

That's irresponsible. The House and Senate need time to negotiate their differences because the House has no telecom immunity provision. Bush's implication that expiration of the law would expose the Nation to terrorist dangers is worse than disingenuous: The eavesdropping authorizations under the law continue for a year. Crucial decisions about civil liberties in an age of terror shouldn't be driven by fear-mongering.

That was from the USA editorial.

I think this President, unfortunately, is manufacturing a crisis. This is the same thing we heard from this President and this administration in the lead-up to our invasion of Iraq. They painted the most frightening picture of Iraq and Saddam Hussein—weapons of mass destruction which could be aimed at our allies in the Middle East, such as Israel, and aimed at the United States; Condoleezza Rice talking about mushroom-shaped clouds and nuclear weapons striking the United States; drawing linkage between Saddam Hussein and 9/11, when no linkage existed. That was the climate of fear this administration created before they asked this Senate to vote on whether we should authorize the invasion of Iraq.

They are trying to create a new climate of fear on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. That is fundamentally unfair to the American people. I must warn this President, and every President: The American people will only be frightened by red alerts, orange alerts, and all this rhetoric for so long before they turn it off. We don't ever want to reach that point. We want to make certain when we tell the American people a danger exists, it truly does exist.

If any danger exists now from the expiration of the Protect America Act, it is a danger created by the President's party in objecting to our efforts to extend this law. They cannot have it both ways. They cannot object to extending this law and then say to the American people: Be afraid. Be really afraid, because this law hasn't been extended. That is exactly what has happened.

Time and again this administration's allies have pressured Congress to consider controversial proposals immediately before an election. Now we see them raising another security issue in the run-up to an election. This comes from a playbook written by former adviser Karl Rove that the administration has used over and over again. Think about that vote for the authorization of war in the climate of fear the administration created, and then think of the reality of what we found on the ground when we went into Iraq. Despite heroic efforts by our men and women in uniform, despite their successes in deposing Saddam Hussein, despite the expenditure of billions of dollars, we have never, ever uncovered one shred of evidence of weapons of mass destruction that this administration warned us about. Not one shred of evidence of nuclear devices aimed at the United States or any other country, not one shred of evidence linking Saddam Hussein to 9/11. All of the fear gen-

erated by this administration before that vote has not been substantiated.

But the invasion of Iraq has been substantiated in another way, in almost 4,000 Americans' lives that have been lost, 25,000 seriously wounded, and at a cost to the United States and our Treasury—record amounts. By the end of this year, it is estimated we will have spent \$1 trillion on this war that this President created on a foreign policy decision which I think may be the worst in my lifetime and sadly endangering so many brave, courageous soldiers who serve our country in uniform and risk their lives when called to duty. It is unfortunate.

Yesterday, at the insistence of the Republicans, we ground to a halt the debate on the war policy in Iraq. It means we will have to wait several months. When we return to it, there will be more than 4,000 American casualties in this war, there will be more injured soldiers, and there will be more money spent.

This President is trying to run out the clock. He wants to leave that White House on January 20, 2009, turn the keys over to his successor, and say: Good luck in Iraq—to leave two wars behind and to leave the United States in turmoil in terms of our foreign policy around the world.

Well, it is imperative now that we have the truth on the floor, and the truth is that we have tried to extend this in law despite the objections of Republican Senators. The truth is that we can work out our differences, and we should do so in a bipartisan way. We all have the same goal here: Keep America safe.

We also want to make sure that when it comes to the use of military commissions for the trials of would-be terrorists, we have a commission or at least some form of justice that will stand up to the test of our Constitution.

I do not want a single person released from our detention, wherever they may be, who can endanger the United States. I want them all held responsible for what they have done to endanger us. But the fact is, there has been only one conviction in the 6 years, 6½ years since 9/11. The fact is, what has happened in Guantanamo has been the securing and detention of hundreds of prisoners for years at a time, many of whom have been released without a charge, to return back to their families and back to their countries with a bitter taste in their mouth about justice under this administration.

The American people will take a hard look at this issue in this election, as they should. One would hope the administration would have learned a lesson from what has occurred with the invasion of Iraq and what has occurred every time they have heightened fears before an election campaign.

The American people have the final word. Now the President is claiming our security is at risk because this Protect America Act has expired. But

at the same time, his party, the Republican Party, has time and again objected to extending this law. The American people have heard this song before. They are not going to buy it.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

REQUIRING A REPORT SETTING FORTH THE GLOBAL STRATEGY OF THE UNITED STATES TO COMBAT AND DEFEAT AL QAEDA AND ITS AFFILIATES—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2634, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to consider calendar No. 576, S. 2634, a bill requiring a report setting forth the global strategy of the United States to combat and defeat al Qaeda and its affiliates.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I rise to make a number of points on the two Feingold bills which are before us. I will be happy, after I conclude my remarks, if my neighbor from Illinois, the majority whip, wants to come back and discuss some of the points he made. I believe I disagree strongly with them. But I wish to take the time to lay out my views of what is happening in Iraq and in our battle against al-Qaida and why the two measures before us make absolutely no sense.

On the second Feingold bill, he asks for a strategy dealing with al-Qaida. Let me assure you, as the ranking Republican, the vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, I know one of the most important elements we have in dealing with al-Qaida is to be able to listen in on their electronic communications. That is covered by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

On February 16, 2008, after being extended for an additional 15 days—and we agreed, the Republicans agreed, the President agreed to give an additional 15-day extension on the Protect America Act, but it expired. The Protect America Act which I was pleased to sponsor passed in Congress in August 2007 to provide a short-term legislative solution to intelligence gaps that were occurring because of the outdated Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, which put a 6-month sunset on the PAA to give Congress ample time to work on permanent changes to FISA.

Our Intelligence Committee, in September, immediately answered the call. We went to work, and after many discussions among staff on both sides, members on both sides, visits to NSA, and in close collaboration with the intelligence community, we passed out a

bill that was a strong bipartisan bill that would, with a few modifications, ultimately become the bill the Senate passed. The majority leader, however, did not act on this bill until the final days of the session in December. Even though it was passed out in October, on December 17 several Democrats led a filibuster preventing the Senate from considering this vital intelligence legislation.

I find it ironic that the assistant majority leader is now accusing Republicans of taking up postcloture time on S. 2633, the troop withdrawal bill, when it was one of his own members who filibustered even bringing FISA to the floor last December by demanding postcloture time that killed moving to the FISA legislation in 2007. And it aided in jamming us with a deadline of the expiration of the PAA. That was the Senate Democrats, not Republicans, who jammed this body on the FISA deadline.

