

When the President sent 30,000 additional troops into harm's way in Iraq last year, the purpose—his purpose, his stated purpose; not my view of it, his stated purpose—his stated purpose was to allow Iraqis to have the opportunity and the space, the environment, to strengthen the Federal Government and achieve national reconciliation.

That, no matter how we try to paint it, has not been accomplished. Even our own benchmarks, that even the administration agreed to and the Iraqis agreed to, have largely not been accomplished. So to use a sports analogy, we keep changing the goalposts every time, further and further away from the obligations the Iraqi leadership has.

Not too long ago, Iraq's Parliament finally passed three laws, after months of bitter squabbling. We certainly should applaud them for that. But the Bush administration is touting this event as an end-all, be-all political breakthrough. But, as usual, they are taking a small bit of good news and trying to whitewash the bigger picture.

The agreement the Iraqi Parliament reached is basically temporary. The provincial powers arrangement is set to expire—guess what—in 1 year—what they passed has an expiration in 1 year—to hold the politicians over so they can have the same arguments all over again next year.

Iraqi politicians are still a long way from permanent agreements over fundamental issues because they do not have the pressures of the necessity to do so. The reason is, as long as we continue to insist in an open-ended presence in the lives of Americans and the national treasure of the United States, they will not make the hard choices and compromises necessary to achieve lasting stability.

When I went to Iraq and met with a lot of the Iraqi elected leadership and some of the tribal chiefs and whatnot, I was stunned that they kept telling me about what America needed to do. My response to them was: Iraq's future is in your hands, not in America's hands. You must make these decisions for your country.

I know we have heard a lot about the surge, and certainly it depends on what your measurement is. If you are talking about greater security in Baghdad, the answer is, yes, yes; no question—although Baghdad has become far more segregated as a city, so that one of the ways in which security has been achieved is that we segregate Sunnis and Shias into different parts of Baghdad's neighborhood. Maybe that is the cost.

But when I landed, I was supposed to go to Mosul. I was not able to go to Mosul because they could not guarantee my protection. We have millions

of displaced Iraqis who are beginning to come back. And now they come back to neighborhoods and to homes where the person living there is—not only has their home been taken over, but they are not even from their same sect. So they feel they cannot go live there.

I asked: How are you ready to take on the displacement of several million of your country people coming back to the country? They have no real plan. We have 80,000 or so concerned local citizens, individuals who at one time fought us and have decided to join us but who are on the payroll—we pay them every week to be there—and their expectation is they are going to be integrated either into the security forces or get some type of employment. We do not have from the Iraqis a clear sense of how they are going to meet that challenge. These are 80,000 individuals who have weapons on them.

So when we hear about the surge, let's not forget what President Bush said was the purpose. It was to create the space and environment necessary for the opportunity for Iraqi leadership to make the hard choices, compromises, and negotiations, to pass the benchmarks we had passed and the Iraqis agreed to. That has failed. That has failed.

About security: Yes, we have created greater security in Baghdad. We also have created greater segregation in Baghdad. And we have pushed the challenges elsewhere in the country.

At Combat Post X-Ray outside of Baghdad, I met with troops from New Jersey serving in the Air Force. An IED had just killed one of their colleagues and wounded several others.

The hardest thing I have had to do in 33 years of public life is to call a family and give them my condolences because a loved one has been killed. It is the hardest thing I have had to do in public life. It is hard enough for a parent or a wife or a husband or a mother or a father to hear that when they believe their family member was fighting for freedom and for our security. It is incomprehensible when that death was about Iraqi politicians fighting for resources and power.

When General Petraeus was here last year and came before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he said in his testimony that what we have in Iraq going on is a fight over power and resources.

I do not think Americans believe that sending their sons and daughters into harm's way so Iraqis can fight over power and resources is a mission worthy of their sacrifice. There is no military solution in Iraq. Everyone, including General Petraeus, has admitted that.

The only way to pressure Iraqi politicians into making the choices necessary to move their country forward is to stop signing blank checks and to set a timetable to transition our troops back home. That is, in essence, what my colleague, Senator FEINGOLD, does. He creates a transition, effective 120

days after this law is passed and signed by the President. But that still permits us to meet critical missions, to conduct targeted operations against members of al-Qaida, the real threat to the United States, and affiliated international terrorist organizations; to provide the security for our own personnel and the infrastructure of the U.S. Government; to provide training to members of the Iraqi security forces who have not been involved in sectarian violence or in attacks upon the U.S. Armed Forces so that we can ensure that they can ultimately be able to stand up for their own country as our major focus; and to provide training, equipment, or other materiel to members of the U.S. Armed Forces to ensure, maintain, or improve their safety and security while redeploying members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

That, in my mind, is ultimately an opportunity to transition with honor; focus our mission on whom we need to—al-Qaida; strengthen the Iraqi security forces to meet their own challenge; and send a message to the Iraqi leadership that you must do what you have failed to do. The opportunity has been given to you. We cannot continue an open check in terms of national treasure or a continuing loss of American lives.

Finally, I felt truly blessed to step onto American soil after flying back from Iraq. Too many American men and women over there do not have the option right now of taking that return flight, and too many Americans have not returned, and others may not as well. I have seen firsthand how bravely our troops have served, but let's be clear about that service: American troops cannot be waiting for Iraqis forever to make the choices necessary to achieve success in their country. They cannot be asked to serve up a functional society on a platter. They cannot be expected to be the only ones serving up a functional electric grid, sewer systems, or revenue-sharing agreements about oil. As the former Chief of Staff said, we need the Iraqis to love their children more than they hate their neighbors. That is a powerful truism, but that does not come at the point of a gun.

If Iraqi politicians think they can sit back and keep looking at the menu of options and squabble over the choices no matter what, Americans will keep delivering everything they order; they will keep picking up the tab, they will never feel the pressing urgency to build a functional country for themselves. It is time for that type of service to end. It is time for every American soldier to have the most wonderful privilege we as Senators have had who have visited Iraq: the privilege of booking a return home ticket.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

MR. ISAKSON. Madam President, I rise for just a few minutes. I know the distinguished Senator from Michigan

wants to speak, and I will not be long, but I feel compelled to come to the floor today to speak about S. 2634, to require a report back to the people of the United States and to the Congress on our country's plan to address al-Qaida and its affiliates on a worldwide basis. It is very disappointing to me that we would put something on the floor like that when, in fact, it is those who have objected to the plan we have who are causing all of the problems we are experiencing today. I wish to go through it for a moment because there is a plan.

Nine days after 9/11, when the United States of America was attacked and New York City was attacked and the world saw the evil of al-Qaida and the evil of terrorism, the President of the United States went to the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, and he made a speech in which he declared a change in U.S. policy—a change from one of reaction to one of preemption.

So, first of all, we don't need a 60-day report back to the people of the United States on what our policy is. Our policy is one of preemption. Now, if you want to argue whether that is right or wrong, it is fine with me, but don't pretend as though we don't have a plan.

Secondly, in terms of preemption, it is a proposition where you don't want to see what happened on 9/11 happen again, so you are proactive rather than reactive. We were attacked as a country in the late 1990s and early 2000 seven different times in which we reacted after the fact. In most cases, those reactions were benign. In one case, we sent one missile into an aspirin factory, but it was too late for the diplomats who had died, for the soldiers and sailors on the *Cole* who had died, and for others who had died tragically under terrorist attack.

So, first and foremost, I would submit that we have a policy called preemption.

Thirdly, I would submit it has been a pretty good policy because since the President of the United States established it in that speech on the floor of the House in September of 2001, there has not been a single executed attack on the United States of America on our homeland. I think that is pretty good evidence that we have a plan, and a plan that is working in the interest of the safety of the American people.

Fourth, recommendations regarding the distribution and deployment of U.S. military, intelligence, diplomatic, and other assets to meet the relative regional and country-specific threats described in paragraph 1. The people who want to pass this bill are the very people who 2 weeks ago would not allow us, in the House of Representatives, to extend the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Here we are asking what our plan is going to be. Yet people are voting against the United States having the intelligence to conduct the worldwide program against al-Qaida and its affiliates. You just can't have it both ways.

I respect anybody being opposed to our deployment in Iraq. I respect anybody's opinion in this body—or any other body, for that matter—on the policy of the United States. But do not on the one hand assume we have no policy and then on the other hand vote against every meaningful contribution to the policy we do have, and the absolute prima facie evidence of that is FISA. Go look at the votes in the Senate on who voted against the extension of FISA, and you will find the same people who are supporting and furthering S. 2634. It is on its face patently unacceptable.

Lastly, it requires recommendations to ensure that the global deployment of the U.S. military of personnel and equipment best meets threats identified and described in paragraph 1; and, A, doesn't undermine the military readiness; B, requires the deployment of Reserve units more than twice, once every 4 years; and C, requires further extension of deployments of members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Let me interpret what that means. In 60 days, they want us to report to our enemies exactly what our military deployments are going to be in the future. One thing you don't do when your sons and daughters are engaged in harm's way around the world is tell your enemy what your game plan is. Sure, you should have one, and it should be one we all listen to on the fourth floor in our secured briefing rooms, but don't require it to be advertised to the world.

We live in the greatest, freest, most liberty-loving country in the world. We fight in this body every day to protect the Bill of Rights. But we have to recognize something: The terrorists don't want what we have. They don't want us to have what we have. They don't want us to have a first amendment to protect speech or for me to be able to stand up here and express myself. They don't want a law-abiding citizen to be able to carry a firearm or own a firearm. They don't want you to be able to worship on Sunday or worship on Friday or worship on Saturday or worship five times a day if you are a Muslim. They want to be able to dictate how you worship and whom you worship. We have to remember that, as we talk about the individual liberties and freedom we protect, those are the very liberties al-Qaida and its affiliates, as this bill portends, want to take away from us. The last thing we want to do is pass legislation requiring us to give them our game plan.

I welcome debate on these issues anytime we want to come to the floor. I take pride in the accomplishments of the young men and women who stand today in Afghanistan, in Iraq, and in other places around the world furthering the interests of the United States of America and protecting us against al-Qaida and its operatives. We have a policy, and it is called preemption. We have a plan, and it is our plan, and it doesn't need to be advertised to

them. Most importantly of all, we have the finest men and women in the world executing that plan today around the world on behalf of the people of the United States of America. But let's not require disclosure of our plan, and let's not pretend we don't have a way to attack al-Qaida and its affiliates. We do. It is called preemption. As of yet, they haven't hit us on our territory, in our country since the day we established that as the policy of the United States of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, will the Senator from Georgia yield for a question?

Mr. ISAKSON. Absolutely.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I wish to ask the Senator through the Chair—he indicated that our strategy vis-a-vis al-Qaida after 9/11 has to do with the doctrine of preemption. I am intrigued by that. I know that was a justification for going into Iraq, but I wonder if the Senator could explain how the doctrine of preemption is going to help us against an organization that is existing in some 80 countries in the world. Are we going to invade and preempt 80 different nations?

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, after seeing what al-Qaida wants to do to us and has done to us, I don't think we should minimize what the effort might be that we have to take.

I say to the Senator from Wisconsin, it is one of preemption, and the No. 1 way to preempt is to know in advance what the enemy is going to do, and the No. 1 way to do that is to be able to surveil known enemies. That is why we have the FISA bill. You can preempt when you have the knowledge. If you don't have the knowledge and you strip your intelligence agency of the business, yes, they are going to grow in 80 countries, and yes, they are going to hit us. So we have a policy of preemption. The best way to preempt is to have good intelligence, and the best way to get their attention is to let them realize we will go after them wherever they are as long as they declare war on the United States of America.

Mr. FEINGOLD. So you are not referring here to the doctrine of preemption to use as a justification for invading Iraq; you are talking about the need for intelligence, is that correct?

Mr. ISAKSON. The President of the United States—I believe it was 9 days after 9/11—announced the change of U.S. policy to be one of preemption. That is what I addressed in my remarks. The FISA reference I made was to say that I found it a little unusual for the people who were supporting the bill of the Senator from Wisconsin—whom I completely respect—to be most of the same people who voted against us having the intelligence to be able to preempt them. And then to have a bill that portends we don't have a policy? I just didn't think it made good sense.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, if the Senator will further yield for a question, I understand what he is saying in terms of the need for intelligence, but the doctrine of preemption that was announced by the President 9 days after 9/11 and through that period was not about intelligence. It had to do with the notion of where we could intervene in various nations. So I am just a little bit confused about that and trying to understand the connection.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, responding through the Chair, I appreciate the clarification. My point is you can't intervene if you don't know where it is going to happen.

Let me just make a point, if I can. I live in the great State of Georgia, and I live in a suburb of Atlanta. There will be a trial in April of two students at Georgia Institute of Technology—Georgia Tech. Because of the PATRIOT Act and the FISA law, our intelligence agencies tracked communications from Islamabad, Pakistan, into Atlanta, GA, to the library at Georgia Tech to two students, Islamic students who were then communicating to Toronto, Canada, to establish a cell in Atlanta. Days before they were to activate the plan of that cell, our authorities moved in and put them under arrest, and they are going to trial. The cell was never activated. No lives were lost. That is how you preempt. You preempt through intelligence, you preempt from knowing what the enemy is going to do before they do it, and you preempt by having the strong intelligence and military forces to make it work.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Madam President, I appreciate the Senator responding to me. I will simply say that I virtually agree with that general proposition that we need to be able to have the information and we need to stop terrorist attacks, and I am glad we were able to do it in Georgia.

But the fact is, al-Qaida is operating in 80 countries around the world, and because of putting so much focus on Iraq, including so much focus of our intelligence system in Iraq, we don't have the adequate resources to preempt terrorist attacks throughout the world. That is the very problem. There are terrorist attacks going on in places such as Algeria and Morocco and Afghanistan and Southeast Asia, and because we are so consumed with Iraq, we can't pursue the very notion of preempting the terrorist attacks to which the Senator from Georgia properly refers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, first let me indicate that as my colleagues were speaking a moment ago, I think it is incredibly important to understand that, in fact, we are talking about a threat in 80 countries, and we do have a FISA law that, in fact, has worked, and no one is suggesting we do not have the need for strong intel-

ligence and support for our intelligence operations. In fact, that is what all of us are willing to see happen. But what we are talking about in this resolution is whether we are going to continue to keep our focus on a country that is now in the middle of a civil war or whether we are going to redirect our efforts to address our real threats not only abroad but threats at home.

When we talk about the threats to our families, I would suggest that if we are now spending somewhere around \$15 billion a month, some say, that when we look at what could be done here at home to address the very real threats of job loss, people losing their homes, children walking into schools that are crumbling, the lack of health care, those are also very important threats.

So we certainly want to make sure we are safe and address those threats abroad, but, more broadly, we have many threats affecting our families right now, and they expect us to use the very best judgment to keep them safe both from threats outside our country as well as from threats at home, including a huge economic cloud over many families.

Madam President, I rise today to lend my strong voice of support for the Feingold legislation to provide the safe redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq, and to refocus us on, in fact, those things that are threats to our country and to the families of this country. Tonight, 591 members of the Michigan National Guard will bed down after a long day of working and fighting and facing danger at every turn in the harshest physical conditions imaginable. For every single one of these men and women, a family will go to sleep in Michigan tonight worried that their son or daughter, father or mother, sister or brother won't make it home.

The true cost of this war cannot be measured in dollars and cents. The real cost is measured in the sacrifices of our brave men and women and their families every day. This cost is more than just the possibility and the reality of physical danger. This cost includes the sacrifices that every single American family makes by being apart from each other time and time again. It isn't right what is happening; it isn't fair; it isn't safe. It isn't making us safer as a country, and we need to change this policy.

That is why I am so grateful that, once again, Senator REID has made it a priority for us to focus on the war in Iraq and what is happening to troops and families and people here at home, and the cost of the lost opportunity by spending upwards of \$15 billion a month now in Iraq.

Tonight 591 Guard members in Iraq, with 591 families at home, 591 will have missed birthdays, missed Father's Days and Mother's Days, missed high school graduations and children's first steps or anniversaries or family funerals or holidays; 591 will have missed paychecks, sidetracked careers, with small

businesses and farms put in economic danger; 591 lives that will never be the same; 591 sets of missed opportunities that will never be replaced. And these members of the Michigan National Guard make up only a fraction of the 160,000 men and women in uniform currently serving bravely and honorably in Iraq, or the countless others who have served.