Again, when Congress returned from its recess in January, the PAA was set to expire in a few short weeks. The majority leader did not take up this important legislation, however, but he went to a debate on the Indian health bill. With the original PAA deadline looming, a short 15-day extension of the PAA was agreed to with the understanding that both House and Senate would be able to act within that time.

Why the majority leader wanted to put the Senate up against this deadline, I have no idea. He claimed the Senate Republicans did that. Well, I can assure you that it is not the Senate Republicans who filibustered moving the bill in December and insisted on bringing up Indian health before FISA in January. Why was that done? We just passed Indian health recently. It was an important bill, but there was no deadline requiring us to bring up that bill before we went to FISA. Unfortunately, once we did get on the FISA bill, more time was wasted trying to come up with a bipartisan agreement on how to handle amendments.

Ultimately, the Senate passed its bill on Tuesday, February 12—5 days before the expiration of the Protect America Act. The Intelligence Committee bill has been available for review by both Houses since its passage in October. As I said, there are a few modifications in the bill passed by the Senate, but the authorities and concepts remained unchanged.

Additionally, Senate and House majority staff were in close coordination during the deliberation of our bill in the Senate. And it happened more than once, when we were trying to move forward on the Senate floor, that Democrats had to pull their staff out of meetings with our House counterparts to talk to us so we could move forward in passing the bill out of the Senate.

After we passed our bill, the House Speaker refused to allow the Senate's bill to come up for a vote, even after she failed to get agreement from her own body to extend the PAA a second

time. The House refused to grant an extension. The Speaker spent the remaining period of time before the recess considering censure resolutions against current and former administration officials and debating and listening to the potential steroid abuse by Major League Baseball players. She had been assured by the majority of her colleagues in the House, Republican and Democrat, that they would pass the Senate bill were she to allow it to come up for a vote. Nonetheless, she allowed the Protect America Act to expire on February 16, and the House went home on recess, as we did in the Senate.

We all know the Senate's bill was passed by a strong, bipartisan 68-to-29 vote. As we all know, this bill goes further than ever before in providing a role for the FISA Court in foreign intelligence collection. It requires, for the first time in history, that the Government obtain a court order to target a U.S. person overseas. And let me be clear, this is not even a requirement in criminal matters, but it is for intercepting terrorist communications. We have gone further in protecting civil liberties than ever intended by Congress previously in FISA or other measures, permitting law enforcement authorities to listen in on conversations or intercepted communications of people engaged in criminal activities.

Finally, of the utmost importance, the Senate bill afforded civil liberties to those companies that aided us with the President's terrorist surveillance program following the September 11 terrorist attack. Why is this last point so important? Well, the events of this past week should make it clear that we need the voluntary cooperation of our private partners in order to collect timely intelligence. The PAA did not provide any civil liberty protections for those providers that assisted with the terrorist surveillance program. It did, however, give prospective liability protection to companies that complied with the directives while the PAA was in existence.

Let me address one point that has been brought up on the floor. The President authorized the use of the terrorist surveillance program under his constitutional article II authorities, which have been used consistently by many Presidents throughout history.

I understand—and I was not involved at the time—that the administration talked with the top leaders on the intelligence committees in both bodies, the Senate and the House, on a bipartisan basis, about trying to get the FISA law changed before they instituted collection. It was the advice of those leaders that the President not try to wait until we could amend and change FISA.

It is a good thing they gave that advice because, as we have seen, trying to get a long-term FISA amendment passed has taken an inordinate amount of time since we first were advised of the need to amend FISA last April when one of the courts involved in this

issued an order saying that because technology had changed, we could no longer intercept communications of foreign terrorists whose communications, because of modern technology, came through the United States. That is what shut us down, and that is what still continues to bother us today. That still continues to limit us today, with the expiration of the Protect America Act.

Once the PAA expired, the liability protections as well as the Government's ability to compel assistance were thrown into doubt. Providers that were being threatened with hundreds of millions of dollars in damages from frivolous lawsuits because they helped their country after 9/11 began to delay or refuse assistance with directives under the now expired PAA. And who can blame them? These providers have a fiduciary obligation to their shareholders, and if the law becomes uncertain, as it now does with the expiration of the PAA, it becomes harder to satisfy those obligations, especially when they are faced with the ongoing frivolous litigation that was described here a few moments ago.

There is a very real difference between having the authorization to make the collections and being able to collect. Being able to exercise those authorities requires that the intelligence community have the full cooperation of the intelligence community and that the intelligence community have the full cooperation of the private telecom carriers.

Based on the opinions and legal documents I have read, they were required by law, by the Constitution, to participate. Yet having participated, now they are being faced with frivolous lawsuits which will, I am confident, never show any wrongdoing by the telecommunications companies. The purpose of these lawsuits is not to collect intelligence but, rather, to destroy the ability of the intelligence community to collect information by imposing unbearable public costs on the companies, threatening not only their reputations and potentially a very large amount of their shareholder value but also exposing their personnel and facilities here and abroad to retaliation by terrorist groups.

Finally, the lawsuits, which were applauded recently, have the very real potential of providing more information to terrorists on how we collect their electronic communications. The more we tell them about what we do to collect against them, the better off they are in being able to avoid those collections.

The Director of National Intelligence has told us that now, after a lag, the surveillance under existing directives has resumed. That is good news. But what this means for collection tomorrow, next week, or next month is simply unknown, especially if, for example, the need arises to issue a new directive to a new provider, if some new terrorist group, some new target comes

up not covered by previous orders. It is this uncertainty due to Congress's inaction that the DNI and the Attorney General have said is their greatest concern. Let me assure you, the providers share this concern. It is only because of the heroic around-the-clock efforts of the men and women of the intelligence community and the Department of Justice that the providers have agreed to cooperate for the time being, but it is only for the time being. We should not be lulled into thinking we have time, certainly not time for another extension of the 15 days after the 6-month sunseting bill, to get this legislation to the President for signature. Just as easily, any one provider could decide at any one time that it is no longer in its business's best interest to comply with the Government's lawful request for assistance when the legal authority has expired. Losing the cooperation of just one provider could mean losing thousands of pieces of intelligence on a daily basis. Moreover, because we have already lost cooperation for several days, we lost the foreign intelligence information that will likely never be within our ability to recall.

What terrorist communications we have missed or will miss in the future because of this 1-week gap we cannot calculate. We do not know. I for one believe we were elected in Congress to establish the framework for protecting our national security and for encouraging assistance from our citizens to serve their country rather than encouraging or allowing a state of fear to fall upon our citizens and companies that would dare to assist their Government in a time of need.

Is this really the message we want to send? Do we really want to send the message: Don't help your country or you will get sued and your elected officials will condemn you? Isn't that really the main issue and the heart of the message here? I am afraid it is. I deeply regret that is what we are seeing on this floor.