In too many cases, these men and women are back in Iraq for their second, third, or fourth redeployment. In addition to the 591 who are already deployed, there are about 1,000 members of the Michigan National Guard who have been mobilized and who will deploy this year. Many of them will be doing their second, third, or fourth deployment to a combat zone. This year alone, there will be a thousand more missed paychecks, a thousand more missed birthdays and holidays and special occasions, and a thousand more lives that will never be the same.

Our fighting men and women are the greatest single resource our military has, and this Government is abusing that resource. America puts our trust in our military to defend us. When our sons and daughters join the military, they are putting their trust in us to give them the tools, the resources they need, and to treat them with the respect they have earned. The current administration policies on redeployment have violated that trust. Those policies have let our troops down. Once again, I am proud to join with my colleague from Wisconsin in saying: Enough is enough when it comes to placing our armed services in harm's way by stretching them to the breaking point with redeployment after redeployment. Enough is enough when it comes to being in the middle of a civil war. And enough is enough when it comes to this administration taking its eye off the ball on the war on terror.

We are all aware of the worsening situation in Afghanistan. However, this administration continues to focus on a civil war in Iraq. Our Armed Forces have traveled a tough road since we invaded Iraq. They have shouldered a heavy burden with pride, with confidence, and with honor. We have asked extraordinary things from them at every turn, and at every turn they have delivered. They have done us all proud. They have faced tough situations and have done their duty. Now we need to do what is right for them. It is time to face the tough situations. It is time to make the hard choices, to make them proud of us, and it is time to remove them from the civil war in Iraq, to change course, and to refocus, as this bill does, and redistribute our resources to those areas that truly address the threats facing our families and our country.

America's soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are always there when we call on them. The question is: Will we be there for them? What this legislation proposes is as simple as it is right. It requires our forces in Iraq to target

operations against al-Qaida and other international terrorist groups.

Why is this important? Because al-Qaida has declared war against us. We know that. The people in Iraq are in the middle of a civil war that is something they now have to address and come to terms with and bring their own resources to address. So while our troops are in Iraq, they should be targeting those who have said they wished to do harm to us.

Also, our troops in Iraq would be required to focus on providing security for U.S. personnel, of course, and that is extremely necessary in order to bring them home safely. I understand the Iraqi security forces are still developing, still learning, as I have met with them in traveling to Iraq. We have heard certainly of the continual need to train, the need for them to continue to develop, and we know we have a role in supporting that, and this bill recognizes that fact. It would allow our troops to continue to train Iraqi security forces, but only if our troops are training the Iraqis who have not been involved in the sectarian violence or attacks against our troops.

This bill will allow our troops to continue to train the Iraqi security forces, but only if that training does not result in our troops being in combat. Training, yes; but they need to step up at this point, after 5 years, and be the ones at the front line.

This bill also brings our troops home safely. It specifically allows our military to train and equip itself to ensure its safety. Most importantly, it requires that we begin to bring our troops home.

This administration said a surge was necessary; that the surge would give the Government of Iraq the time to reach the political solutions necessary to end their civil war and to end the violence. They said time was needed. Well, the Government has had time, and during this time our troops have continued to pay the price. Our troops have been caught in the middle of a civil war. They have been victims of IEDs. They have come home with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental and physical ailments. The bottom line is, it is time for our troops to be placed first and to begin to bring them home.

That is all this bill does, and it does that while allowing our troops to continue to focus on who we all agree is the real enemy: Al-Qaida.

On October 11, 2002, I was proud to be 1 of 23 Members of this body who stood in this Chamber and said the war was the wrong choice. This administration, I believe, since that time has in fact failed our troops and the American people by committing our troops to a war without a clear reason or goal, and by squandering resources that are desperately needed here at home to rebuild America and to invest in American communities. This administration has failed our troops by not having a clear mission for our Armed Forces in

Iraq, by not providing the proper equipment and body armor and logistical support for the troops, by poor planning on the invasion in Iraq and the lack of planning for how to secure the country and what would happen after the initial attack. I believe they have failed by sending our brave men and women back into harm's way over and over again without the proper rest between redeployments.

History will be a harsh judge of this administration, because I believe they have failed the American people. This administration failed because they took their eye off the ball. This legislation is about putting our eye back on the target of what we ought to be doing together.

In closing, let me reemphasize the fact that while the most important thing is to be supporting our troops, to be addressing the threats to them while they are in harm's way, to address the lives lost and the people who are coming home who will need help the rest of their lives, it is also important to look at this from the standpoint of the precious resources that have been lost at a time when so many American families are struggling. We always make decisions based on values and priorities, and it is shocking to me, as we have seen this war go forward, to see upwards of, some say \$12 billion, some say now upwards of \$15 billion a month—not part of the normal budget—going directly on the national deficit, the national debt, to be paid by our children and grandchildren. But let's say it is \$15 billion a month. To see that continue month after month after month, and to see us work together on a bipartisan basis to pass a critically important piece of legislation to increase health care for 10 million children across this country, which costs only \$7 billion a year, and yet that is vetoed—there is not a willingness to invest in American children to the tune of less than half of what it is costing per month in Iraq—these are the wrong values and wrong priorities.

We see schools being rebuilt in Iraq, and yet I can go in too many schools in Michigan where there is a bucket in the corner to catch the water dripping from the roof, or we don't have the kind of computer technology in the classroom every single child will need to know how to use in any job they get, from working at a gas station to working at a technology company. We know we have crumbling roads and bridges here in America. We know every time we invest in and rebuild in America, those are jobs that aren't going to be outsourced to another country. Those are American jobs—rebuilding American roads and American bridges and water and sewer systems in America. We are told we can't do that, that there are not the resources to invest in America, but we are spending \$15 billion a month in Iraq.

We now have a whole new group of industries producing what are called green collar jobs, and I am very proud

to have joined in working with many of my colleagues to focus on the new alternative energy technologies and other things we need to do—small investments with huge results for energy independence and creating more jobs and addressing global warming.

And yet we consistently hear there are not the resources for any new investments in America. There are so many areas where we are told there is no money: for doing the bold research we need to solve Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease and to aggressively move forward on other health research; the desire not to help those who lost their jobs because of trade, to be able to go back and get the training they need to be able to move on to new kinds of jobs so that we have a middle class in this country; and that families can pay their mortgage and electric bill and heating bill and know that they have the opportunity to keep their standard of living in our country.

There is a lot at stake. And this bill, while it focuses on what we need to do to change the mission, to refocus on ways to truly keep us safe, to begin to bring our troops home from Iraq, from a civil war where we need to leave and redirect our troops to those areas where, in fact, we will be focusing on the real threat to our country, that is, on the surface, what this legislation does.

I would suggest it does more than that because this is about who we are as Americans, what our priorities are: No. 1, how to make sure we are truly smart enough to be focused on what keeps us safe; and, No. 2, understanding that we have much to do in our country.

Our families are feeling squeezed on all sides. Communities need help, and we have an opportunity to not only redirect our troops and our focus but to redirect critical dollars to be able to make sure, in fact, we are finally putting the interests of America's families first.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I think the Senator from Oklahoma will return in a moment. If it would be appropriate, I would suggest that he go. I think he will go next, followed by myself, a Democrat, then Senator SESSIONS.

I will get started. Senator COBURN, I think, has been to Iraq just a week or so ago. I look forward to hearing what he has to say about the condition on the ground as he found it.

And to my friend, Senator FEINGOLD, one thing I think all of us should agree upon is that you pushed this idea of withdrawing from Iraq for a very long time. There is no question in my mind that you are very sincere, that you believe it makes America stronger not weaker, and that if the polls were 90-10

to stay, you would be doing this, simply because that is what motivated you as a Senator.

I have nothing but the utmost respect for what makes you tick as a Senator. I know you take on some very difficult challenges, sometimes not popular, and this particular piece of legislation, I think, is ill-advised. I will speak for a while as to why it should be defeated.

But the author of the amendment is consistent, is as patriotic as anybody else who will speak, and we need more of this, not less. So what is the Senate all about? We are talking about important things. There are a million things going on in this country that need to be addressed. But I think taking some time to talk about Iraq, where we are, where we are going to go, and how we are going to get there is probably time well spent. I think most Americans are very interested in the outcome in Iraq.

Having just returned from Iraq, I think Senator COBURN can give us his view of what he found.

I yield the floor and will speak after he is through.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma is recognized.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, first of all, I, too, want to express my respect for the Senator from Wisconsin. We have a lot of things on which we agree. This happens to be something on which we adamantly disagree. But I appreciate, as someone who pushes the limits in this body, his desire to have this debate because I think it is important.

We just heard the Senator from Michigan talk, and the statement would have been a fairly accurate reflection 2 years ago. But it has nothing to do, and it is not even anywhere close, to what is ongoing in Iraq today.

I think the case could have been made 2 years ago that Iraq was in a civil war. Nobody who has visited Iraq in the last 2 months can make that claim. It is not there. Outside of the Green Zone, I met with people whose daughters had been murdered by al-Qaida. I met with people whose father had been murdered. I met with both Sunni and Shia in the same village, in multiple villages, who had reconciled because they reject the terrorism of al-Qaida.

There is no question lots of mistakes have been made with the Iraq policy. But the claims under which we try to describe Iraq today in light of how it was 12 months ago are fictitious at best and damaging probably in terms of what the truth is.

Do we find ourselves in a very difficult situation? Absolutely. Is this an expensive war? Absolutely. Would we all like to not be where we are? I think almost everybody would agree to that. But probably the more important question for me is, where are we today compared to where we were 12 months ago, and have, in fact, the mistakes of the past been reflected in policies that have changed and bode for a greater future absent additional mistakes?

The desire of the Senator from Wisconsin to have us out in a way that limits our exposure is something that I would love to be able to see. But the practical nature of what he wants to accomplish could not be accomplished in less than 18 to 24 months. I mean, it could not happen. You go and talk to the military; it could not happen without us leaving tons of equipment.

But the point is, we should not dwell on that. The point is, did we make the necessary changes that can create an outcome that gives us an honorable exit from the situation, and does it leave a genocide behind? I firmly believe, having traveled—my trip prior to this one was 6 months before the surge. I want to tell you the difference is like night and day, everywhere I went. I duplicated places I went before.

So with the earnestness that the Senator from Wisconsin drives his position, we ought to reflect on what has been accomplished. I also find it very disingenuous to talk about the cost of this war by the person who sponsored more legislation and greater Government spending than anybody in this body in the 109th Congress, in the first session of this Congress.

The fact is, \$349 billion worth of new spending was coauthored by the Senator from Michigan last year, \$349 billion, the same Senator who voted to fund the bridge to nowhere.

I happen to agree we ought to be paying for the war. We ought to be paying for the war, and we could easily pay for the war by eliminating wasteful spending.

I would direct you to the Reader's Digest last month where they estimated \$1 trillion we are missing in wasteful spending. That is an underestimate. So for us to make a claim of a fiscal nature, by the person who has cosponsored more spending than anybody in this body, and has voted against amendments to decrease wasteful spending, is somewhat less than genuine, I believe.

I think the other thing that needs to be said is we had a debate, and we actually funded the surge. It actually happened. We ought to be talking about what happened with that. To me, it is phenomenal, the difference. I will tell you, I am very—I lost a soldier from Ardmore, OK, a 19-year-old soldier killed by an IED.

How can it be that we can continue to do this unless we are doing it for the right reasons and the right cause? I believe if we walk away, no matter how we got there, rightly or wrongly, if we walk away, what I see happening, from my experience in Iraq in 1993 after the first gulf war and before this one, as a medical missionary, here is what I see happening: If we do what the Senator from Wisconsin wants us to do, and we effectively carry this out, I see an unstable northern Iraq. I see a war between Iran, Turkey, and Kurdistan. I see a marked civil war between Shia and Sunni, with involvement of the Sunni Triangle, Sunni crescent. I see a

total destabilization of the Mideast. But beyond all of that, what I see is tremendous additional tragedy that we will have impacted onto the people of Iraq, and in the deaths of 500,000 to 1 million more people.

And the question ought to be: Do we have a moral obligation to fix what we started? The assessment of the Senator from Wisconsin is that we cannot fix it so therefore we ought to come home, we ought to get out, that it was a mistake to begin with; it does not matter what has happened in the past other than we learned from it.

The question is, what can we do about the future? I want to tell you, I do not buy everything the Pentagon says. I am pretty critical across their spending, across everything else. I accused them of lying to me on the training of Iraqi troops in 2006.

But when you see what has been transformed in the training of troops in Iraq, which is comparable to our training of our own troops over the same period of time, and what they have accomplished both in terms of synergism with both their equipment, their military leaders, and their troops, and they walk out of training as a Sunni and Shia together and you see that and you say we are going to walk away from that, we are not going to finish it, we are going to allow this thing to collapse—and it will.

So then the question is, have we made another mistake in not fulfilling an obligation in something that we started? I do not believe we can do that. If we do that, I think the blood of every Iraqi that is displaced or dies after that is on us—not on the Taliban, not on al-Qaida, not on Shia extremists, not on Sunni extremists but on us.

We can win. We will win. We can. There is political progress all across the board, locally and at the regional and at the national government level. I would remind the Members of this body how long it took us to get a functioning government, a functioning government after our independence, one that was based on a constitution, one that was based on the rule of law. It was not smooth sailing. We did not do it in a short period of time. And we did not even get it right when it came to equal rights of individuals. We did not get it right. Yet we are frustrated with that.

I see a new day in Iraq. It is not over. It is dangerous, it is still very dangerous. But the progress, the improvement, the reconciliation between Shia and Sunni is unbelievable.

In province across province, the Shia, the Sunni awakening, the sons of Iraq phenomenon, the coordination of local governments across ethnic lines is in stark contrast with what was there a year and a half ago. Do we just abandon that? Think about the message it sends if we are not going to create a stable Iraq. What immediately do they do? They immediately start going to their own intrinsic ethnic corner. We divide. We send the Kurds one way, the

Shia one way, and the Sunni one way. We create a holocaust.

I want to say publicly I have had a lot of misgivings about what our country has done in the Middle East. But I have no misgivings at all at this time about the course we are on. The leadership of General Petraeus, the leadership of Ambassador Crocker, the leadership of the people within Iraq, sheikhs within small communities risking their lives every day to stand up and say: I will join hands with a Sunni, with the Shia. I am going to reject al-Qaida and we are going to get our lives back together—that is happening. That is a dynamic that is forcefully happening because people want peace.

This will eliminate that movement. This will create insecurity. This will drive people to their corners. This will drive people to extreme positions. In fact, what we have accomplished in the last 12 months will be denuded and neutered out to the point where we will have created a worse situation rather than a better one.

To the soldiers and families who have sacrificed so much in this war, I say thank you from my family. The real problem of the administration, the mistake they made, is we should all be sacrificing for this war, not just our military families. We have refused to do that as Members of the Senate by making sure that we pay for this war, by getting rid of things that are lower priorities, getting rid of things that are duplicative. We didn't do that. We said, we will charge it to our kids. We can't ruffle any feathers and make the hard choices.

The Senator from Michigan said: We do things based on value and priorities. That is baloney. We do things based on how we get reelected, with the exception of the Senator from Wisconsin, who is one of the most honorable men in this body. He never thinks about that issue. He thinks about what he thinks is right. But the way we do things around here is what is politically expedient, not what is right. For her to claim that that is how we do things, when we can't even get rid of billions of dollars in duplicative programs, \$8 billion worth of buildings that the Pentagon wants to get rid of because it might ruffle some politician's feathers somewhere—we don't do things based on priority or on value. We do it on political expediency.

Again, I thank the troops and the families who are sacrificing. I am amazed at the progress that has been made, literally amazed. I believe we ought to honestly look at that before we walk a different direction. We ought to truly reassess where we are. It is a big price. I know it is. We have paid a big price in this endeavor. It is fair to question whether we should continue it. But it is not fair to not look at what has happened over the last 12 months in a realistic and open assessment that says, is there light at the end of the tunnel? I will tell you, there is. Indi-

vidually, in talking to Shia and Sunni families while over there, outside of the Green Zone, walking among them without protection, seeing the hope in their eyes that finally things are going to get back to where they can take care of their families, move ahead with their goals and their personal lives, the leadership exhibited by our military, not just in leadership roles but all the way down to the private and what they are doing and how they are doing it and how they are carrying it out in Iraq, is something we can all be proud of. I don't think we should jeopardize what they are doing by voting for this bill. It is great for us to question. Sometimes we haven't done that well enough. But to ignore the reality of what is happening today in Iraq and the trend lines and the movement lines and the economic growth lines and the power lines and the oil production lines and the agreement among Shia and Sunni at all of these regional and provincial levels, to ignore that is a grave mistake on our part.

It is my hope that we don't carry forward with this idea. It is also my hope that we will truly recognize, not be blinded, not be sold a bill of goods. I am not suggesting that. We should ask the tough questions. But to deny the marked change, the tremendous progress, the tremendous freedom, the tremendous lifting of the burden on the Iraqi people that has happened in the last 12 months and not say that means something and not say that that means we are going absolutely in the right direction—we haven't won this war, but we certainly have them on the run. We certainly have the Iraqi people enamored with us to the point where we are not despised. We are welcome now in the vast majority of Iraq. In 95 percent of Iraq we are welcome because we are a liberator of them from al-Qaida, not from Saddam but from al-Qaida, the one who cut their 8-year-old daughter's head off because she looked at them wrong, the ruthlessness of radical Islam. That is what is at stake right now. We can differ in our approach on how we might battle that, but this is the heat sink right now. Iraq is the heat sink for al-Qaida. It is where they are, where they are coming.

We are winning. The Iraqi people are winning, and the Iraqi troops are winning. Let's not destroy that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I returned Thursday of last week from Iraq after my tenth visit. A year ago this time I quite honestly thought we were going to lose this thing—incredibly depressed, because you could see over about a 2½ to 3-year period it getting worse with each visit. Things have changed dramatically. But it is important for every Senator to put Iraq in context so their constituents and the Nation can judge what our proposals are and what makes us tick on Iraq.

I believe Iraq is the central battle-front, not the only one, in the overall

struggle against radical Islamic terrorism. At the time Saddam Hussein was invaded and replaced, it wasn't to drive al-Qaida out of Iraq, absolutely not. It was a dictator who had created war and chaos in the region as long as he had been a dictator, who had defied 17 U.N. resolutions to let us inspect his weapons program. It was the Russians, the French, and every other intelligence organization in the world believing that Saddam Hussein was trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction. It was basically neutering the effectiveness of the U.N. The Oil for Food Program designed to help the Iraqi people and control the dictator was a joke. So the reason we invaded Iraq is because the dictator was defying the world. He made us want to believe he was trying to procure weapons. Because if he wasn't, he should have opened his country to inspection. He was living off the Oil for Food Program.

We had 70 something Senators vote to authorize force. The reason most of us voted that way is because all the evidence possessed by everybody in the world suggested that Saddam Hussein was not becoming the solution to the Mideast; he was still the problem.

What happened? We displaced the dictator and we got it very badly wrong after the fall of Baghdad. We had a model that was short on troops. There was a period of time when we allowed the country to become lawless. Instead of stopping looting and pillaging, we let it grow. We disbanded the Iraqi Army, and they could have been helpful, at least some of them. We made a lot of mistakes after the fall of Baghdad. For about 3 years plus, we were pursuing a strategy that was not producing results. Why? Because we didn't have enough troops. The enemy was getting stronger, not weaker.

We had a great debate last year as to whether we should change course. Everybody in the body suggested we change course, because it was clear the old strategy was not working and it was depressing to go to Iraq and hear the people in charge on the ground say things are fine, when you knew they weren't.

I am not a military commander. I am a military lawyer. But common sense would have told you a couple years ago that this thing was slipping away. So it was time to act and change course. There were two ways to do it. You could pull the plug and start pulling people out or you could add more troops to secure the Nation in a way that we should have done after the fall of Baghdad.

I will take responsibility for my point of view of not pushing harder early on to have more troops. But I can promise you this: For a couple years, along with Senator McCain, we pretty much were the lone voices to add more into Iraq. As the polling numbers on Iraq changed, the desire to add more troops dramatically got more difficult for a politician. But that is what we

needed. I am here to tell you a year after the surge began that those who said the war in Iraq was lost were wrong. Those who said the surge had failed last April before it even started were wrong. Senator FEINGOLD passionately believes that the troop presence in Iraq should change, and he was suggesting withdrawal long before it was popular. There are some people who have been playing Iraq for the next election, not for the next generation or the next decade. They have made bold statements such as it is all lost, that we have lost in Iraq. They never told us who won, because wars are about winning and losing.

If you believe, as I do, that this is a battle in a greater war, could you afford to lose? What is the price to the United States to lose a battle against al-Qaida anywhere in the world? What would it cost us as a nation for al-Qaida to be able to stand on every street corner in the Middle East and tell people: We drove the Americans out of Iraq? They came to Iraq after the fall of Baghdad for the very reason we went into Iraq, except with a different result in mind. We wanted to replace the dictator and allow people in Iraq who had been oppressed for 30-something years to have a better life and ally themselves with us and be a peaceful neighbor rather than an agent for destruction in the region. We wanted to allow a woman to have a say about her children. We wanted Sunnis and Shias to be able to live together and prosper. We wanted a peaceful Iraq.

Al-Qaida saw what we were doing, and they came in droves to make sure we were not successful. The question has to be: Why does bin Laden care about Iraq? Why is he sending everybody he can get to go into Iraq? Why is he disappointed with the performance of al-Qaida in Iraq? Because he said the land of the two rivers is the great battle of our time. The land of the two rivers is Iraq. Bin Laden, no matter what you think about him, understands the consequences of us succeeding in Iraq. It is a nightmare to his way of doing business. The thought of a woman being able to run for office, hold office, have a say about her children is a nightmare. The idea that Sunni, Shias, and Kurds can live together and not be told how to worship God is an absolute affront to his way of thinking. The idea that the Iraqi people would align themselves with us for a peaceful Mideast must drive him crazy.

They came, al-Qaida, with a mission in mind. That was to drive us out and kill this effort at moderation. Thank God the President changed course with a mission in mind. We put more troops on the ground beginning last February. A year later I am here to tell my colleagues, it worked. All of those who said we had lost in Iraq and the surge had failed were absolutely wrong. Thank God we didn't listen to them. Because if we had left Iraq, al-Qaida, as sure as I am standing here, would be claiming all over the world they beat

America. Iran would be the biggest winner, second only to al-Qaida. And Iraq would be a chaotic place where the Sunni-Shia fight would spill over to the region. If you think there is a problem now between Turkey and the Kurdish rebels up in the north, imagine a collapsed Iraq. What is that worth to prevent? Let me tell you what it is worth. It is worth everything we have to throw at it.

Let's talk about the troops for a minute. We all appreciate them. I don't doubt that one bit. But answer this question: Why do they reenlist after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan at higher levels than anywhere else in the military? What do they see that we don't see? Why do they keep going back the second and third and fourth time?

My opinion is: They get it. They understand their commitment and their sacrifice now will prevent their children from having to go to such a battle in the future. And they buy this idea that if we can contain extremism and defeat it in Iraq, we are safer here at home. They believe it so much they keep going and going and going.

Let me tell you something no one said yet: Well done. We should take this 30 hours and celebrate what I think is the most successful military counterinsurgency operation in the history of the world. We should take the 30 hours and go over in detail what the commanders and the troops under their command have accomplished. It is a phenomenal story that will be talked about in military history for decades to come. It has exceeded every expectation I had. Adding more troops into Iraq, I thought, was essential and would matter, but I never dreamed it would matter this much.

Let's talk about what has happened since the surge began.

Monthly attack levels have decreased 60 percent since June of 2007 and are now at the same levels as early as in 2005 and some points of 2004. In other words, we are rolling back the clock on attacks.

Civilian deaths are down approximately 75 percent since a year ago, dropping to a level not seen since the beginning of 2006.

Now, what does that mean? The better security, the more likely the Iraqi people will step up to the plate and reconcile their differences. I have always believed that was the key to stabilizing Iraq.

Now, when we try to do things such as immigration—and my good friend in the chair knows how hard that is—they run awful ads against you and say terrible things about you on the radio and make life pretty difficult for a politician to take on the hard things. Everybody likes doing the easy things. Very few of us like doing the hard things. But when you do the hard things, you get a lot of push-back. But we keep trying.

Imagine trying to sit down across the table or the aisle with someone of a dif-

ferent sect, and they kill your family. Now, what kind of world is that? The violence in Iraq had gotten so out of control that the idea of political reconciliation, to me, was impossible. To expect people to go to Baghdad and solve their nation's problems—because the threat of violence covered the country, I knew we would never get reconciliation. But here is what I hoped.

I hoped if we could turn this around and reduce civilian casualties and reduce the level of attacks and reduce sectarian deaths—which have decreased by 90 percent in the Baghdad security districts; listen to this: a 90-percent reduction in sectarian killings in Baghdad—I always believed if we could do that, the Iraqi people would rise to the occasion because they do want a new Iraq. That was my bet. That was my hope. And if they do not want it as much as I want it, or more than I want it, then it is never going to happen.

But here is the evidence, after a year of sacrifice, blood, and treasure—not just by us but by the Iraqi people. Their army and security forces have increased by 100,000.

Let me tell you what it is like to go to the recruiting station in Berkeley. You get pushed back because of the city council ordinance.

Let me tell you what it was like to go to the recruiting station in parts of Iraq a year ago. They were killing people who were trying to join the army and security forces. They were attacking recruiting stations. They were getting the names of those who wanted to join the army and security forces, and they were coming after their families; and they still came.

I have been to Iraq 10 times, and I can tell you, I met people the first couple visits who are now dead because the terrorists killed them. Because what the people were trying to do is create a moderate form of living that is an absolute nightmare for al-Qaida.

I have always believed, after having gone there so many times, that the Iraqi people are willing to die for their own freedom, and if they can pull this off, it makes me and my family and my country safer. So that is why we stay, that is why we fight. And we are winning.

What has happened in the last 60 to 90 days? Not only have we reduced the level of attacks by 60 percent—and civilian deaths are down by 75 percent and sectarian deaths are down by 90 percent—we have doubled the amount of weapons caches found because we are getting better information from the population. They are telling us things they did not tell us before.

Ten of the eighteen provinces have been taken over by Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi security forces grew by 100,000 in 2007 and stand now at more than half a million.

All I can tell you is the Iraqi people have taken the opportunity we provided them with the surge to stand up

for their own freedom. They are dying at 3 to 1 our rate. They have paid a heavy price. Our country has paid a heavy price. But the reason the Iraqis keep coming after somebody falls is because they want a better way.

If I had to put in a story line the most important aspect of the surge, it would be as follows: A Muslim country made up of different Islamic sects turned on al-Qaida. Listen to that. With better security and a strong commitment from the United States that we will be your ally, we will not leave you, we will not abandon you to this vicious enemy, they slowly but surely turned on al-Qaida, beginning in Anbar and now marching throughout the whole country.

What does that mean for the overall war on terror? That is something we should be on the floor celebrating because the way you win this war is not: Kill every terrorist. The way you win this war is: You stand by forces of moderation and you give them the ability and the tools to change their own destiny.

Look what has happened. Anbar Province, a year ago, was determined lost by the Marine Corps. This year, they celebrate a 5-K run through the streets of Ramadi. Why? Because the sheiks, the tribal leaders, the average citizen said no to al-Qaida, aligned themselves with us, and al-Qaida has been diminished in great measure.

To those who want to defeat al-Qaida, stay with the Iraqi people and help them defeat al-Qaida. What a message to the Mideast: Muslims turn on al-Qaida with American support. What is that worth? That is priceless. That is how we win the war.

GEN David Petraeus should have been the man or person of the year. What he has accomplished in a year absolutely is stunning, militarily. It has come at a heavy price in blood and treasure. But to all those who have served under his command, congratulations. You have made military history. You have made your country safer. You have been al-Qaida's worst nightmare. And we are not going to let the Congress undercut you.

Now, the surge was not just about killing al-Qaida. The surge was about providing better security so the Iraqi people could build capacity to defeat their own enemy, enemies within their country, and reconcile themselves.

There have been major benchmarks out there for political reconciliation for quite a while. I said in October of last year, if I do not see progress by January or February of 2008, I am going to reevaluate my position vis-a-vis the Iraqi central government. One thing I can tell you, after a year, and going into March of 2008, the Iraqi political reconciliation has astonished me.

They have passed the deBaathification law, and they deserve credit for it. What does it mean? It means Sunnis who held jobs in the Government during the Saddam era are

going to be allowed to get some of their jobs back. What does that mean in real terms? That means the Shias and the Kurds have looked at a former oppressive group—people who ran Saddam's government—and said: Come on back. Let's build a new Iraq.

My God, what a statement to make. How hard that must have been for people who have lived under the thumb of Saddam Hussein and the people who ran his government, to turn to that same group and say: Let's move forward. Come back and help us build a new Iraq.

A provincial powers law just passed. What does that mean? It means the central government in Iraq, where the Shias dominate, has allowed the opportunity for local elections to occur in October of this year, hopefully.

That means that the Sunnis in Anbar can actually elect their own local leadership. They can elect people to send to Baghdad to represent their interests.

That means the Shias in the south are going to have a chance to elect their equivalent of a mayor, a county councilman, a Governor.

It means the central government, dominated by Shias, has turned to every province in Iraq—Sunni, Shia, and Kurd—and said: Instead of us running your life, you elect your local leaders.

That means they bought into this idea of democracy, where people vote for whom they want to make local decisions.

Here is what I predict: that in 2008 there will be provincial elections, and there will be a huge turnout. In 2005, the Sunnis boycotted the elections in Iraq because they were not certain that democracy was for them, and they were afraid of being left out. It is the Sunnis who are pushing for local elections, and they were able to win in Baghdad.

They passed a \$48 billion budget—something we cannot do. A \$48 billion budget has been passed, with the blessing of all groups, that will allow money to flow from Baghdad to reconstruct the country in every corner.

The hardest thing for one politician to do for another is to reach a deal in allocating resources because you always want more for your people and less for the others. We still do that here. I love Colorado, but I like South Carolina to get its fair share; and usually that means I care more about South Carolina spending than I do Colorado. But people, such as the Presiding Officer and myself and everybody else in this body, usually were able to give and take and get a budget that helps everybody.

Can you imagine how hard that must be for a group of people who have lived under a dictator who have never had that responsibility before and who have been suffering from violence inspired by al-Qaida, sectarian in nature? They were able to overcome that hatred and that bitterness that has been inspired by al-Qaida and say to each other: Here is the money of the country. You get your share.

That is progress. That is hope. That is al-Qaida's worst nightmare.

The one that means the most to me is that the general amnesty law was recently passed. I have been a military lawyer for 25 years and a student of history to some extent. What happened in Baghdad is astonishing. The prisons are full of insurgents. People aligned themselves with the insurgency during this lawless period. Blood has been taken and shed from each group, one to the other. Most of the people in jail are Sunnis. There are more and more Shia militia, but right now it is Sunnis.

The central government in Baghdad passed a general amnesty law where a committee will be formed of all groups to go through the files of those in prison to allow them to come back home and be part of the new Iraq. That is a level of forgiveness and a desire to start over that had to be incredibly difficult because there is nothing sweeter than revenge.

The people who were on the bottom in Iraq for a long time, the Shias and the Kurds, and those in the Sunni world who were trying to basically prevent Iraq from coming together as one, have now seen it is better for them to chart a new destiny, a new course together. They have a long way to go, and they are going to be fought at every turn.

If you understand nothing else from this speech, as Senator McCain would say, understand this: al-Qaida is diminished, but they are not defeated. Their goal tonight or tomorrow or the next day is to create a spectacular attack that will make headlines all over the world, and people in this body will respond to those headlines and try to change course in policy. I would argue the worst thing we could do is allow one of the most vicious movements in the history of mankind to change American foreign policy because they have the ability and the desire to commit mass murder. So beware of al-Qaida. They are diminished, but they are not yet defeated, and they know they can't win in Iraq, but they are still not sure they can't win in Washington. They are not going to win in Anbar. They are not going to win in Baghdad, they are not going to win in Fallujah, they are not going to win in Diyala, and they are not going to win in Basra. But the question is, Can they still win in Washington? I hope the answer after this debate is no. If we would take winning in Washington off the table, reconciliation in Iraq would go at a faster pace, not a slower pace.