Some in Congress, particularly in the House Democratic leadership, have asserted that even though the PAA has expired, the country is just as safe as we were after the PAA was enacted. They claim the procedures under FISA are more than adequate to allow the intelligence community to do its job. They point out that the certifications already issued under PAA do not expire until at least August. These arguments simply do not carry water. Those who claim we can revert simply to emergency FISA orders demonstrate they really don't understand how the FISA process works. The intelligence gaps that led to the need for PAA were caused not by backlogs in processing FISA warrants but because of the way FISA was being applied to foreign intelligence collection, and seeking emergency authorization is not simply a solution, as though the intelligence community could just tell the Attorney General they are intercepting terrorist communications and then build

a case for probable cause. Rather, the intelligence community must first establish probable cause on each target before they go to the Attorney General for emergency authorization.

The problem prior to PAA—and it is the same problem that exists now that the PAA has expired—is that the probable cause standard cannot always be satisfied easily when we are talking about foreign terrorists, foreign terrorists who are not entitled to constitutional protections. Analysts who should be spending their time tracking the terrorists will be forced to expend countless hours, hundreds of hours, to develop enough information to support the FISA probable cause standard. We all understand the merits of a probable cause determination when we are talking about U.S. citizens. That is what the fourth amendment is all about. But when we are talking about foreign terrorists, applying such a standard absolutely makes no sense.

Is the House Democratic leadership really advocating a system that imposes unreasonable burdens on our intelligence analysts at the expense of our ability to track terrorists and affords foreign terrorists the same fourth amendment protections our own citizens have? I would hope not. The people I talk to back home don't think that makes sense. There is a lot of common sense around the country. When you go out and talk to people and you listen to them, you hear that common sense. They say: What are we doing, giving our constitutional rights to foreign terrorists who seek to harm us?

These points were reiterated this past week by the DNI and the Attorney General in their letter to House Intelligence Committee chairman SILVESTRE REYES. The DNI and AG disagreed that FISA could be employed in place of the PAA, pointing out that it was "the very framework that created intelligence gaps in the past."

Further, just because existing authorities will continue in effect at least until August doesn't mean the intelligence community has the flexibility and authorities it needs to address future unknown threats or technologies. Having the authorization doesn't necessarily mean you have the ability, particularly in the situation in which we have placed our vital private sector partners who must cooperate with us.

As the DNI noted this weekend in an interview:

A new personality, a new phone number, a new location—we now have to put it into the system to be able to collect that information. That's the question, because the private sector partners said nothing new. So we had to negotiate that because what it created was uncertainty, and the position from the private sector point of view, "Am I protected? Does the law allow you to compel me to comply?" And when the act expired last week, that's in question. And that's why we feel that we are less capable of doing our job.

The immediate problem for the intelligence community is how to address

this uncertainty so that new threats not covered under current certifications or directives may be pursued. And the DNI has told us this is no longer a hypothetical concern. While I cannot discuss details publicly, any Member may come to the Intelligence Committee's spaces for a classified briefing on this issue.

Simply to sum up on the second Feingold amendment—for the safety of our country, the safety of our troops abroad, the safety of our allies, the House must bring up and pass our bipartisan FISA bill now.

Turning to the first Feingold amendment, that is another one seeking to renew and rejuvenate a measure that we have voted down more than 40 times in this body: that we cut and run, that we declare defeat and retreat from Iraq. I thought it was interesting; this morning I saw a Presidential candidate on the trail stating that al-Qaida was not even in Iraq before we went in to take out Saddam Hussein. If you take time to get informed about what was going on in Iraq, as we have in the Intelligence Committee, you will know there was a very vibrant group, a very vibrant Islamic terrorist group called Ansar al-Islam. Its leader was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. We got to know him well because he was that vicious villain who beheaded his enemies on television. Innocent citizens, American troops, journalists, he took great delight in lopping off their heads in front of television.

And, yes, his group, Ansar al-Islam, picked up the major franchise. He joined officially what he had been unofficially, and that was an ally of al-Qaida. His group is now called al-Qaida in Iraq. They may have changed the name, but the people were there. The terrorists were there. David Kay went into Iraq after we deposed Saddam Hussein. He was sent there with a group called the Iraqi Survey Group to find out why we got the information wrong. There were wrong things in our intelligence. We made assumptions that weren't correct. But we missed other dangers, such as his ballistic missile program, the fact that he found Iraq to have been a very dangerous place in which terrorist groups were running loose and where Saddam's government had the ability to start a just-in-time inventory production of weapons of mass destruction.

The conclusion of the Iraqi Survey Group, which was discussed with us many times in the Intelligence Committee and was then stated publicly: Iraq was a far more dangerous place ever than we knew. That is what the best intelligence post-fall of Saddam Hussein had to say for those who question why we went in. We didn't get it all right. But we had enough right to make the right decisions. From the intelligence we know now, al-Qaida was not only in Iraq before we went in, it is the primary danger we fight there now, and its leaders have said repeatedly

that they want to make their headquarters for their worldwide caliphate in Iraq.

Fortunately, our military leaders have developed a strategy that is working against them: General Petraeus, the surge and, most importantly, the counterinsurgency strategy, COIN, to go in, clear, hold, and build.

We can't just knock out a terrorist activity. We have to go in and make sure al-Qaida doesn't come back. We have to go in with Iraqi security forces to make sure the area can be safe so they don't come in and retaliate against citizens who cooperate with us.

We have been hearing on the floor some very compelling testimony by my colleagues who have recently returned from Iraq about the tremendous progress that has been made there. My last trip to Iraq was in May of 2007. We saw, when our Intelligence Committee was there, the beginning of a turnaround that showed that the COIN strategy of General Petraeus was working. But last night, I had an opportunity for an extensive conversation with a Marine combat platoon commander who went back to Al Anbar province in March of 2007, having left there 1 year previously after spending 13 months there on his first tour in Fallujah.

In March of last year, it was a very difficult situation, and al-Qaida was still hanging on to control in Al Anbar. The Marine platoon commander had left there in February 2006. We were working toward progress, but then al-Qaida bombed the Golden Mosque at Samarra and the ensuing chaos allowed al-Qaida to establish a firm foothold in Al Anbar and served up grave sectarian stress.

Things began to change in the spring with the COIN strategy. American and Iraqi forces were clearing, holding, and building, embedded in the communities they had cleared. As of May of last year, Marine outposts and Iraqi Army outposts were still being bombarded with mortars, threatened by IEDs, and continually harassed by small arms fire, a deadly combination of attacks on them. But when the American troops demonstrated they came in to clear and help Iraqis hold a secure area, things started changing dramatically. Iraqi security forces began working better among themselves and with their forces. There was much greater civilian cooperation, and Iraqi civilians became our most vital source of intelligence. That intelligence, combined with the good work of the Iraqi security forces and Marine action, essentially eliminated most of the kinetic threats, the killing threats.