Economic progress in the last year: Oil production in Iraq has risen by 50 percent over what it was a year ago. Oil production is up 50 percent because of better security. Oil revenues are double what they were a year ago, and the Iraqi central government has shared the resources with everybody in the country. Inflation has fallen from 66 percent to less than 5 percent in a year. What does better security buy

you? It buys you a functioning economy, political reconciliation, and better military security. Electricity demand is up more than 25 percent since last year. People are purchasing, they are buying, they are building hopeful lives. There are 21 new health clinics in Baghdad, 1,885 new schools, and 604 refurbished schools throughout Iraq.

People say: What about South Carolina? What about the schools in South Carolina? Lord knows we have our fair share of educational challenges in South Carolina and, like every other place in the country, we could use more money. But I am here to tell my constituents that the price to be paid in blood and treasure in the future losing Iraq is far greater than the price we are paying now, in my opinion. If I did not believe it, I would not say it. If the men and women in uniform didn't believe it, they wouldn't go back time and time and time again. If we can continue this model that has produced dramatic success beyond my imagination, we will win in Iraq, and everybody in this body, their families, and our Nation as a whole will be safer for the experience because it means al-Qaida lost.

Al-Qaida came to Iraq with a purpose: to undermine this effort at moderation, stability. They came for a purpose: to make sure a woman never had a say about her children. And they are losing. They have not yet lost, but they are on the road to losing, and they know it.

What is it worth for our country to align itself with a Muslim nation to turn on al-Qaida? It is worth everything to me. It is certainly worth my political future.

A year ago, when this debate was started, the polls were incredibly against the idea of sending more troops. The need for more troops existed, in my opinion. A year later, the results of more troops and better security is astonishing.

The way to get the Iraqi people to reconcile themselves is not to leave them, not to set a timetable for withdrawal that will encourage the enemy who is on the mat to get back up into the fight. The way to get them to reconcile themselves is to stand with them, to stand by them, invest in the training of their army, help them get on their feet. That is the way to beat al-Qaida. Winning is going to happen in Iraq unless we change this model here at home.

People ask me: Senator GRAHAM, what is winning? Winning, to me, is a stable, functioning government, aligned with democratic principles, at peace with its neighbors, that rejects Islamic extremism, will deny al-Qaida a safe haven, and will align itself with us in the greater war on terror, and finally, will create a system where a mother can have a say about her children. We are not there yet, but we are well on our way.

We have a model that will lead us to victory: a general who knows what he

is doing and brave young men and women who are sacrificing because they understand the need to sacrifice. They are excited. They want to come home, but more than anything else, they want to win. That is why they keep going, going, going, and going. They are going to win unless we do something here at home to make it hard for them to do so.

The worst thing we could do now as a nation is to ignore the results of the last year, worry more about the next election than we do about winning this global war, and try to get an advantage over each other based on the next election cycle. I hope the Members of this body will understand that the turnaround in Iraq is not only dramatic, it makes us safer as a nation here at home, and that we now have a model that will allow us to win what I think is a war we can't afford to lose.

Let it be said, finally, that there are Muslims in this world of different sects who will come together and fight al-Qaida with us. Let it be said that there is a nation called Iraq that has lived under an oppressive dictatorship for over three decades, that is beginning to taste freedom, that they are fighting and dying for their own freedom in large measure, that they are beginning to reconcile their political differences, they are beginning to build a larger army that is combat ready, that they are beginning to create an economy that will allow them to sustain themselves, and they are beginning to create a society that will allow us to live in peace with them and be a force of moderation for the region. That, I say to my colleagues, is an outcome very beneficial to the United States.

I am glad we are having this debate. I am glad we have a little bit of time in a chaotic election year to take a breath and at least allow one Senator to say to the troops: You are winning. You should be proud. Good job. We are behind you here at home. We are behind the policy you are trying to implement. I hope they come home sooner rather than later. I believe they will. But when they come home, they are going to come home in a way that will allow them to tell their grandchildren: I did something that mattered for our country. That is why they keep reenlisting.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to discuss the state of our economy, the budget cuts proposed by this administration, and yes, the war in Iraq and the need to set our priorities straight in this country. Like my colleague from South Carolina, I wish to thank our troops. Like the Presiding Officer, I visited Iraq and saw firsthand the bravery of these troops everywhere I went. Of course, I was very focused on Minnesota troops. They would come up to me in cafeteria lines and airport farmacs and never complain about a thing. They didn't

complain about the heat or their equipment or their long tours of duties. Many of our Minnesota National Guard extended over and over and over again. They really only asked me to do one thing, and that was when I got home, that I call their moms and dads, their husbands and their wives, and tell them they were OK.

When I got home, I talked to their families. I think I called over 50 moms and dads, husbands and wives. I heard a little bit different story. I heard stories of families waiting and waiting and waiting, with anxiety over jobs that might be lost or never gotten back. One of the moms I talked to when I went back in March—I left a message for her. A few months later, I called her again when her son had been killed. I met her.

I have to tell my colleagues, these troops, as my friend from South Carolina said, have done their duty. They deposed an evil dictator. They guaranteed free elections in Iraq. Now it is time for us to do our duty for them.

We all know there can be no purely military solution in Iraq. This has been agreed to by so many military commanders and experts and Members of this body on both sides that it is not really worth arguing about anymore. We all recognize that true stability in Iraq will only come through political and economic compromises between Iraq's main ethnic groups and that only the Iraqis themselves can reach these agreements. Given this, I believe our strategy should be focused on transitioning to Iraqi authority and bringing in other countries and that we cannot keep doing this alone.

I was listening to my friend from South Carolina speak so eloquently, and one of the things that struck me that he said was that this was priceless, and he meant this in the best of all ways. He said it was priceless. I just can't say this war has been priceless. After 4 years, 5 years, over 3,600 American soldiers have been killed. Over 25,000 have been wounded. We have been in this war now longer than World War II. Almost \$450 billion—\$450 billion has been spent. We cannot wait until next year to change our strategy.

The President is intent on leaving the current situation for the next administration to resolve. Unfortunately, our soldiers in the field don't have the luxury of simply running up the clock on this administration. We owe it to them to begin bringing our combat troops home. I think we all know we can't do this overnight. We know we are going to have troops remaining to guard our embassies and to train police and to act as special forces, but I do believe that if we want to push this Government to get its act together, the Iraqi Government, we have to send a clear message that we are not staying there indefinitely. So we owe it to our troops, but we also owe it to the people of this country. We can no longer continue to give the President the blank checks he keeps asking for. We must

ensure the safety and the well-being of our troops in the field, but funding must be conditioned on a plan for responsible redeployment of U.S. combat forces from Iraq.

Now, why is this so important to our own country and to our own future and to our own children? Well, as I said, the war in Iraq has already cost over \$490 billion directly, and by some estimates it has cost the American people almost \$1.5 trillion when factoring in all of the costs. For each month that passes, we spend another \$12 billion on the war, and we cannot separate the President's spending in Iraq from the economic and the budgetary problems we face.

One of the things that has always really bothered me on behalf of the people whom I represent is that this administration never really adequately calculated the repercussions of this war. I think the troops in the field—and I will say one thing. Despite the clear disagreements on strategy for this war, there has been bipartisan agreement that our troops need to be treated with the kind of respect they deserve. When they signed up for war, there wasn't a waiting line. When they come home and need medical care and they need mental health care, they need to get their education benefits, they shouldn't be waiting. It is this Democratic Congress that took on this issue and looked at the facts. Why are all of these men and women coming up to me out in Minnesota and saying they couldn't get health care? Look at the facts. The Pentagon underestimated the number of troops coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan by four times the amount—four times more returning troops needed health care than they estimated. We put billions of dollars into that.

We are willing to rise to the occasion and say we are not going to make the same mistake we made after Vietnam. We are going to treat our troops with the respect they deserve when they come home. But again, when the administration made its plans for this war—a war I did not support from the beginning—when they made their plans, they did not anticipate the enormous costs.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, would the Senator yield for a unanimous consent request?

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Yes.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized following the remarks of the Senator from Minnesota.

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

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, the administration did not anticipate the cost for our troops. The war has already cost over \$490 billion, \$1.5 trillion when you factor in all costs, \$12 billion a month. They did not anticipate what was going on with this economy. They did not respond the way they were supposed to to the mortgage crisis. They

did not anticipate. They listened to their friends in the special interest groups, and look where we are now. Look where we are now.

Two weeks ago we passed a short-term stimulus package that will help change the economic direction of this country by putting money in the hands of American families, including our seniors and our veterans. This action was a start. But today we must begin focusing on the long-term policies to spur economic growth long after the rebate checks are spent. We have to get this economy on the right track, and it means making a reckoning for that money that is spent in Iraq, to start bringing home some of our combat troops, to start being more responsible about this budget.

Today we announced our next step, which is to look at this mortgage crisis, really the crisis that I say fundamentally puts us where we are right now. Mr. President, 8.8 million families across the United States are underwater. They owe more to lenders than they have equity in their home, giving them limited or no options for refinancing.

The Foreclosure Prevention Act, which I am going to talk about later, and I hope will come to the floor this week, signifies a major step in the right direction, curbing the disastrous effect the foreclosure crisis has had on our families and our economy. The time to act is now.

We also need long-term economic policies that will encourage sustainable economic growth in every corner of this country. From the impact of the mortgage crisis and the value of homes, to the skyrocketing cost of oil that fuels cars, trucks, and heats homes, to rising prices in the grocery stores, the middle class is being squeezed from every side.

Back in January, I traveled around my State. I visited towns all the way from Worthington up to Halleck, MN. You haven't been anywhere, Mr. President, unless you visited Embarrass, MN, in the middle of January. It is always one of the coldest places in our country. We were all over our State. People are concerned. They are Minnesotans so they try to be optimistic, especially when it is January. They try to look to the future. They look at the potential with this energy revolution. But they would come out to cafes, come out to college campuses and talk about how it is getting harder and harder for them to send their kids to college, to afford health care, and to fill their cars up with gas.

To give a sense of what we are looking at in our State—and our State has always had a diverse economy; we are eighth in the country for Fortune 500 companies—the unemployment rate for Minnesota recently jumped to 4.9 percent, up from 4.4 percent the month before. Our State has lost 23,000 jobs in the last 6 months alone. Home heating prices for Minnesota families have also risen by 14.1 percent per household in the past year alone.

On the foreclosure front, the statistics in Minnesota are equally devastating. At the end of 2007, over 50,000 families in Minnesota were delinquent on their home payments. It is estimated that 30,000 will lose their homes in the next several years if something is not done.

What are these families like? They are like the Gray family in Minnesota with whom I met. They are both teaching. They were all excited to buy their new house. They got a mortgage approved, a standard mortgage. It turned out the home values were much higher, and they were not able to afford a home. So they went to someone they thought they could trust and got one of these adjustable rate mortgages. They were told a lower rate at the beginning, \$1,500, and it might go up a few hundred dollars. By 2008, it was up to \$3,300 a month from \$1,500 a month. We know that is not the rate of inflation. We know it is not the right thing to happen.

I use that as one example of what we are seeing across this country and why this administration has its priorities messed up and why people such as the Grays, good people who are just trying to have a home for their family, have found themselves in the middle of this mess. It is where Wall Street has hit Main Street. It is where the Bush administration's priorities to spend \$12 billion a month have hit people like the Grays right in their homes.

The cost of foreclosures is not limited to these families. If something is not done, Minnesotans will lose an estimated \$1.6 billion in declining home values. That is because the chickens have come home to roost. When it comes to this mortgage crisis, it is not just one family, one foreclosure. It affects real estate values on an entire street, an entire neighborhood, an entire community.

We need an economy that creates stable middle-class jobs. We need infrastructure investments so we don't have bridges falling, as we did in our State, right in the middle of America. We need energy investments that will reduce our dependency on foreign oil and create good "green collar" jobs in the growing clean alternative energy sector of our economy.

The people we serve are asking for a new direction, a government that spends their money wisely, that represents their values, that works for American families. America wants a Washington that is going to offer new priorities and new solutions.

Last year, our Congress succeeded in a downpayment on change. It was a beginning. We were hampered by procedural rules and all these filibusters, but we moved this country. There is so much more to do. We moved, first of all, to a more responsible budget process. We gave working Americans an increase in the minimum wage. We provided greater financial aid to help their kids go to college. And we passed a new energy bill that raises fuel efficiency

standards for the first time since I was in junior high.

But there is much more that needs to be done.

Senator DORGAN and I heard about it at an economic hearing we had in my State just last week where we met with a panel of economists and experts on energy policy and what was going on in our economy in Minnesota. One economist described our current condition as "serious, unstable, and declining." In our State, families sense their stability is slipping, with 67 percent of middle-class Americans having an increased sense of anxiety about their futures.

Tom Stinson, Minnesota's chief economist, discussed the frightening unemployment statistics. We haven't added any new jobs over the past year, and we are not alone. States that have historically had lower unemployment rates are now creeping toward the national average.

Unfortunately, when we look at this problem we are facing, and we know there are solutions, we know there is a way to get this economy back on track and be fiscally responsible, but President Bush's new budget proposal falls far short of what America needs to address our economic downturn and invest in meaningful recovery effort.

This new budget request does not offer new priorities or new solutions. Instead, this budget continues a familiar pattern of misplaced priorities. It continues a 7-year pattern of fiscal irresponsibility: borrowing money and leaving an ever-larger debt to our children and grandchildren.

Look at this, the wall of debt we have seen and how quickly it has risen from 2001 to 2013. This administration took a \$200 billion surplus and turned it into a \$300 billion budget deficit. Do you know what it means to middle-class families? When I talk to people in our States about what all these millions and billions and trillions mean, it means that 1 out of 12 Federal tax dollars goes to pay interest on that debt. That money is not going to the United States. Most of that money is going to companies in foreign countries. That is what is happening to this country.

I was listening before to my colleague from Oklahoma talking about how we have to be willing to make these sacrifices and pay for things. I find this so ironic because it is people on our side of the aisle who have been willing to talk about rolling back some of the Bush tax cuts on people making over \$200,000. Think how that money can go to pay off this debt, to go into infrastructure investment we have been talking about, to move this economy in the right direction. It is people over on our side of the aisle who have been talking about oil giveaways and putting them into renewable energies so we can start investing in farmers and workers in the Midwest instead of oil cartels in the Mideast.

How about the debate we had on the middle-class tax issue, on AMT tax relief? We were willing to talk about how

we wanted to pay for it. We wanted to pay for it off those hedge fund operators, but they wouldn't go for it. It is this Congress that put the pay-as-you-go back.

When I talk to people in my State, they understand we need to have a short-term stimulus package, why we need it, and why economists believed it was a good idea. But when we go forward in the long term, we cannot keep going the way we are going with this wall of debt. We are not going to end up where we want to go. We are going to be right back where we were before we put the stimulus in place, and we need to make bold changes in this country.

In just 7 years, this administration took that budget surplus, \$158 billion—think of that money—and made it into a \$400 billion deficit. So when we talk about this war in Iraq and when my esteemed colleague from South Carolina talks about it being priceless, it is not priceless. It is \$12 billion a month.

Meanwhile, this new budget continues to neglect crucial investments that are needed to strengthen our economy and our Nation for the long term. It does not make the investments we need in our Nation's transportation infrastructure. It does not make the investments we need in developing renewable energy sources to move us toward greater energy independence and security. It does not make the investments we need to support the basic medical and scientific research that has always been a key driver of our country's innovation and growth.

I come from Minnesota, a State where we believe in science. We brought the world everything from the Post-It note to the pacemaker, and we believe this investment pays off not only in the health of our citizens but also for jobs and looking to the future and not letting other countries such as India, China, and other countries go ahead of us because we have failed in this country to have an investment strategy and put those Government policies in place that drives that investment.

Here are a few examples from my State of where the President's budget goes wrong.

Americans are struggling to lower home heating costs in any way they can. Nationwide, the average household is expected to pay 11 percent more for heating this winter compared to last year. Families who rely on home heating oil are facing record prices, 30 to 50 percent above last winter.

So what does the administration do in its budget? It cuts this funding. It ends the Department of Energy Weatherization Assistance Program. The Weatherization Assistance Program increases the energy efficiency of homes occupied by low-income Americans, directly reducing their energy costs. It cut it by 100 percent.

The funds appropriated in fiscal year 2008 for this program will enable upgrades for as many as 85,000 homes.

With energy costs rising significantly and an economy poised on the brink of recession, the weatherization program and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program are necessities, they are not luxuries.

Another example: Nearly 6½ years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, Americans are well aware of the need for State and local governments to be prepared as possible against future threats. I heard you talking, Mr. President, earlier this afternoon about the importance of putting that money into our own homeland security. So what does the administration do with this budget? It slashes funding for State and local first responders' efforts, cutting firefighter assistance grants from \$1.2 billion to \$300 million, and the State Homeland Security Grant Program from over \$1 billion to \$200 million, and, once again, it proposes to eliminate the cost of the COPS Program.

As a former prosecutor, I take this personally because I saw how that COPS Program worked, how it added police officers to our neighborhoods, how it brought down crime. Look at this: What is the comparison when we are looking at this budget as we are talking about priorities of the \$12 billion a month on the war in Iraq? This is the amount the President would need to add to his budget to maintain this police program which puts police out in the neighborhoods at a 2008 level, plus inflation.

Personally, I would like to do more, especially in our rural areas. I think we need meth cops out there. Just to restore it to 2008 levels plus inflation would cost \$596 million. What would you do if you just roll back the tax cuts for those making over \$1 million in 2009? I am not talking about people making over \$250,000; I am talking about people making over \$1 million. What would you bring in with that? You would bring in \$51 billion. Look at the comparison. Think about how many police you could buy on the streets. Think how much you could buy to help people afford their homes. Think of the benefits. Look at what you can do for \$51 billion to help our veterans.

We have soldiers coming home from Iraq that just this summer in Minnesota were told: You are the longest serving unit, you Red Bulls from Minnesota, of the National Guard in Iraq. But guess what. Your paper only says 729 days. So guess what. You are not going to get your full education benefits, even though you served longer than 729 days.

Obviously, we took up this matter with General Shellito, head of our National Guard, took up this matter with the Army, and it is working to fix it. Oh, well, it saved some money to write that down as 729 days. But think about \$51 billion and what we could do with that. We are talking about priorities here.

Fiscal responsibility is also about making sure down the line that these

priorities are right. Do we want a budget that offers tax giveaways to the wealthiest or a budget that provides relief to middle-class families squeezed by rising costs for health care, housing, energy, college tuition, childcare and care for aging parents?

Do we want a budget that gives lucrative special favors to the giant oil and pharmaceutical companies, or a budget that invests in our future prosperity, such as research and development on renewable energy?

Do we want a budget that continues to spend \$12 billion a month in Iraq or a budget that provides our veterans with the help they need; that makes sure we have the money we need to keep our troops there for the focused purpose of guarding our embassy and training police and having them there for special forces; and money for the COPS program—that \$596 million it would cost to restore that? That is about homeland security.

I want to see an administration that aims for fiscal responsibility by reversing or rolling back these tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans—people making over \$200,000.

I want to see an administration that aims for fiscal responsibility by eliminating offshore tax havens for multimillionaires so people aren't hiding money in the Cayman Islands.

I want an administration that aims for fiscal responsibility by ending the tax breaks and giveaways that have been handed out year after year to the big oil companies.

I want to see an administration that aims for fiscal responsibility by allowing Medicare to negotiate for lower prices for prescription drugs for our seniors.

The President's budget does not provide the new priorities and the new solutions America needs. Instead, it continues to take us down the wrong path. This budget is only the most recent example of an administration that is putting its head in the sand and ignoring the reality of the looming economic recession.

As the housing market is crumbling, and millions of families are expected to lose their homes in the next couple of years, the administration seems to hope this problem will go away. This is why I have cosponsored the Mortgage Foreclosure Prevention Act, and I am committed to working with my Senate colleagues on a bipartisan basis to pass this bill to help keep our families in their homes and get the middle class back on their feet. Across the country, we are seeing families struggling to keep their homes. If something isn't done, over 2 million families will lose that struggle in the next 2 years.

Through a pilot project conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank in Minneapolis, we have been able to track by ZIP Code all of the outstanding subprime mortgages in our State. This data is a startling reminder that we are seeing only the beginning of this crisis if we don't do anything about it.

By being able to track the reset dates of all the subprime mortgages in Minnesota, the study shows thousands of mortgages resetting to higher interest rates monthly, causing more and more families to fall behind on their payments. Congress must act quickly if we are going to curb any effects of the housing crisis.

In my home county, where I was chief prosecutor of Hennepin County, we have seen an 82-percent increase in sheriff sales of foreclosed homes. The problem extends to greater Minnesota. We have seen the foreclosures double in some of our urban areas. We have seen 3 out of 100 households—3 out of 100 households—that are in foreclosure.

Something must be done to help these families. I have met them. These are not just statistics and numbers; these are real families living in the State of Minnesota. This is why I believe we need to pass the Foreclosure Prevention Act and why I believe we need to reprioritize what is happening in this country—\$12 billion a month in Iraq, with no end in sight, and some people saying we are going to stay there for 100 years, while these families are losing their homes, while our veterans are still not getting a fair shake.

This bill, the Foreclosure Prevention Act, would give \$200 million to families to counsel them in ways to avoid foreclosure. I will put that chart up again showing an example of these priorities. This is for people making over \$1 million a year—people making over \$1 million a year. Here is our \$51 billion. Think of this mortgage counseling. It is a proven way to work here. It would be only \$200 million.

Our State finance agencies are in a perfect position to help families refinance loans, but their hands have been tied by ceilings on the amount of State-backed mortgage bonds they can use. This bill makes it easier for them to help find families and rework their mortgages. That is what we are trying to do. It will not work for every one of these people. Some we don't want to help. They are not deserving of this. They maybe speculated on these mortgages to begin with. But many of these families I have personally met, including the family from Ohio we saw today here in the Senate. These are hard-working families who were maybe not told the truth about their mortgage or misled about their mortgage or the whole mortgage was set up to get them in trouble down the line, and the mortgage lender goes away and sells it to someone else, who sells it to someone else, who sells it to someone else, and pretty soon it doesn't just hurt that family, it hurts the entire street, and it hurts the entire neighborhood.

This is about getting our priorities right. Yes, it is about the war in Iraq and an administration that refused to account for the cost, refused to have a plan to start bringing our troops home, that refuses to admit we are in financial straits—financial straits they got us into. Because we must remember,

when they came in, we had \$200 billion surpluses, and now we are where we are with this wall of Federal debt.

The American people are tired of this. They want a fair accounting of what is going on in this country. They want a fair accounting of this war and a plan to bring our troops home. That is the best thing we can do for our troops, and that is the best thing we can do for our country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I have been listening to the discussion this afternoon, which is a repeat of a discussion we have heard often in this Chamber: Who supports our troops; who waves the white flag of surrender. You know, in the discussion in this Chamber and out on the Presidential trail, we hear all of those terms, and who is willing to stick with it and defeat the terrorists with respect to the war on terror.

Well, let me, if I might, suggest there is a smart way and a tough way to deal with terrorists, and we are not doing it very effectively, in my judgment. I want to review for a moment, because we have people coming to the floor who forget to review where we are, and where we have been, especially.

In 2001, on September 11, terrorists attacked our country. Following the attack that killed thousands of innocent Americans—the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a farm field in Pennsylvania—following that attack, Osama bin Laden and the leadership of al-Qaida boasted that they engineered the attack against the American people. They boasted they engineered the attack against the American people. So the President says: We are going to have an effort to bring to justice the terrorists.

Well, it is now 2008. That was 2001. In 2008, our National Intelligence Estimate, released about 4 months ago, said the greatest terrorist threat to our country, to our homeland, is the al-Qaida organization and its leadership, who are now plotting additional attacks against our country. Our National Intelligence Estimate says the greatest terrorist threat to our country, 7 years after 9/11, is the al-Qaida leadership, because they are planning new attacks. They have reconstituted in a safe and secure hideaway in northern Pakistan. Those are the words of our National Intelligence Estimate, not my words—safe, secure. Iraq leadership, Osama bin Laden, still alive 7 years later and creating new training camps, training new terrorists.

So how effective has the war on terror been when the greatest terrorist threat to our country 7 years after the 9/11 attack, the greatest terrorist threat is now building and reconstituting in northern Pakistan? It is reasonable to ask the question: Who took their eye off the ball? Why has this country, why has our policy not been a policy to bring to justice Osama bin

Laden and his al-Qaida leadership? Instead, 7 years later, we are mired down in a war in Iraq, we have spent nearly two-thirds of \$1 trillion dollars, thousands of American soldiers have died, and we have people asking us about who waves the white flag of surrender and who supports our soldiers. That is unbelievable to me.

Let me review a bit. Following 9/11, we had top secret briefings for Senators and Congressmen—top secret briefings conducted by the head of the CIA. The Vice President was involved, the head of the National Security Agency, Condoleezza Rice, was involved. We went to those top secret briefings. All of us did. We were told things in top secret, shown classified materials, about what was happening in Iraq. It turns out that was a foundation for the invasion of Iraq. In fact, it was presented at the United Nations by Secretary of State Colin Powell. It turns out most of it was false; wrong on its face.

Let me review it for a moment—the issue of mobile chemical weapons laboratories in Iraq that threatens our country. Mobile chemical weapons laboratories in Iraq. You know where that came from? We now know it came from a single source, through our intelligence organizations to the American people, to Congress, in top secret briefings, to the world at the United Nations, a single source: A fellow who used to drive a taxicab in Baghdad nicknamed “Curveball” and widely considered by German authorities as a drunk and a fabricator.

A single source named Curveball gave this administration the ability to, in top secret briefings, tell us that Iraq had mobile chemical weapons laboratories and gave then-Secretary of State Colin Powell the opportunity to tell the world that Iraq had mobile chemical weapons laboratories. Turns out it wasn't true.

Will Rogers once said:

It is not what he says he knows that bothers me, it's what he says he knows for sure that just ain't so.

Curveball. One single source this administration used to tell us that mobile chemical weapons laboratories in Iraq threatened this country, and it turns out to have been false, and they should have known it. And some may have known it, as it was described to us.

The aluminum tubes. The aluminum tubes for the reconstitution of a nuclear capability in Iraq. Now, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, then National Security Adviser, even used the term the specter or the threat of a nuclear—or I guess she said mushroom cloud on television. The mushroom cloud. Well, it turns out her office had the information that a substantial portion of the Government didn't believe the nuclear tubes that were ordered by the Iraqis were for the purpose of reconstituting a nuclear capability. Most of that was discredited. The information in the National Security Adviser's

office existed to say that there were very qualified people in this Government who didn't believe that.

It turns out none of that was true. The aluminum tube issue was not true. Those who were telling the world, and in top secret briefings telling Members of Congress about the threat of the nuclear tubes for the reconstitution of nuclear capability, had information in their possession and knew better.

Yellowcake from Niger is another big deal that made it into the President's address to the Congress in the State of the Union. It turns out that was based on falsified documents. It is unbelievable.

Maybe we should review the facts a bit. All of this information turns out to have been false—the information that represented the foundation on which the administration made the case about the need to invade Iraq. Well, this country invaded Iraq and had no plans, once the invasion was complete and the military takeover was complete, on how to deal with Iraq at that point, and it turned into a civil war.

Saddam Hussein, following that invasion, was captured and executed. He was hung by his neck until dead. He doesn't exist anymore. The Iraqi people then voted for a new constitution, and then the Iraqi people voted to constitute a new government.

So Saddam Hussein was killed, executed, a brutal dictator was executed by the Iraqi people. They got a new Constitution, they got a new Government, and then this country, in the context of spending almost two-thirds of a trillion dollars, this country spent \$16 billion training 350,000 able-bodied Iraqis to be policemen and firefighters and safety personnel and soldiers. We trained an array of people in Iraq for security; \$16 billion training 350,000 Iraqis, principally for security, police, and soldier duty.

Now, if the able-bodied people in Iraq who have been trained by this country are not willing and cannot and will not provide security in their country, our soldiers cannot stay there forever and do it. We cannot.

It is interesting to me, and very disappointing to me, that the President decided: we are going to invade Iraq, but we are not going to pay for it. Every single penny we are going to borrow.

So we are going to send soldiers to Iraq and send the bill to the debt. When the soldiers come back, they can pay the debt.

As I said earlier, it is two-thirds of a trillion dollars now in Iraq and Afghanistan, all of it emergency, none of it paid for. In my judgment, that is exactly the wrong thing to have done. We should have been saying: Yes, we will ask soldiers to sacrifice. If that is what we ask our soldiers to do, we will ask the American people to reach a similar sacrifice. But this President would not do that.

So we come now to a position where we have been in Iraq longer than we

were engaged in the Second World War and we have folks who come to the Senate Chamber and we have folks out on the campaign trail saying: Who is going to wave the white flag of surrender?

Some say we are going to stay in Iraq forever, 100 years. Others look at a Taj Mahal that has been built in Iraq, nearly \$800 million for an embassy in Iraq, the largest embassy in the world by far, and they think they know, as a result of that, how long some intend for us to stay in Iraq.

But we cannot do that. Let me mention one other addition. On top of all the things I have described—basically the false foundation of information on which this country made a decision to go to war—on top of all that, with this money we have spent, there has been the greatest amount of waste, fraud, and abuse in the history of this country and nobody seems to care very much.

Let me tell a couple stories: \$85,000 trucks on the side of the road in Iraq, because they had a flat tire and no wrench to fix it, so they torched it, burned it. It does not matter, the American taxpayer is paying for it because big companies got sweetheart, no-bid, cost-plus contracts. Got a flat tire, torch the truck. Got a plugged fuel pump, it does not matter, torch the truck.

I mean, the stories are unbelievable. You got two builders to provide ice. The Haliburton Company is going to select between two bidders to provide ice. One is seven times more than the other bid. Well, pick the contract that costs seven times more than the other because the taxpayer is picking up the tab.

They buy little hand towels for the troops, because Haliburton has to do that. Well, they do not want to buy ordinary hand towels for the troops, they want their logo embroidered on the hand towels, KBR, the subsidiary, Kellogg Brown and Root. Well, that is going to increase the cost of the hand towels triple, quadruple. It does not matter; the taxpayer is going to pay the bill.

Do you want to know where there are 50,000 pounds of nails, 25 tons of nails? They are on the sands in Iraq. They ordered them. They were too short. What do you do with 50,000 pounds of nails that are too short? You throw them away because the taxpayer is going to pick it up. You just order the right size.

This is the most unbelievable story that is yet to be told about the greatest waste, fraud, and abuse in the history of this country. There is a lot to talk about.

We are going to have a hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee. I have held 12 hearings in the policy committee on these issues. We are going to hold more. I have to run to a meeting. But I did want to come and talk a bit. I did not have the opportunity to describe who is it that is supporting America's soldiers and what is

it that does support our fighting men and women? We send them off to war.

There is going to be a Medal of Honor, by the way, awarded next Monday at 2:30 in the White House to a man who died 26 years ago, a Sioux Indian named Woody Keeble. I hope perhaps to come over tomorrow and tell the story of Woody Keeble. There are soldiers who have given so much for this country.

Woody Keeble had 85 pieces of lead in his body when he finished what he did. He was still alive.

But these folks then go to war and do what they do and come back home. And then the question is: Who stands up for our soldiers? Who stands up for our veterans? Who is willing to stand here and say we will keep our promise for veterans health care? Who does that?

There is a lot to say. I regret I have a commitment that I have to be at in the majority leader's office, but I would like tomorrow to come back and speak at greater length about a remarkable American who on Monday will be recognized by President Bush, a North Dakotan from Wahpeton, ND, Standing Rock, the Wahpeton-Sisseton Sioux Tribe. He will be recognized as the first Sioux Indian in this country's history to receive the Medal of Honor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I would like to make a few brief comments in response to my eloquent colleague from North Dakota. The rhetoric he utilizes has been used for a long time.