By the end of July 2007, the Iraqi Army was no longer needed in Al Anbar and moved on to other areas to chase al-Qaida. They turned the security in Al Anbar back to the Iraqi police, backed up by the Marines.

This began a very positive trajectory that continued throughout the time the platoon commander was there. In

the last 4 months he was there, he said the 2nd Battalion 6th Marines did not suffer any injuries from hostile kinetic attack—mortars, IEDs, small arms fire. But probably the most important thing was that al-Qaida lost its traction. It was denied the assistance and support of local populations. And for the Iraqis, the most significant thing was the Iraqis were much safer themselves, having less to fear from the terrorists who killed Muslims as freely as they killed Americans.

In my view, that is a military strategy for success. Al-Qaida forces must be driven out wherever they amass to mount attacks against us or our allies or peaceful Iraqis. Iraqis are taking over security with their Army and police. We must continue to train and support them and back them up when al-Qaida amasses forces against them. That is essential.

Al-Qaida will not go away anytime in the near future. But right now the military battle is in Iraq, and we must continue to strengthen the ISF to fight al-Qaida jointly with them and enable the ISF to do the basic job of assuring security and stability in Iraq. Al-Qaida will no doubt try to establish other beachheads, and we will attack them where we find them.

That is our military strategy. That depends upon good intelligence. That depends upon the passage of FISA. Our intelligence strategy is clear. We must have the FISA bill, and it is time for the House to act. It is the only way we can monitor top-level communications of al-Qaida leaders.

Working with our Pakistani allies, we have seen the death recently of Abu Laith al-Libi, the fifth-in-line operational chief of al-Qaida, who became eliminated. Fortunately for us, the operational leaders, the ones who give the orders, are taken out on a regular basis because we can get the information on them and we can work with our allies to take them out.

I would say, parenthetically, we need a clear, hold, and build strategy wherever terrorism threatens. That means before a radical group steps up and takes over a country. That means we must reject protectionist calls from those who would stop American economic ties and development activities, educational exchanges, with Islamic and Third World countries where terrorism seeks to gain a foothold.

What we call smart power is the essential element in maintaining long-term safety and security. The battle against terrorism is 20 percent kinetic. That is what our military does so well, and we are doing it well in Iraq. We need to be aggressive in going after their kinetic threats, against terrorists. We need strong intelligence activities. But 80 percent of the battle is economic development, personal contact, educational exchange, helping those countries know we are with them in partnership to assure their democracy, human rights, and economic opportunity through free markets in

their countries. That strategy is working in Iraq, and we need to apply that strategy wherever the danger exists or where it may exist.

What is working in Iraq right now? We have seen the COIN strategy. Attacks by insurgents and rival militias have fallen by 80 percent in Baghdad. Our marines have returned from Al Anbar on success, having routed al-Qaida. Al-Qaida once controlled big chunks of Iraq and is now fighting to maintain its last stronghold in the country in Mosul. According to senior Iraqi military officials, concrete blast walls that divide the capital can soon be removed.

These dramatic security improvements and our COIN strategy have, as intended, created an environment in which Iraqi political leaders can reconcile. Everybody wanted to see them act quicker than this body, Congress, can act. They passed a deBaathification law, a provincial election law, an amnesty law, a \$50 billion budget. These things are going to go through the political process. One of them was vetoed. But they are making the process work, and that is what we can expect, not that they will move more efficiently and effectively than we do.

Despite all the progress, some on the other side remain unwavering in their commitment to withdrawal. The artificial deadlines, timelines would jeopardize Iraq's very real chances that it will emerge as a secure and stable state.

Are the Democrats so intent on denying President Bush a victory for a war they insist is his that they would deny their own country a now achievable victory—a secure and stable Iraq? Trying to blame the Iraq war on Karl Rove is a political shot that has to be dismissed as nothing more.

The Iraqi Government has its problems, and there is too much sectarianism in the Government and the Iraqi Security Forces. But saying the benchmarks have not been met—and damning the war to failure on that basis—is shortsighted, defeatist, and yesterday's sound bite. We do not need any more sound bites. We do not need any more political campaigning on keeping our country safe. It is time we got serious about assuring our troops they have the support they need and that our intelligence agencies have the ability to use their full capabilities, technical capabilities in partnership with the private companies, to make sure we get the best intelligence available.

No responsible Iraqi official thinks we can leave now, nor do our U.S. commanders, and nor do any responsible world leaders, regardless of whether they felt we were right to go into Iraq in the first place.

If you think our world standing has gone down as a result of Iraq, watch it take a nosedive if we pull out precipitously and irresponsibly, leaving a mess in our wake: Chaos, widespread killing, potential nationwide sectarian

wars, and the reestablishment of an al-Qaida safe haven, a caliphate.

The same people who were wrong about the surge a year ago are determined to remain wrong about it now. We must defeat the retreat-and-defeat resolution. We must defeat an effort to establish our al-Qaida fighting strategy in public. We have a strategy. Anybody who wants to learn about it can learn about it. Some of it is classified. We are not going to talk about it publicly. But I join with my colleagues in urging defeat of both the Feingold amendments.

Now, Mr. President, I yield the floor for my colleague from Florida.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Missouri for his steadfast direction on this very important issue to the national security of our country and for the great work he does in our Intelligence Committee. But I also know he is someone who not only looks at this issue as it relates to the safety of the American people, but he also has had, as you might say, a little skin in the game. He has had his son over there on more than one occasion. So he is someone who speaks not only as a terrific Senator but as a father of someone who has been on the frontlines of this battle.

So I, too, rise in opposition to both Feingold proposals. I believe this is a time when anything other than retreat is the order of the day. It is odd we should come to this point at this point in time. Why, once again, after now repeated and repeated attempts without success to insist on a withdrawal and a retreat and a defeat, do we come back to revisit this very subject?

So I rise in opposition to the Feingold measure. The measure requires that the administration develop a strategy ensuring the deployments do not undermine military readiness or homeland security—which that is what they are about; they are about homeland security—and that Reserve units are not deployed more than once every 4 years and regular units not more than once every 2 years.

The fact of the matter is much of what this Feingold proposal—the current one—suggests or asks is information that the sponsors of this legislation, if they truly just seek to obtain that information, would find in very comprehensive documents that are already available.

There is something called a Quadrennial Defense Review, something else called the National Military Strategy. Also, there is the National Security Strategy. And there are many other documents such as these that are already available. These documents exist so we can have a fuller view of the challenges we face and the assets and plans we have in place to defeat the enemies of America.

I would further suggest that one of the key tools in the fight against al-Qaida is FISA, the Foreign Intelligence

Surveillance Act. That is something both the military and nonmilitary intelligence agencies use to track terror suspects. It is probably the single most effective tool we have in making arrests and disrupting terrorist operations.

The Protect America Act, nearly 2 weeks ago—which updated FISA—expired because the Congress failed to act. The Senate acted, the House did not. As a result, we run a serious risk of losing the cooperation of the partners we rely on for gathering intelligence. As the 9/11 Commission and others have pointed out, small gaps in intelligence or the inability to connect the dots can have catastrophic consequences.

Because of the uncertainty this Congress has helped to create, we are running the risk of losing these partners and missing out on information that could be vital to securing this Nation. It is imperative for our intelligence community to have every tool they need to collect intelligence at their disposal.

The core authorities provided by the Protect America Act have helped us to obtain exactly the type of information we need to keep America safe, and it is essential Congress reauthorize the act's core authorities, while also extending liability protection to those companies that assisted our Nation following 9/11.

As a member of the President's Cabinet on the fateful day of September 11, 2001, I can readily recall what this city was like on September 12. We could still see the smoke rising from the Pentagon building—that unbelievable sight of destruction, of death. It was a time when the Nation was assured we were about to be hit again. The decision was made that we needed to act, that we needed to move forward to try to protect our Nation. And thank the Good Lord, until today our Nation has been kept safe. That has not been by accident. That has not been just by fate. It has been because we have been aggressive in intelligence gathering, and we have been aggressive in taking the fight to the enemies of America.

Some in this body have argued the expiration of the Protect America Act has not weakened the intelligence community's ability to conduct surveillance and have cited an Executive order as a legitimate substitute for the act. I do not agree with that. I disagree.

An Executive order is not always as effective, efficient or safe for our intelligence professionals as the conditions accorded to them under the Protect America Act. In fact, this Executive order failed to aid our intelligence community in a particular case prior to 9/11. One of the September 11 hijackers communicated with a known overseas terrorist while living in the United States. But because that collection was conducted under an Executive order, the intelligence community could not identify the domestic end of

the communication and, further, were unable to collect the information that may have given greater insight into the planning of the 9/11 attacks.

In fact, this was cited as one of the central criticisms to the congressional joint inquiry that examined the intelligence failures leading up to the September 11 attacks.

In the absence of the Protect America Act, others have argued employing the outdated provisions of FISA would be sufficient to ensure there is no drop-off in the way we gather foreign and domestic intelligence. Unfortunately, using these particular provisions accorded under the FISA Act—unlike the Protect America Act—would impair our ability to collect information on foreign intelligence targets located overseas.

FISA was designed to govern intelligence surveillance of persons in the United States where the fourth amendment mandates that there must be probable cause before surveillance can begin. While this makes sense when targeting suspects in the United States for surveillance, it doesn't for surveillance of overseas targets and could result in the loss of potentially vital intelligence as our intelligence officials wait for the process to occur. It could also divert the attention of our linguists and analysts away from their core role, which is to protect the Nation from the task of providing detailed facts for FISA Court applications.

It is false to assume Congress's amendments to FISA are sufficient and that there is no longer a need to modernize the act. This past August, Congress amended the Protect America Act on a basis that runs counter to this particular statement. Since its inception in 1978, there have been many advancements to communications that have to be reflected, that have to be updated, and that have to be a part of FISA.

There has been an issue of concern also about Congress's failure to provide liability protection for private sector firms which helped the Federal Government in defending the Nation following the September 11 attacks. This was part of the Senate bill which had strong bipartisan support. Not providing liability protection, some have argued, will have no effect on our intelligence collection capabilities. The fact is that these companies acted in good faith, and they acted in good faith when they were called upon to assist our intelligence professionals in keeping our Nation safe after our Nation was attacked.

I once again want to remind us about September 12. What did we feel like? What were our thoughts at that time? What would we not have done to ensure that America was kept safe from another savage attack? By the way, our enemies are still at it. Nothing has changed in terms of their intentions. What has changed is their capabilities, because we have been on the offense.

What has changed is America's ability to defend itself because we have been protecting ourselves.

It was the right thing for these companies at the time to assist their Nation in need, and it was the right thing for us to do to provide them with immunity from the potential barrage of lawsuits they could face. It was the fair and the just thing to do. Private party assistance is necessary and critical to ensure that the intelligence community can collect the information needed to protect our country from attack.

In a report on S. 2248, the Senate Intelligence Committee agreed when stating:

The Intelligence Committee cannot obtain the intelligence it needs without assistance—

from our telecommunications partners.

Exposing the private sector to potential billion dollar class action lawsuits would set a dangerous precedent after they worked admirably with the folks in our intelligence community to defend our country. If we are unable to count on their support in the future, we cannot continue to pursue terrorists who are still very much interested in attacking us again.

Yesterday, testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Admiral McConnell was very clear. This is necessary. It is essential for Admiral McConnell and for our intelligence community to be able to do their work. We have a solemn obligation to keep to the American people, which is to keep them safe and to remain proactive in identifying threats before they materialize.

Through the benefit of hindsight, we have identified some areas where the bureaucracy has failed the American people, and we must work to fix them by ensuring our intelligence officials have everything they need to stay on the offense in the war against our enemies.

One thing I think we can agree on is that Iraq is the pivotal front on our global war on terror. That is where we are fighting al-Qaida. We fight them there so we don't have to fight them on our soil.

Osama bin Laden has called Iraq the "central front" against the war on America and the West, and al-Qaida in Iraq shares that goal. Our soldiers are on the front lines of this war on terror, and it is our duty to give them everything we can to help them achieve their objectives.

Admiral McConnell yesterday was talking about how this particular act could help in the case of kidnapped soldiers on the front and that this inability would be a tremendous detriment to our ability to keep our soldiers safe on the battlefield.

I understand the bill we are on today and the legislation we considered earlier this week are aimed at pulling United States troops out of Iraq immediately, precipitously, irresponsibly, and signaling defeat. If we are seeking conditions in Iraq today such as those

we saw a year ago—presurge—then I could understand why we would be debating this. When we were here a year ago, many of my friends on the other side of the aisle were ready to admit defeat. The distinguished majority announced that the United States had "lost" the war in Iraq, there was no way to win, and that we should pull our troops out as soon as possible. Presidential candidates still continue to insist that an immediate pullout is the only logical answer that a Commander in Chief should take.