We have heard this rhetoric before each one of our evaluations of the way ahead in Iraq. And we have each time concluded that our national interests call on us to remain active and strong in Iraq and active and strong against terrorism around the world.

I would note, to remind everyone, every intelligence agency in the world thought weapons of mass destruction were in Iraq when the war began. In fact, Saddam Hussein did not seriously deny that these weapons existed. Saddam denied the U.N. inspectors the right to look for WMD, even though he had agreed to do so after suing for peace in 1991. At that time, after he had invaded Kuwait, we agreed not to take Baghdad and grab him by the scruff of the neck. He agreed he would allow his country to be inspected by the United Nations.

He did not do that. He systematically violated 13 U.N. resolutions. As the well-known magazine, *The Economist*, said: We either have to give up and let Saddam break the embargo or we have to fight? They said: We believe we should fight.

That, I suggest, is the fundamental reason we had to authorize the President to use force. A lot more can be said about it, but those were some of the things we were considering at the time. I would note also that an official

commission report concluded that, while U.S. forces did not find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Saddam Hussein planned to work his way out from under the sanctions and to reconstitute his weapons of mass destruction.

That has been clearly established. Most of us were surprised we did not find nuclear or chemical weapons in Iraq. I have to tell you, I was surprised. In 1991, when we had the first Gulf War to repulse Iraq, which had invaded Kuwait, we discovered that Iraq's nuclear program was far more advanced than we had previously thought. That is indisputable.

We know that after 1991, and before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Saddam had utilized weapons of mass destruction, poison gas, against the Kurds of Iraq, killing thousands of his own people. How could he not have weapons of mass destruction? It still remains baffling to me that we did not find them.

So I wish to rebut this old rhetoric that somehow President Bush lied to get us into the war. We spent months discussing this and debating all the issues. We had private briefings. We knew basically everything the President knew. And what we knew was the CIA Director George Tenet, who had been appointed by President Clinton, told the President of the United States: It was a slam dunk; that weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq.

That is the kind of information that the President acted on. He was not lying to the American people. This Senate authorized the President to use force in Iraq by a more than three-fourths majority vote. A majority of both parties, a majority of the Democratic Senators, a majority of the Republican Senators voted to authorize the President to use force in Iraq. And that is how we got here.

So the question is: What do we do now? This is a great Nation. We are not some fly-by-night bunch who can change our minds every time the poll numbers change. We have responsibilities to our Nation, to our allies. We have committed our men and women to harm's way. We have lost a large number of American soldiers to execute a policy we sent them to execute.

I have to tell you, we lost far fewer in the initial invasion than I imagined, but have lost far more than I imagined in the post-invasion period. Things are never quite certain in war, however.

People who fight you and desire to kill you usually do not want to be killed themselves. Military action is a tough thing and always causes us to remember we should avoid it whenever we possibly can. It should be a last resort. It is only acceptable when we have no real other alternative.

I do not believe the Lord is happy when his children fight and kill one another. It cannot be a good thing. It is a bad thing. Sometimes, because we are so flawed and we have options that are so grim, military action becomes the best decision that can be made under

the circumstances. I think that is where we were in 2003 when it came to the Iraq debate.

In the fall of 2006, in an election that came during one of the worst periods of time in Iraq, the Republicans lost control of both Houses of Congress. The President's polling numbers were terrible. The following summer we had a national debate about whether to allow General Petraeus to continue the surge. We had a commission that General Jones headed, with 15 members. I asked him at the hearing: General Jones, do you and the members of your commission believe we have a chance to be successful if we execute this surge? He said: I do. He looked around. Any of the other members want to rebut what I have said or have a different opinion? Not a single one did.

That commission unanimously reported that they thought we could be successful. We had General Petraeus testify, and we had the GAO issue a report in September after the surge had actually begun.

We noticed some progress. But it was premature to see that as a sustained trend. We knew that. And we continued again at that time to allow the surge to go forward. We believed things were going to get better. That was my conclusion after hearing everyone's opinion.

I remember asking General Petraeus: Sir, will you tell us the truth, the good and bad? And he committed in private and in public to do that.

Will you give us your best judgment? Will you let us know if you think this is not an acceptable, feasible action in Iraq; that we need to acknowledge that we can't be successful? He made that commitment.

So what has happened since? We sent five additional brigades into Iraq as part of the surge. Three have already returned to the United States. The other two are planned to be returned by summer. We will be at or possibly below the 15 combat brigades that we had in Iraq before the surge.

General Casey was asked today in the Armed Services Committee about that plan and whether it meant we could move from having our soldiers on 15-month deployments to 12 month deployments. He said: When we get back to 15 brigades—and at this time we are projected to be there by July—he believed then that we could go back to a 1-year rotation instead of the longer 15-month rotation. 15 month rotations have been so painful to our military personnel and their families. That is a long time. We need to keep it to 12 months if we possibly can.

We are anticipating three reports in April. General Petraeus will come, as he promised, to give us a report on the status of Iraq and what he thinks about our future military commitment and soldier strength there. We will also receive a report from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a report from Admiral Fallon, the CENTCOM commander who has Iraq the rest of the Middle East

under his command. We will have those three reports in April. That is the time for us to begin to evaluate again what our next step will be.

General Petraeus has said that we need to be careful to consolidate the gains we have made, to help the Iraqi people and government move to a more stable footing for the long term. If we were to pass the Feingold legislation, it would be a slap in the face to our commander on the ground who is absolutely one of the finest generals this Nation has ever produced. It would be unthinkable that we would, in a time of great success, reject the commander's recommendations and the military's recommendations after we took their recommendations when things were not good a year ago. We were worried a year ago. There was cause for legitimate concern. I do not deny it. But, goodness sakes, we have had some success in recent months.

The military estimates that attacks against coalition forces and Iraqi forces and Iraqi civilians have collectively fallen by 60 percent against Iraq since June of last year. Iraqi Army estimates put the number as high as an 80-percent reduction. In June there were almost 1,700 IED explosions across Iraq. That number fell to 600 in December. While one U.S. combat death is so serious that we are not able to articulate the gravity of it, we are seeing, I am pleased to say, a major reduction in casualties among our troops and Iraqi troops. It is quite remarkable. December of 2007 was the second lowest combat death total of the war for American forces behind May of 2003. January and February of this year have shown comparably low death rates. That is something for which we can be thankful. Every single life is important. But we have to understand that when we commit troops to combat, there are going to be casualties. Having a good movement in the right direction is a cause for confidence, not a basis to cut and run.

From January to December of 2007, sectarian attacks and death among Iraqis in the Baghdad area decreased by 90 percent. I want to just say, we should be skeptical of these numbers when we hear them just one time. Are the trends sustained? How accurate are these facts? Those are legitimate questions for members of Congress to ask.

When I see soldiers in the Atlanta airport—most of them are on their R&R or coming home from Iraq or Afghanistan—I speak to them about their experiences. I spend a lot of time in the Atlanta airport, more than I like. I ask them how things are going. And I am hearing, from them, information that directly confirms the reports we are getting.

Just this month, a soldier I met was saying he worked at a base in Iraq. He said they used to take incoming rounds against the base throughout the day every day. Now they go days without any attacks. Another soldier told me things were getting boring. Every

morning they used to meet. There would be some emergency, some serious challenge they had to address. Now when they meet, they can go weeks without anything serious happening. These observations are from sergeants, enlisted people, junior officers. It confirms, I will just say to you, the information we are receiving.

How has this success happened? What has occurred? The ranks of Sunni volunteers who have chosen in recent months to switch sides and turn against al-Qaida as members of local citizen councils have grown to more than 91,000, according to statistics from the U.S. military. The Sunnis, who are the minority group in Iraq, used to run Iraq under Saddam Hussein. They have been taken from power. They were strong Baathists. They were attracted to al-Qaida and their false promises. Many, though not most, were in cahoots with al-Qaida. They have now rejected al-Qaida. Whole tribal regions have publicly renounced them. They said they don't care about their people. They try to run their neighborhoods. They are corrupt. They don't support them. And 91,000 have joined local citizens councils part of the awakening, they call it, to turn against al-Qaida.

Sunnis are turning these guys in. Most al-Qaida are foreigners. They don't live in Iraq. So the Sunnis know who they are. The Sunni folks know them. Once they turned on al-Qaida, we have seen a dramatic change in the Sunni areas.

Shia groups, citizens councils are growing around the country as well. More and more the people are getting tired of murderous killers and religiously driven extremists. They realize this is no foundation on which to build their future. Three critical laws have been passed. Critics say: We have to have laws passed. Surely we do, although the President and all the masters of the universe in America, I guess, determined that we would pass an immigration law. They said we had to do it. We had to have this program, this amnesty. They were going to ram it right through here. It failed flatter than a fritter. So just saying a bill needs to be passed in a democratic parliamentary situation doesn't mean that is so easy to be done.

Three critical laws were passed by the Iraqi Parliament on February 13 of this year. They enacted a \$48 billion budget for 2008. They granted amnesty to thousands of Sunni detainees and passed a provincial power law defining the relationship between the central government and provinces. These last two were on the list of benchmarks demanded by Congress.

Last fall when General Petraeus was here, the critics of the war said: You are not meeting these benchmarks. We are not interested in the military side. We are only interested in the political side. Well, we are making some progress now in the political area. In one sense things are even better than

they appear on the political side because, throughout the region, reconciliation has been undertaken, and Baathists have been accepted back into Government positions, even in the absence of a national law. The oil money was and is being fairly distributed, even though they haven't agreed on an absolute firm legal formula for distribution of revenues.

Last Friday, February 22, the Shiite cleric, Moqtada al Sadr, who controls the Mahdi army, instructed his followers to extend their cease-fire against the Sunnis and the Americans for another 6 months. This is a big deal. The Sunnis have come around and now al Sadr, with the Shia, has also recommended that his followers continue their cease-fire.

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, with whom I have met in Iraq, said this last week:

We are indeed seeing the signs of that political surge. Putting all of that together would have been just unthinkable 6 months ago.

Let me say this Feingold bill would be disastrous if it were passed. It would cut off funding after 120 days for any missions not approved by Senator FEINGOLD and politicians in Washington. It would replace the deployment decisions and recommendations of General Petraeus with political decisions. Some, I guess, who are in the moveon.org camp think General Petraeus is a betrayer. That is what they put in an ad in the paper last year. I say he is one of the best generals we have had. He has had a remarkable tenure of success in Iraq.

The Feingold bill would forbid us from training any members of neighborhood councils that have sprung up under the Sunni awakening, unless we could certify that they had never been involved in sectarian violence or in attacks upon the U.S. Armed Forces. Well, we want them on our side. I don't know what motivated them at one point or another to oppose the United States. But if they have made a decision, as a lot of Sunnis clearly have, to switch sides, to turn in al-Qaida, to kill al-Qaida, isn't that good enough? Why shouldn't we welcome them back into the fold of the Iraqi Government and give them a chance?

We have to be careful. In fact, I think the State Department and the military are too naive in their belief that the prisoners we now have in custody can be released in the interests of reconciliation. Many of these, I am afraid, are just killers and murderers and thugs. Releasing too many of these people can create violence in the community. I don't doubt that some have had a change of heart because many have. But we have to be careful about how many of these prisoners we release.

This bill would prevent us from attacking terrorists or sectarian militias unless we can be sure that the targets are "members of al Qaeda and affiliated international terrorist organizations."

How is this supposed to work in practice, let me ask? Will we ask al-Qaida to wear special hats or badges or uniforms so we can distinguish them from simple local terrorists?

The likely consequences of this legislation would be renewed sectarian violence, expanded "breathing room" for al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, and decreased possibilities for political reconciliation. It would create major political instability in Iraq.

The frequently referenced final report of the Iraq Study Group described, in grim detail, the results of an American decision to abandon Iraq:

Because of the importance of Iraq, the potential for catastrophe, and the role and commitments of the United States in initiating events that have led to the current situation, we believe it would be wrong for the United States to abandon the country through a precipitous withdrawal of troops and support. A premature American departure from Iraq would almost certainly produce greater sectarian violence and further deterioration of conditions, leading to a number of the adverse consequences outlined above. 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.

If we leave and Iraq descends into chaos, the long-range consequences could eventually require the United States to return.

This was a serious evaluation by serious men and women who have studied this area in depth. I do not think anybody can deny that this is a realistic description of what would occur if we were to pass the Feingold bill.

Well, Mr. President, I see others here who want to talk, and it looks as though we will have more time tomorrow. I say to my fine colleague from Florida, I enjoy serving with him, as he is chairman of our Strategic Subcommittee in Armed Services.

I conclude by saying, we are a great nation. We made some tough decisions. We went through a full debate last summer. We decided to give General Petraeus a chance. We gave him a chance. We supported the surge in a bipartisan vote. We sent the money. We sent him the resources to carry out the surge. It has been successful beyond anything we could have imagined at the time. And now, to undertake a precipitous withdrawal, directly contrary to his opinion as to what should be done to help continue to secure Iraq, would be unthinkable. No great nation should flip-flop around like that, certainly not the United States of America.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I want to make sure I have in the RECORD why I had opposed the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to the Feingold bill, S. 2633.

This Senator is certainly for a gradual withdrawal from Iraq. But the Feingold bill has a considerable pitfall because it starts the withdrawal within a certain period of time and cuts off

the funding with the exception of allowing funding, for example—I am going to read—for "Conducting targeted operations, limited in duration and scope, against members of al Qaeda and affiliated international terrorist organizations."

In other words, the Feingold bill would allow funding to continue to conduct operations against al-Qaida, but only "limited in duration and scope." I do not think we ought to limit the ability of the U.S. Government to go after al-Qaida in Iraq.

Furthermore, this clause in the Feingold bill would allow funding to go not only against al-Qaida, "limited in duration and scope," but also against "affiliated international terrorist organizations." The word "affiliated" means affiliated to al-Qaida.

There are a bunch of other terrorist organizations in the world we want to go after, and this limitation of funding would be only for those affiliated with al-Qaida. I do not want the Government of the United States limited in its ability to go after al-Qaida and then only those other terrorist organizations affiliated with al-Qaida.

I have voted against the motion to invoke cloture. There seemed to be only about a dozen of us who voted against that motion to invoke cloture. As we proceed, I will certainly, if we get to the bill, try to amend that portion; otherwise, I will certainly be constrained to have to vote against this bill.

Mr. President, I have another matter I will bring up at another time. I will let the debate proceed on this Feingold bill, so I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, it is suggested we should not be discussing Iraq. Well, the last time I checked, the majority leader sets the agenda. The majority leader brought up Iraq, and if he wants to bring up Iraq, we can discuss Iraq.

I too am wondering why it is being brought up because we have other important issues we could be dealing with. For example, I wish to see the Congress turn its attention to a pro-growth economic package, a discussion of how we can help this economy move. I think once we have that opportunity to debate, we will have a good, principled exchange of ideas here.

My suspicion is that from the other side of the aisle we will hear a number of expensive spending proposals, and from our side of the aisle we will hear a different agenda, an agenda that says we want a bigger, bolder, broader pro-growth economic agenda so we can move this economy in a more positive direction.

Part of that would have to do with lower tax rates for individuals, such as to permanently reduce the dividend, capital gains, and estate tax rates to 15 percent. Part of it would be to lower corporate tax rates, reducing the capital gains tax for corporations from 35

percent to 25 percent so our companies in America can compete in the world. Part of it would be indexing the capital gains tax for inflation so that double taxation of capital would at least reflect inflation. Part of it would be something that many Members of this Chamber have talked about for a long time: a simpler, flatter tax, giving taxpayers the option of filing a 1-page return with a 17-percent flat tax rate.

I wish to see—and I plan to introduce within the next few days—legislation that would make permanent the expensing provisions for small business that we passed in a bipartisan way before the recess in the pro-growth package to help stimulate the economy. Those provisions increased the small business expensing limits and allowed a 50 percent bonus depreciation.

Now it is not unusual to hear Republicans talking about lower tax rates. But that is only a part of—a part of—what we would propose if our debate were here for a pro-growth economic package. I wish to see us bring up Senator ISAKSON's proposal, which would create a \$5,000-a-year, 3-year tax credit for buyers of foreclosed or new homes to get buyers back in the marketplace.