A lot has changed since a year ago. In February of 2007, ethnosectarian violence accounted for nearly 800 deaths in Baghdad. So far this month, ethnosectarian-related deaths number below 40, a 95-percent decrease. During the same period in Baghdad, suicide attacks went from 12 a month to 4 this past January, a 66-percent decrease. Attacks have decreased in 17 of 18 provinces in Iraq. IED detonations are down by 45 percent in Baghdad since February of 2007.

This is to say that the war wasn't lost. Admitting defeat was premature, if politically expedient, at the time. We did not lose the war. The surge is effective. Our troops, as we knew they would, did rise to the challenge. By the way, it is not only our troops, it is our commanders. It is General Petraeus. It is the brilliant strategies that have been followed.

No one wants to have our troops in Iraq any longer than necessary. I look forward to the day when young people I know who are paying this country's duty there can come home to their families and to their young children. We are there because our military presence is necessary. It is necessary for our national security.

The troop withdrawal measure, Feingold No. 1, was debated this week and would cut off funds for combat deployments in Iraq in 120 days. Not only would it cut off money for our troops, it would cut off any chance at continuing the political process that has begun to take hold in Iraq.

The atmosphere that the surge has created in Iraq has allowed political progress to take place. Sure, the voices of defeatism would say we have made no political progress. The fact is from time to time we get a little bogged down in the Senate, even after 200 years of meeting together and after 200 years of relative peace and tranquility. But progress is being made politically.

This month, on February 13, the Council of Representatives passed three key pieces of legislation: the amnesty law, the provincial powers law, and a fiscal budget.

The amnesty law: The Government of Iraq's general amnesty law represents a benchmark in facilitating political reconciliation and the rule of law of Iraq. It addresses the scope of eligibility for amnesty for Iraqis in Iraqi detention facilities, whether they have been brought to trial or not. The law exempts from this amnesty those who

have committed specific serious crimes such as premeditated murder or kidnapping or those who are subject to the death penalty.

The provincial powers law: Along with the elections law, the provincial powers law provides the establishment of a new provincial election by October of 2008 and defines the authorities of the federal government in relation to the provinces.

The fiscal budget: The \$48 billion Iraqi budget would represent a 17-percent increase in spending over last year's budget, with a 23-percent increase in security expenditures. They are beginning to pay for defending their country. Capital funds allocated to the 15 provinces will increase over 50 percent, from \$2.1 billion to \$3.3 billion, reflecting the improved budget execution performance by the provinces in 2007.

Democrats' proposals for a quick withdrawal of American forces without regard to consequences will leave America less safe and undermine our national interests. Moreover, disclosing to al-Qaida our plan for defeating them is a recipe for defeat of our own troops. General Petraeus tells us that the effective fight against al-Qaida begins in Iraq. General Petraeus says:

We have an enormous national interest in Iraq, first of all, in helping the Iraqis achieve its objectives, our objectives of a secure, stable Iraq, connected into the region. Not a regional problem, not a base for al-Qaida from which to train and export terror. . . .

And, I would add further, one of the possibilities of a triumphant Iraq, of a triumphant United States in Iraq, of a state that could be a stable democracy in the heart of the region, and what a difference it could make as an example to other nations.

I am still hopeful enough to believe that this can be achieved, and certainly when we look to where we were a year or so ago to where we are today, a lot has changed and a lot has happened.

I see my colleague from Colorado patiently waiting.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I personally thank the Senator from Florida for a fine statement. I listened very carefully to what he had to say on FISA, and then his message of hope to the Iraqi people. I have had an opportunity to serve with the Senator from Florida in the Senate and I feel very honored to be able to do that. I also had an opportunity to interact with him when he was a member of the President's Cabinet. He is a leader whom I think has a future and I certainly appreciate his leadership here in the Senate as well as in the President's Cabinet. I thank him for his dedication to our country.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Colorado.

Mr. ALLARD. I also want to recognize Senator BOND, the Senator from

Missouri. He spoke before Senator MARTINEZ. I thought he gave a very meaningful talk about the importance of FISA, along with Senator MARTINEZ. He has a personal interest in what happens, not only as a Senator from the State of Missouri, but he has a son who serves in Iraq. So he gets a firsthand report, and I know he spends a lot of time studying it. He certainly has become one of the more knowledgeable people in the Senate as far as intelligence matters are concerned. I think it behooves all of us to listen to his presentation and the message he is sending.

I rise today to discuss S. 2634 in light of the current situation regarding the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. The bill we are discussing calls upon the Secretaries of Defense, State, and Homeland Security, along with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Director of National Intelligence, to jointly submit to Congress a report setting forth the global strategy of the United States to combat and defeat al-Qaida and its affiliates. I can't imagine that this proposal would have any effect—given, for instance, that the Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell has been calling for an extension of the Protect America Act, and the House refuses to listen. Director McConnell feels an extension is necessary to combat and defeat terrorists, including all al-Qaida, but that proposal doesn't seem to matter much.

As we all know, the existing authorities provided by the Protect America Act expired nearly 2 weeks ago. On February 16, the House Democratic leadership allowed these provisions to expire without a vote. So for the last 2 weeks, our intelligence community has lost out on opportunities to gather intelligence and to continue to keep our Nation safe.

As a majority of Senators know, the recently passed Senate version of FISA is a solid, workable, bipartisan bill that would greatly enhance the protection of this country. In addition, it would increase civil liberty protections and the protections of the privacy rights of Americans.

The Senate passed FISA modernization with bipartisan support. Since then, the House has failed to take up the provisions. What is most distressing, and quite frankly the most insulting factor in this situation, is that within the same week the House chose not to take up and make permanent essential provisions from the Protect America Act, the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform found time to conduct a hearing on steroids in professional baseball that amounted to nothing more than a media circus. It is for reasons such as these that Congress has some of the lowest approval ratings in history. To top it off, the House promptly adjourned for a week of recess as the FISA provisions expired. If nothing else, this action—or more correctly inaction—presents the appearance that

House leadership is prioritizing media-friendly events above the hard work of keeping our Nation safe and providing our intelligence agencies with the tools they need.

FISA in its current form is not sufficient to fight the war on terror. This issue, as much as any issue brought before Congress, needs to be clarified in a timely fashion. Time is most certainly not on our side, and continued delays in the passage of this bill will simply prolong our existing vulnerabilities.

Director of Intelligence Mike McConnell and Attorney General Michael Mukasey wrote on February 22 that:

We have lost intelligence information this past week as a direct result of uncertainty created by Congress's failure to act.

Mr. President, is this a comment we simply want to disregard? Are House Democrats under the impression the DNI and Attorney General are bluffing? These claims need to be taken seriously, and political posturing simply will not suffice at this point.