I wish to see us begin to more seriously implement the America COMPETES Act. That is part of a pro-growth agenda as well. We worked hard in this Chamber across party lines for 2 years to advance legislation to increase our nation's competitiveness in the global economy. The President made a priority of it. He said we ought to have an 18 percent increase in funding for the physical sciences in this year's budget. We should talk about that and make a commitment to make room in the budget for that so we can double funding in the physical sciences over the next 5 years so we can keep our brainpower advantage so our jobs will not go overseas.

As one Senator, I want to see that we continue to in-source brainpower for new jobs by pinning a green card on the lapel of every foreign student who earns a degree in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics from a U.S. university, and who is legally here and passes a background check. We could have a good debate here in the Chamber about whether it is a good idea to do that. I think it is.

We have 570,000-something foreign students here. Why would we attract the brightest people in the world to study here and make them promise to go home and create new jobs in India and in China? Let's create them here.

We could make the research and development tax credit permanent. We could have a full-day debate about how to improve our schools. I see the Senator from New Hampshire is in the Chamber; he was one of the principal authors of the No Child Left Behind Act. There is a provision in that legislation which is called the Teacher Incentive Fund. It tackles one of the most difficult problems in American education. How do you reward outstanding teaching? Well, you cannot do

it from Washington. But you can fund it from Washington, so in Philadelphia and in Phoenix and in Memphis school leaders and teachers are part of plans where you pay them more for leading well and pay them more for teaching well.

I did that in Tennessee in 1983 when I was Governor. Mr. President, 10,000 teachers went up a career ladder. As soon as I left, its opponents killed it. But teacher after teacher comes back to me saying they wish it were still there. Every time we have a hearing on education, we hear the need to keep and attract outstanding teachers.

We could talk about and debate—and I am sure we would debate—Pell Grants for Kids. Why not give vouchers to poor kids so they can go to some of the schools that people with money go to?

Why not go ahead and implement the provisions in the America COMPETES Act for adding 10,000 math and science teachers, and give a million and a half more low-income children the opportunity to take Advanced Placement tests?

If we want to talk about growing the economy, we can do that. We could talk about stopping runaway lawsuits and enacting small business health plans. We can talk about lower energy costs. We can talk about lowering the cost of Government. Or we can talk about Iraq.

I have been one of those who, over time, has had some difference of opinion with the President on Iraq. I thought he should have embraced the Iraq Study Group plan as soon as it came out. Put Secretary Baker, Congressman Hamilton, and the other members of the Iraq Study Group up there in the Gallery and honor them and accept their suggestions.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, will my colleague yield for a brief statement?

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I would be glad to yield to the majority leader.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I just finished a conversation with the Republican leader. We have decided it is to the interest of everyone we have no more votes tonight, so everyone should understand that. We will be out tomorrow to decide what we are going to do after Senator MCCONNELL and I have a chance to get together in the morning. No more votes tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader.

Mr. President, I would say that last year I thought I had succeeded in doing something that no one else had been able to do. I unified President Bush and Senator REID on Iraq in their opposition to our Iraq Study Group legislation. But my point is that while I have been one on this side of the aisle who wishes the President had taken a different tact, I think in all honesty we are talking about how things have changed in Iraq.

If we look at the Iraq Study Group recommendations, what were they? First, transition of mission. Let's shift our military forces out of direct combat and into roles of supporting, training, and equipping Iraqi forces as security conditions on the ground permit. That is happening. It is happening province by province. That wasn't foreseen quite as clearly by the authors of the Iraq Study Group report. I am not sure any of us saw it. General Petraeus was wise enough to see it. He is helping Iraq have a transition of mission of U.S. forces from mainly combat to mainly support, training, and equipping. But the Iraq Study Group itself, while it set a goal for that shift of mission, explicitly rejected the idea of a deadline. As the Senator from Alabama said earlier, it explicitly rejected the idea of a deadline.

The second recommendation of the Iraq Study Group was that we maintain a long term, but diminishing, presence in Iraq, with an emphasis on diminishing. That is happening. Troops are coming out instead of troops going in. Now, they are not coming out as rapidly as many had hoped, but they are coming out. They are coming out in the spirit of the Iraq Study Group report—not as rapidly as the report originally recommended, but as quickly as conditions on the ground will now permit. The limited mission the Iraq Study Group envisioned, in addition to supporting Iraqi forces, includes protection of coalition forces, counterterrorism operations, border security, intelligence-sharing, supporting provisional reconstruction teams, and search and rescue.

Finally, the Iraq Study Group urged that we undertake a new diplomatic offensive, that we step up regional and diplomatic efforts to press others in the region to help Iraq succeed. Well, that has been happening. It may not be happening as rapidly as everyone in the Chamber would like, but these efforts are well underway, with a more expansive United Nations mission. But higher profile efforts are also needed, including by the President.

So I would not stand here and say that the Iraq Study Group legislation that Senator SALAZAR and I introduced—supported by eight Democrats and eight Republicans, and which we unsuccessfully urged the President and this body to adopt a year ago—I would not say we should do that today. But I would say as one Senator that I believe that is the direction in which we are moving, and the Iraq Study Group has made a significant contribution to that effort. I, frankly, believe the bipartisan approach here by those 16 Senators also helped move us in that direction.

Now, Senator FEINGOLD's proposal and the Iraq Study Group recommendations are at odds. In the first place, the Feingold legislation sets a 120-day deadline for changing the mission of our forces in Iraq and requiring a massive withdrawal. The bipartisan Iraq Study Group specifically opposed such

a deadline, saying that transition should be, as I said, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground.

The Feingold amendment and the Iraq Study Group differ in another way: the continuing mission for the troops. My reading of the Feingold bill says that it would prevent American troops from being embedded with Iraqi forces, from securing Iraqi borders, from fighting terrorists who aren't known to be affiliated with al-Qaida, and performing various intelligence operations. Those missions are all supported by the Iraq Study Group. It is part of our long term, but diminishing, role in Iraq.

As has been noted today, this is not a new subject for the Senate. We have had perhaps three dozen votes on Iraq last year. Perhaps we should have that many votes. What else is more important than Iraq? But at some point, we have come to a conclusion, and I think on the issue of the Feingold bill, this body, by a large majority, has already expressed itself. There were four previous votes on similar—not exactly the same but similar—funding cut and withdrawal proposals offered by Senator FEINGOLD. Those were on December 18, 2007, and 71 Senators voted against that Feingold amendment. Then, on October 3, 2007, 68 Senators voted against that Feingold amendment. Then, on September 20, 2007, 70 Senators voted against that Feingold amendment. Then, on May 16, 2007, 67 Senators voted against that Feingold amendment.

We have 100 Senators, and 49 of us are Republicans. Not all of us agree on Iraq. So that meant that a substantial number of Democrats consistently voted against those Feingold amendments.

So I know Senator FEINGOLD is sincere and passionate in his beliefs, but it would seem to me that four votes are enough on this subject, and—as important as it is—we could turn our attention to other issues. But if the majority leader, for whatever reason, feels a need to bring this issue to the floor of the Senate, then we are ready to talk about it.

We are not all of one mind here, even on the Republican side. We have some on this side of the aisle who said when the Iraq Study Group report came out that it was a recipe for surrender. I disagreed with that and said so publicly and said so privately to the President. He was good enough to hear me out one-on-one. I find him to be a very good listener.

I, for one, am enormously impressed with General Petraeus's counterinsurgency strategy. I, like most of us, have had a chance to go to Iraq—in my case, two times to Iraq, and three times to Kuwait. I have had a chance last year in August to visit with General Petraeus and General Odierno and to go into the outskirts of Baghdad and to see an area where our soldiers were in camp and to have dinner with a group

of sheiks. One of the sheiks' sons had been murdered in his front yard, and they were fed up with the al-Qaida terrorists and were convinced that because the American forces were there, that the Iraqis could risk their lives by teaming with the American forces to run the terrorists out of town, which in many places they have done.

I still think it would have been better for our troops and it would send a clear message to the enemy if we had, as an administration and as a Congress, embraced the Iraq Study Group Report because it said basically what we are doing today. It said we need to change direction. We need to, No. 1, shift our mission, which we are doing. It specifically embraced the idea of a surge, if that was necessary. It rejected the idea of a specific deadline and said it should be subject to developments on the ground. It said we should identify a long-term but diminishing presence in Iraq, which we have been doing as a country. The Iraq Study Group Report said also that we should step up our diplomatic efforts. Its goal—not its binding effect but its goal—was that all of its recommendations could be accomplished more rapidly than has been done. That is true. But at the same time, it recognized that it was all subject to security developments on the ground.

So when we have a success—or it may be more accurate to say a series of small successes in a difficult arena such as Iraq—when we have military leadership such as General Petraeus and his team who have stuck to a new counterinsurgency strategy—at least new to Iraq that took our forces out of the Green Zone and placed them on the outskirts—when we have done that, then I think we ought to recognize that for what it is.

I am glad to have this opportunity to talk about Iraq and the progress we are making there. I hope we can make more there. I would like for more of our Tennesseans to come home. In the National Guard alone, we have had more than 10,000 Tennesseans in Iraq, some for a year, some twice, some three times. They are our uncles, and they are our aunts. They are our neighbors, our deputy sheriffs, the mayor of Lexington, the postmaster from Robbinsville. They have mortgages. They have kids. Ninety have died, 90 Tennesseans in this period of time. So it is good to have this discussion. If the majority leader wants to bring it up, we should. But I think at the same time we ought to recognize it for what it is. We have changed direction. The troops are coming out instead of going in. The mission is shifting. The role is diminishing. It will be there for a long time, and the diplomatic effort is stepped up. If that is succeeding, then our country is succeeding, and we can spend more time on other issues.

TORNADOES IN TENNESSEE

Now, if I may—I see the Senator from Florida may be wanting to speak, and if he would indulge me another 3 or 4

minutes, I wish to discuss what has happened in Tennessee with tornadoes in the last couple of weeks.

On the night of February 5, tornadoes began to hit Memphis at about 6 o'clock. While many people were watching the Tennessee-Florida basketball game safely in their homes, a tornado touched down in Macon County, TN, and stayed on the ground for 21 miles. More than two dozen people were killed.

Prior to that, it hit in Jackson, TN, nearly wiping out Union University. Fortunately, at Union University, president David Dockery had conducted drills, and the students had enough warning to get to the safest places in their dormitories, and no one was killed there. That was not by accident; it was because of good leadership. It was also because of a good early-warning system.

The point of my remarks tonight is that we sometimes hear in connection with disasters—particularly since Hurricane Katrina—that our disaster response system and our emergency response system isn't as good as it should be. I can't speak to every case, but over the last 30 years, as Governor for some years and in the Cabinet for 2 years and now in the Senate, I have seen a lot of disasters and tragedies. I have never seen an example where the local officials, the Governor of the State, and the President of the United States acted more rapidly, more effectively, or more humanely.

The Governor, Gov. Phil Bredesen of Tennessee, a Democrat, was on the scene immediately. He gathered all of his information—not too rapidly because he knows it needs to be accurate—and he had it to President Bush on the night of February 7 at about 7 p.m. By 10 p.m. President Bush had approved it—had called the Governor and approved individual and public assistance for five of the hardest hit counties. The Governor then went on to commit that the State would pay half of the local share of the disaster aid that needs to be paid.

I went with the President and Congressman GORDON and Senator CORKER to the Macon County area on the Friday after it hit. I visited Jackson last week. What I found was that FEMA has already received 3,700 applications from 14 approved counties. FEMA has distributed \$1.9 million in 14 counties. The first small business loan was approved on the day I was there.

I visited those whose homes were blown away. It is a terrifying thought that in just 60 seconds everything is demolished. You don't know where to hide. But I also visited with the emergency responding team and a couple whose home was hit in Jackson, TN. They were told via the television at 6 o'clock that the tornado was coming, and they were told 10 minutes before it hit their house that if they lived on the north side of the interstate, the tornado would be there in 10 minutes, and it was. That was the kind of early

warning system they had. And in Macon County, a tornado that hit at 9:30 at night has been anticipated. By midnight, FEMA personnel from Atlanta were at the Tennessee border at Chattanooga. And by 7 a.m. the next morning, disaster recovery centers were set up in Macon County.

I wish to express my admiration, first, for the local officials for doing a first-rate job; second, to FEMA and TEMA, the Tennessee emergency management professionals who were there on the spot; third, to Governor Bredesen who could not have done a better, more thorough, more sensitive job; and fourth, to the President and the Washington officials who were on the ball.

It is important occasionally to find the good and praise it in Government service, and in this case, I believe—well, I know—every single person I talked with in the west Tennessee area or the Macon County area felt as if the Governor, the President, and the local officials were doing everything they could to be helpful, and they were deeply grateful for it.

I yield the floor.

• **MR. MCCAIN.** Mr. President, I strongly oppose, as I have before, the legislation offered by the Senator from Wisconsin.

This bill would mandate a withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq and cut off funds for our troops 120 days after enactment. The one exception would be for a small force authorized only to carry out narrowly defined missions. If this latest attempt sounds familiar, it should—the majority has thus far engaged in no less than 40 legislative attempts to achieve this misguided outcome. And, just like the 40 votes that preceded this one, the result of this effort will undoubtedly be the same.

The reason is clear. To pass such legislation would be to court disaster, and to set a date certain for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq, regardless of the conditions on the ground or the implications for our national security, would be tantamount to setting a date for surrender. Should we ignore the signs of real progress in Iraq and legislate a premature end to our efforts there, the Congress would be complicit in all the terrible and predictable consequences that would ensue.

The Senate, in facing this choice time and again over the past year, has voted against legislated surrender in Iraq. Instead, we have decided to build on the clear successes of our new strategy and to give GEN David Petraeus and the troops under his command the time and support they have requested to carry out their mission. The interests of America, the future of the Iraqi people, and the stability of the Middle East are the better for it.

But the Senate has come to this conclusion only after repeated attempts to do what the proponents of this bill would have us do today—bring the war in Iraq to a premature and disastrous

close through legislative fiat. If ever there was a case for precipitous withdrawal from Iraq—and I believe there never was—now is the last time anyone should consider such a step. If abandoning Iraq was a terrible idea when we were unsuccessful in our efforts there, it is a catastrophic proposal today, when we are winning.

The supporters of withdrawal said in 2007 that the surge could never work, that extra American brigades could do nothing to bring greater security to Iraq, that no new counterinsurgency strategy could succeed in protecting the population. We were losing in Iraq, they said, and nothing could change that. Some even declared that the war was already lost.

But they were wrong. As General Petraeus put it in his end of the year letter to the troops, “A year ago, Iraq was racked by horrific violence and on the brink of civil war. Now, levels of violence and civilian and military casualties are significantly reduced and hope has been rekindled in many Iraqi communities.” In fact, the surge has succeeded well beyond the projections of even most optimists. Let me cite a few examples.

In Baghdad, ethno-sectarian violence has fallen over 90 percent in a year. IED attacks in Baghdad are down by 45 percent since February 2007. The specter of civil war in Iraq’s capital, a real threat when the surge began, has retreated significantly. The capital’s population has begun to retake its streets, its schools, and its markets.

The remarkable progress is not confined only to Baghdad. Attacks have decreased in 17 of 18 provinces in Iraq since the surge began. In the country as a whole, attacks are down by some 60 percent and stand at the level experienced in early 2005 or even 2004. Car bombs across Iraq are down, the number of civilian deaths has fallen, and IED explosions are down, all by significant margins. Intelligence tips are up, discovery of weapons and explosive caches has increased, and al-Qaida is on the run, having been forced by U.S. and Iraqi troops out of the urban areas like Baghdad, Ramadi, Fallujah, and Baquba and into isolated rural areas. U.S. casualties, too, have fallen significantly, even in the midst of ongoing operations.

As GEN Barry McCaffrey put it in a recent report, Iraq is seeing “dramatically reduced levels of civilian sectarian violence, political assassinations, abductions, and small arms/indirect fire and IED attacks on U.S. and Iraqi Police and Army Forces. This is the unmistakable new reality . . . The national security debate must move on to an analysis of why this new political and security situation exists—not whether it exists.”

In the face of such facts, it is beyond perplexing to see the proponents of this legislation seek not to consolidate our gains and ensure that they continue but, rather, to force a troop withdrawal that would reverse all of the achieve-

ments I just cited. Understanding what we now know—that our military is making remarkable progress on the ground, and that their commanders request from us the time and support necessary to succeed in Iraq—it is inconceivable that we in Congress would end this strategy just as it is succeeding.

This is not to say that all is rosy in Iraq. It is not, and neither I nor our military commanders make any such argument. The cumulative results of nearly 4 years of mismanaged war cannot be reversed overnight. Al-Qaida is on the run but has not disappeared, and we can expect them to fight back. Fighting among Shia factions in the south presents a significant challenge, and violence and crime remain at unacceptably high levels in a number of areas. The road in Iraq remains, as it always has been, long and hard. But this is an argument for continuing our successful strategy, not for abandoning it in favor of sure failure.

At some point last year, a few of the proponents of withdrawal from Iraq began conceding that the surge was having tangible, positive effects. They went on to argue, however, that securing the population was irrelevant, as the point of the surge was to see political progress and there had been none. Yet even while this new debate began, political progress at the local level took off across Iraq. Tens of thousands of Iraqis—most of them Sunnis who were, or would have been, part of the anticoalition insurgency—joined Concerned Local Citizens groups and aligned themselves with our efforts. Moqtada al-Sadr announced that the Mahdi army would observe a 6-month ceasefire, a pledge he renewed just last week for an additional 6 months. In Anbar and elsewhere, local populations turned to the coalition and against al-Qaida, turning that province from Iraq’s most dangerous into one of its safest.

In the face of these new facts, supporters of withdrawal changed their argument yet again. Maybe the surge had brought about greater security, they said, and perhaps this had helped generate political progress at the local level, as counterinsurgency doctrine would suggest. But this was irrelevant, they said, so long as national level political reconciliation is lacking—and since we can never expect that, the troops must leave.

Yet they were wrong again. In January, the Iraqi Parliament passed the long-awaited deBaathification law that restores the eligibility of thousands of former party members for government jobs lost because of their Baathist affiliation. Earlier this month, a provincial powers law passed that devolves a significant amount of power to the provinces and mandates new provincial elections by October 1 of this year. The Parliament passed a partial amnesty for detainees that can facilitate reconciliation among the sects, and it completed a landmark 2008 budget.

Again, these significant achievements come coupled with remaining challenges. Parliament has yet to pass an oil law, though oil revenues are being shared in its absence; the Maliki government remains unwilling to function and provide services as it must, and other difficulties abound. Yet it is telling that in his latest report, military analyst Anthony Cordesman said, “No one can spend some 10 days visiting the battlefields in Iraq without seeing major progress in every area . . . If the U.S. provides sustained support to the Iraqi government—in security, governance, and development—there is now a very real chance that Iraq will emerge as a secure and stable state.”

No one can guarantee success in Iraq or be certain about its prospects. We can be sure, however, that should the U.S. Congress succeed in terminating the strategy by legislating an abrupt withdrawal and a transition to a new, less effective and more dangerous course—should we do that, then we will fail for certain.

Let us make no mistake about the costs of such an American failure in Iraq. Should Congress force a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq, it would mark a new beginning, the start of a new, more dangerous effort to contain the forces unleashed by our disengagement. If we leave, we will be back—in Iraq and elsewhere—in many more desperate fights to protect our security and at an even greater cost in American lives and treasure.

In his testimony before the Armed Services Committee in September, General Petraeus referred to an August Defense Intelligence Agency report that stated, “. . . a rapid withdrawal would result in the further release of strong centrifugal forces in Iraq and produce a number of dangerous results, including a high risk of disintegration of the Iraqi Security Forces; a rapid deterioration of local security initiatives; al Qaeda—Iraq regaining lost ground and freedom of maneuver; a marked increase in violence and further ethno-sectarian displacement and refugee flows; and exacerbation of already challenging regional dynamics, especially with respect to Iran.”

Those are the likely consequences of a precipitous withdrawal, and I hope that the supporters of such a move will tell us how they intend to address the chaos and catastrophe that would surely follow such a course of action. Should we leave Iraq before there is a basic level of stability, we invite chaos, genocide, terrorist safehavens and regional war. We invite further Iranian influence 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. If our notions of national security have any meaning, they cannot include permitting the establishment of an Iranian dominated Middle East that is roiled

by wider regional war and riddled with terrorist safehavens.

The supporters of this amendment claim that they do not by any means intend to cede the battlefield to al-Qaida; on the contrary, their legislation would allow U.S. forces, presumably holed up in forward operating bases, to carry out “targeted operations, limited in duration and scope, against members of al Qaeda and affiliated international terrorist organizations.” But such a provision draws a false distinction between terrorism and sectarian violence, between counterterrorism and counterinsurgency. Moving in with search and destroy missions to kill and capture terrorists, only to immediately cede the territory to the enemy, is the failed strategy of the war’s first 4 years. We should not, and must not, return to such a disastrous course.

Americans were divided over this war from the beginning, and we remain so today. All of us want our troops to come home, and to come home as soon as possible. But how we leave—that is of the utmost importance. We must not leave, as the supporters of this amendment would have it, in a way that erodes all the security gains that our brave men and women have fought so hard to achieve and in a way that puts us on the road to surrender. The stakes are too high, we have come too far and sacrificed too much for that. Instead of surrendering, we should persevere with the pursuit of our strategic objectives: to defeat al-Qaida, not be defeated by it; to implant in Iraq the forces of stability and tolerance, not chaos and civil war; to demonstrate that America keeps its word with its friends and allies, rather than abandoning them to horrific consequences. The American soldiers we have sent to battle deserve to return to us with honor—the honor of victory that is due all of those who have paid with the ultimate sacrifice.

Before I close, I would note that there will be another vote soon on the motion to proceed to legislation requiring the administration to develop a new al-Qaida strategy within 60 days, and to report it to Congress. I oppose putting such a mandate in law for several reasons. The National Security Act of 1947 requires the President to transmit to Congress each year a comprehensive report on the national security strategy of the United States. Title 10 requires the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to produce a national military strategy and to conduct a biennial review of that strategy, a review that was recently completed. The Chairman has indicated that a new national military strategy is under development and, of course, the next President will be required to issue a fresh national security strategy. In short there are, and will remain, a number of legislative requirements for security strategies that include a counterterrorism approach.

Finally, this bill would attempt to limit the President’s use of the mili-

tary by imposing dwell times for our forces. While I fully support the goal of achieving sustainable dwell times for our Armed Forces, I do not believe that we should try to force such a restriction on the President irrespective of any contravening interests.

Mr. President, as the debate over Iraq goes on, let us remember to whom and what we owe our first allegiance—to the security of the American people and to the ideals upon which our Nation was founded. That responsibility is our dearest privilege, and to be judged by history to have discharged it honorably will, in the end, matter so much more to all of us than any fleeting glory of popular acclaim, electoral advantage or office. I hope we might all have good reason to expect a kinder judgment of our flaws and follies because when it mattered most we chose to put the interests of our great and good Nation before our own and helped, in our own small way, preserve for all humanity the magnificent and inspiring example of an assured, successful and ever advancing America and the ideals that make us still the greatest Nation on Earth.●

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise today to express my concerns, shared by so many of my constituents in Pennsylvania and across the country, about the war in Iraq and how our efforts there have exacted a direct cost on the fight against al-Qaida and its affiliates in Afghanistan.

The bills introduced today by Senator FEINGOLD and Majority Leader REID have prompted an important debate about our national security. I believe it is our duty, as elected officials, to level with the American people on the war in Iraq, both on the reality of the situation on the ground and in the context of our Nation’s broader strategic priorities. We must speak truth to the anxiety of the American people on what we are doing to make this country more secure.

Our Nation recently marked the 1-year anniversary of the President’s decision to initiate a troop escalation into Iraq. We are quickly coming up on the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. As the President said in January of 2007, when announcing the goals of his troop escalation, “Iraqis will gain confidence in their leaders and the government will have the breathing space it needs to make progress in other critical areas.” Judged by those standards enunciated by the President himself, the surge has not worked. While we all welcome the reduction in violence, that metric was never the be-all and end-all in determining whether the surge worked.

Monday of this week, the Pentagon said it expected 140,000 U.S. troops would remain in Iraq this July, 8,000 more troops than when the President’s troop buildup began in January of 2007.

These extended troop deployments have imposed a significant toll on a

U.S. military already stretched dangerously thin by this war. We have provided Iraqis with some “breathing space” and violence in many parts of Iraq is, indeed, down. That fact is attributable to the fine men and women of our armed services and to their skills as the finest fighting force in history. Yet Iraq is still not a secure Nation because progress on the essential tasks of political reconciliation has not been achieved by the Iraqis. General Petraeus has been very clear on this point: The war in Iraq can only be won politically, not militarily.

Although the Bush administration immediately praised the three reform measures recently passed by the Iraqi Parliament, the package served only to postpone critical discussions on the future of the country and underscore the fractured State of the Iraqi Government. The Parliament approved a 2008 budget, passed a provincial powers law defining a division of responsibility between the central government in Baghdad and regional authorities, and issued an amnesty bill that may free thousands of prisoners from the disaffected Sunni community. But the potential details and implementation of these laws, especially on the amnesty bill, remain a critical question mark. What the Iraqi leadership failed to achieve and the decisions of Parliament chose to kick down the road, so to speak, is perhaps more notable than the short-term successes. The government has yet to tackle the most divisive issue in Iraq, and that is this: who controls the country’s oil and how to distribute the proceeds. To take the most egregious example, the Kurdistan regional government in the north passed its own oil law last August, signing dozens of contracts with international oil firms, which the central government in Baghdad deems illegal. The Iraqis have devised a de facto approach for splitting oil proceeds in the short term, but that arrangement is vulnerable to breakdown at any time.

Legislative accomplishments by the Iraqi Parliament are welcome but can be very deceiving. So long as the very parliamentarians who passed these recent bills cannot leave the Green Zone without fear of assassination attempts or suicide bombings, Iraq remains an unsecured nation.

Just as Iraqi progress on internal reconciliation is sorely lacking, I am also distressed by our short-term strategy of pacifying local actors in Iraq to improve security while ignoring the underlying political and sectarian fault line in Iraq. In short, this approach is not sustainable and is undermining—undermining—our overarching objective of national reconciliation.

At the same time we speak of bridging the sectarian divides, the U.S. “awakening strategy” in western and central Iraq is arming Sunni tribal leaders and integrating former insurgents into the rough equivalent of militias—all in a process separate from and parallel to the national armed forces of Iraq.

As an article in *Time* magazine recently noted, a number of these “concerned local citizens” militias, organized and supported by the U.S. military, are now turning on each other in a contest for influence and territory. The Shia-led central government views these armed militias as undermining its central authority and has balked at integrating large numbers of Sunnis into the national Iraqi security forces. So at this point we must ask ourselves whether the U.S. Government, in service of a worthy but short-term objective of suppressing violence in Iraq, is only paving the road for a large-scale future conflict by arming sectarian groups separate from the national army and police. That is an important question we must consider.

Let me say, Mr. President, sometimes short and telling anecdotes tell a story. We have read recently that the Iranian President, Mr. Ahmadinejad, will make a visit to Baghdad next week for talks with Prime Minister al-Maliki and other officials. This visit has already been announced, with details of his itinerary available to the press and the public. By sharp contrast, when President Bush, Secretary Rice and/or Secretary Gates visit Iraq, they travel to Baghdad unannounced and rarely leave the fortified walls of the Green Zone.

Another example. When Senator DURBIN and I visited Iraq last August, we flew from the airport to the Green Zone in low-flying, fast-moving helicopters practicing evasive maneuvers. Here is a question we should ask ourselves: Why can the Iranian President drive in an open manner into Baghdad while U.S. leaders must sneak into the country under the cloak of darkness? Five years into our occupation of Iraq, what does this say about our role in Iraq and the security of that nation?

As Iraq continues to dominate the attention and resources of our Government, it clouds and confuses our long-term U.S. strategic priorities. I remain troubled, as so many others here remain troubled, that a “Declaration of Principles” signed on November 26, 2007, by President Bush and Prime Minister al-Maliki commits our Nation to “providing security assurances and commitments to the Republic of Iraq to deter future aggression against Iraq that violates its sovereignty and integrity of its territories, waters, or airspace.” That is what the Declaration of Principles says in part.

Although Secretary Rice assured me during a recent Senate Foreign Relations hearing that no such commitments will be extended to Iraq, I remain deeply skeptical. In concert with my colleagues, I will continue to exercise vigorous oversight to ensure that President Bush does not lock the United States into a binding and long-term security commitment to Iraq.

It is time to refocus our energies and our efforts on the “forgotten war” in Afghanistan. Our focus on Iraq has distracted from and undermined the central front in the war on terrorism.

ADM Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently testified before Congress, and he said:

In Afghanistan, we do what we can. In Iraq, we do what we must.

With all due respect to Admiral Mullen, he has it wrong. We should do what we must in both places.

We know that 6 years ago America was fighting and winning the war in Afghanistan, and al-Qaida and the Taliban were on the run. But instead of staying and accomplishing our mission in Afghanistan by hunting down those who planned the 9/11 attacks, this administration diverted our attention to Iraq. Today, the Taliban has returned with a vengeance and controls more territory than at any time since its ouster in 2001. Afghanistan is on the brink of becoming yet again a failed state and thus a safe haven for al-Qaida to launch deadly attacks, including against the American homeland.

Three recent bipartisan reports on Afghanistan concluded that the situation on the ground is dire. One report, coauthored by retired general Jim Jones and Ambassador Thomas Pickering, puts it bluntly, and I quote in part:

The progress achieved after 6 years of international engagement is under serious threat from resurgent violence, weakening international resolve, mounting regional challenges, and a growing lack of confidence on the part of the Afghan people about the future direction of their country. The United States and the international community have tried to win the struggle in Afghanistan with too few military forces and insufficient economic aid, and without a clear and consistent comprehensive strategy.

That is the Jones and Pickering report from which I am quoting.

When Secretary of Defense Gates is forced to go public with criticisms of the refusal of our NATO allies to deploy more forces in Afghanistan and his skepticism of their ability to conduct counterinsurgency operations, we must admit that the situation on the ground is getting worse in Afghanistan, not better. Military officials expect the coming year to be even more deadly, as the Taliban becomes more deadly and deploys greater numbers of suicide bombers and roadside explosives. U.S. forces remain largely isolated in Afghanistan, with key NATO allies refusing to provide ground support and imposing onerous restrictions on where and how they can fight. The end result is that the very future of NATO, the most successful alliance in modern history, is now in grave danger.

In a welcome display of straight-talk, Secretary Gates admitted that the very reason large segments of the European public do not support NATO operations in Afghanistan is due to their antipathy toward U.S. policy in Iraq. Secretary Gates recently asserted in Munich:

Many of them, I think, have a problem with our involvement in Iraq and project that to Afghanistan, and do not understand the very different—for them—the very different kind of threat.

That is what Secretary Gates said recently.

Mr. President, let me conclude with this thought: The war in Iraq has indeed strained our military, limiting the number of combat divisions we can provide in Afghanistan. It has undermined our global leadership, depriving us of the moral authority to demand more of our allies, and it has diverted the attention of our senior military and civilian leadership, allowing the Taliban to mount a comeback under our very eyes. We are losing a war we cannot afford to lose in a futile and misguided effort to force success in another conflict that can only be won politically, not militarily. Our priorities are tragically mistaken, and our Nation is paying a severe cost.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and 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. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

AUTHORIZATION FOR REPRESENTATION BY SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, S. Res. 460 concerns a civil action filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The National Association of Manufacturers is challenging the constitutionality of section 207 of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, which amended the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 to strengthen the reporting requirements for coalitions and associations that engage in lobbying activities.

As amended, the law mandates that registrants disclose the members of their organization that contribute more than \$5,000 in a quarterly period to the lobbying activities of the organization and “actively participate in the planning, supervision, or control of such activities.” Under prior law, disclosure was required of those members who contributed at least \$10,000 for lobbying semiannually but only if those members “in whole or in major part” planned, supervised, or controlled such lobbying activities.

The plaintiff National Association of Manufacturers alleges that its members face sustained injury to their first amendment rights, including their right to anonymous policy speech, and seeks to prevent the enhanced disclosure requirements from taking effect