Our intelligence community must act quickly in order to be successful. As lives literally depend on their expeditious decisions, it is not in our best interests to deprive our intelligence community of the ability to collect necessary foreign intelligence information. Having the ability to collect and obtain correct information at the right time is of critical importance to our struggle against radical Islamic terrorists who have grown increasingly brazen in their tactics. Additionally, our enemies have become more adept to changes in technology. The world moves quickly, and we have no choice but to keep up with the changes if we are to keep our country safe. The absence of a legislative framework creates an ambiguous environment that presents our enemies with opportunities to exploit our weakened defenses.

Nearly 2 weeks later, these provisions are still surrounded with uncertainty, as the House has failed to act on the bipartisan legislation put forth by the Senate. The information that has been lost in the last weeks is lost forever. We will never know what happened and, hopefully, we will never learn what we missed during this time the hard way. If we think the enemy is not watching the actions of Congress, we are simply fooling ourselves. Simply put, this is too critical an issue to be playing politics.

We are only hurting ourselves and insulting the men and women of our military and intelligence community who risk their lives every day while gathering and acquiring certain intelligence data, if we are going to waste their efforts by bogging down the collection of critical information. We know full well we must do a better job of connecting the dots in our enemies' communications, and the challenge is only increased with the Internet, cell phones, and other forms of communication. We don't need to unnecessarily place Americans in greater danger. To needlessly fail to detect a terrorist plot

is one of the most egregious disservices that our Government could commit. The fact is, we are not on the same playing field as our enemies. As Americans, we have higher standards. We abide by laws and protocols which our enemies do not follow.

Protecting the civil liberties of Americans has always been one of the cornerstones of our democracy. However, a balance must be struck between protecting civil liberties and protecting our citizens from foreign threats. I believe this balance has been struck through the Senate bill. The legislation strikes this necessary balance. In changing times, revision of our surveillance laws needs to occur.

In the time between the court ruling requiring the Government to obtain FISA Court orders for foreign surveillance and passage of the Protect America Act, collection of foreign intelligence information decreased by 66 percent. We cannot ignore that fact. We are not making our Nation safer if our intelligence-gathering capabilities are functioning at one-third of their capacity. As such, Congress addressed these concerns through the Protect America Act. But now we have essentially taken a step back, and that is inexcusable.

As it stands today, there currently exists a legal uncertainty for the telecommunications companies assisting us in this critical task of gathering intelligence. This simply makes it more difficult to collect the vital information needed to keep Americans safe. I cannot emphasize enough how paramount it is to have the assistance of private telecommunications carriers to carry out intelligence gathering.

The Senate bill provides protective immunity to those carriers whose cooperation will be needed in the future. It also provides retroactive immunity to private carriers from civil lawsuits arising out of their alleged cooperation with the National Security Agency in their terrorist surveillance program between September 1, 2001, and January 17, 2007. Also, this immunity does not extend to Government officials or to any criminal proceedings that may arise in the future out of the terrorist surveillance program.

Thus far the House version does not offer immunity to the telecommunications companies. I hate to even allude to the fact that failure to offer this immunity stands to benefit only two groups—terrorists who exploit our system and trial lawyers who file class action suits—but I feel I must.

Mr. President, the U.S. Government owes these patriotic companies and their executives protections based on the good-faith effort they made in working with our intelligence community, assisting in their efforts to discover and thwart attacks against our Nation. The Senate Intelligence committee found and stated in its report that, without retroactive immunity, the private sector might be unwilling to cooperate with lawful Government

requests in the future, resulting in what the committee calls “a possible reduction in intelligence.” This is simply unacceptable for the safety of our Nation.

Because the companies stepped up to help their country in a time of war, they have been the subject of over 40 lawsuits, and counting. It doesn't take an accountant to realize these claims and the litigation involved could end up costing hundreds of billions of dollars. These companies could end up in bankruptcy, and the trial lawyers will continue to get richer.

The bottom line is the FISA temporary provisions need to be reauthorized as soon as possible. The temporary provisions expired on February 16, almost 2 weeks ago, and since then leaders in the intelligence community have stated that we have lost important information as a result of Congress's failure to act. It is unacceptable and irresponsible to ignore the needs of our intelligence community at this stage of the legislative process. The House owes it to America to accept the Senate bill or expeditiously work out changes in a conference so we can provide the protection the American people deserve and demand.

I see my colleague from the State of New Mexico is prepared to make his comments. I publicly thank him for his service over the years. He is a great leader. I appreciate what he has done for America.

I yield the floor.

ENERGY

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to speak about our Nation's growing reliance on foreign oil, and to outline many of the ideas that can help reduce that dependence.

Ten years ago, I gave a speech at Harvard University entitled, “A New Nuclear Paradigm.” Its purpose was twofold: to shine a light on the substantial benefits of advancing nuclear power, and to outline specific policy initiatives needed for a nuclear renaissance in the United States. At the time, I stated that it was “extraordinarily difficult to conduct a debate on nuclear issues.” After all, it appeared that America had given up on nuclear power.

In my speech, I observed that an open discussion of nuclear energy issues produced only “nasty political fallout.” A lingering worry lay deep within me that as such critical issues retreated into the halls of the academy, rather than the Halls of Congress, we risked losing an opportunity to have a serious debate. Had that come to pass, the United States would have missed out on the vital contribution that nuclear energy offers to our national security, economic strength, and foreign policy objectives.

My remarks came in the midst of a stretch when nuclear energy was largely dismissed. Between 1978 and 2007, not a single application was filed for a new nuclear plant to be constructed in the United States. Internationally, the story was much different. During that same period of time, more than 250 nu-

clear reactors were brought on-line around the world. And, as President Carter took our Nation down the short sighted path of a once-through nuclear fuel cycle, Europe and Japan wisely chose to proceed with their reprocessing and plutonium-use programs. The poor decisions made here stood in stark contrast to those made abroad. Nations that chose to pursue nuclear power became more competitive in the global economy, and America's long-standing edge in innovation began to slip.

In the decade since my address at Harvard, we have changed the face of the debate on nuclear energy. We did this by ensuring that it was framed in the context of how to advance nuclear energy, not whether we should. It is now clear to serious thinkers that advancing nuclear power is essential to providing clean, safe, affordable, and reliable electricity. And, it should be equally clear that the advancement of nuclear power is the essential tool in confronting the challenge of global climate change.

The clearest evidence of this shift in thinking came with the passage of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which included loan guarantees, tax incentives, risk insurance, and an extension of the Price-Anderson Act. All of these policies are important for the development of nuclear power. And to this day, the signing of that important legislation, in my home State of New Mexico, remains a watershed moment in America's nuclear renaissance. In the 30 months that have passed since the bill was signed into law, we have seen the planning stages begin for 33 new nuclear reactors in the United States. I was thrilled to take part in an event last fall celebrating the first operating license application in decades. Since then, six more applications for new nuclear reactors have been filed with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

To put the importance of these achievements in their proper perspective, one must appreciate the enormous global benefits of a nuclear renaissance in this country. Consider that today, there are 104 nuclear reactors in service around the Nation. Together, they displace the same amount of carbon dioxide as is emitted by nearly every passenger car on the road in America. A future for nuclear power in this country will truly mean a brighter tomorrow.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 has already had a positive impact on the advancement of other energy resources as well. The Federal Government has now approved seven new Liquefied Natural Gas terminals, which could bring an additional 15.1 billion cubic feet of natural gas to the U.S. marketplace. As a result of that bill, enough wind-power has been brought on-line to power 2½ million homes. Along with much-needed electricity capacity, this new wind production has generated \$16 billion in economic activity, created new green jobs across the country, and displaced 16 billion tons of carbon dioxide.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 also included the first-ever ethanol man-

date, a small but important step toward reducing our dependence on foreign oil. This standard has been so successful that since the bill's passage, 77 new ethanol plants have broken ground across the country. Last December, we voted to substantially expand this standard to continue to revitalize rural America and provide our Nation with home-grown energy.

In the years ahead, the benefits of this act will be even more apparent. Renewable fuel usage will increase. The decline in domestic oil production will slow. And if the 33 nuclear reactors now being planned are built, they will generate enough electricity to power 28 million American homes.

In the following year, 2006, Congress picked up where it left off and passed the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act. Staring down a more than two decades-old moratorium that prevented the discovery of our Nation's deep sea resources—we acted. By lifting a ban in the Gulf of Mexico, we allowed for the production of American resources in an area that covers more than 8 million acres.

This bill is already attracting great interest, and investment, in America's ocean energy resources. An estimated 1.26 billion barrels of oil and 5.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas were made available as a result of the decision to open this area. That is enough natural gas to heat and cool nearly 6 million homes for 15 years.

The 2006 bill is also delivering significant revenues to the Treasury. Last October, the Department of the Interior conducted a lease sale in the central Gulf of Mexico, part of the area covered by the new law. That sale attracted \$2.9 billion in high bids, the second highest total in U.S. leasing history.

More important than the resources made available, and the revenues brought in, were changes to the prevailing mindset—that it is acceptable to lock up American resources as both foreign dependence and the costs of essential goods and services continue to rise. We must continue fighting against that type of outdated thinking.

Last December, after 12 full months of debate, Congress again responded to America's energy and environmental challenges by calling for greater efficiencies, a stronger energy supply, and a cleaner environment. With the enactment of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, we will see a 40-percent increase in fuel economy by 2020, a savings of several billion barrels of oil, and 36 billion gallons of biofuels introduced into our fuel mix by 2022. As a result of this new law, energy usage in Federal buildings will be reduced by 30 percent, and 6 billion tons of carbon dioxide will be displaced by 2030.

I begin with these examples to prove that progress on energy policy is not only possible—but that it has, in fact, become something of a pattern. While

conventional wisdom holds that Washington has been asleep in meeting our energy challenges, those of us in Congress have agreed on three pieces of landmark, bipartisan energy legislation in the past three years.

Despite this progress, the energy debate should, and must, continue. Today more than ever, policymakers are faced with a daunting task: how to meet America's growing energy needs efficiently, affordably, and responsibly. Congress's recent achievements have been years in the making. They are steps in the right direction. But in many ways, they are overshadowed by the enormity of the challenges that remain.

Americans now spend hundreds of billions of dollars to import oil each year. Over the course of decades, these billions will become trillions. A tremendous amount of American wealth, accumulated over generations, is being transferred to nations that are rich with oil. We are trading our American capital—a resource that can grow and multiply—for Middle East oil, a volatile and finite commodity. Just as oil and gas wells bore into the surface of the Earth, so too has the stable foundation of the American economy been penetrated by those who sell us the energy that we cannot, or will not, produce for ourselves.

Consider our current situation. In 2005, the United States consumed roughly 7.6 billion barrels of oil. More than 60 percent of this supply came from abroad, and it came at a cost of \$230 billion. It is too early to calculate how much money we will send overseas this year, but at our current pace, this number could surpass \$400 billion.

To put those numbers in perspective, it would cost less—\$188 billion—to repair every structurally deficient bridge in America and \$230 billion per year is more than enough to provide health care, not only for every American child but for every American. It is eight times more than the United States distributed in Federal foreign aid in 2005, and enough to reduce that year's Federal deficit by nearly three-quarters. In the wake of the devastation wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, \$230 billion would have been enough to completely rebuild the gulf coast. And, \$230 billion is well beyond the cost of the economic growth package that the Congress just passed to get our Nation's economy back on track.

With high prices, growing consumption, and decreasing production here at home, the amount of money Americans spend to import oil is set to accelerate dramatically. If oil prices remain high over the next 25 years—and there is little reason to believe that they will not—the Energy Information Administration projects that our reliance on foreign oil will cost as much as \$8.5 trillion, even without taking inflation into account. This calculation assumes \$89 trillion to be the average price of oil through 2030, a price that we surpassed for much of 2007 and nearly all of this year so far.

Here is one thing we can all agree on: \$8.5 trillion is a staggering sum, especially when compared to spending on oil imports for the previous 25-year period. According to the EIA, we spent a total of \$1.6 trillion to import oil from 1980 to 2004. This bears repeating: \$1.6 trillion over the past 25 years, \$8.5 trillion over the next 25 years, more than \$10 trillion in half a century. These figures reveal America's dependence on imported oil for what it is—a great and growing burden that will require sustained action to resolve.

The dire consequences of this arrangement are already becoming evident. In the future, they will be felt even more acutely—rippling through our economy, decreasing household income, and siphoning away jobs. Left unchecked, this dependence will threaten our prosperity and our way of life. It has the potential to make us poor.

Unfortunately, these costs are merely the tip of the iceberg. No discussion of oil imports is complete without an examination of the broader implications for our economy, our national security, and our relationship with the rest of the world. The figures I have quoted account only for the transaction price that our refiners and marketers will pay to acquire oil from foreign countries. These costs reflect one, but not all, of the many consequences associated with our reliance on imported oil.

A good place to start is by looking at our economy, a main focus of the Presidential primary races, because oil imports will have a significant impact on its continued vitality. It is testament to the strength of our economy that high oil prices alone have not already thrust our country into a recession. As many experts have noted, our economic energy intensity has improved greatly over the past few decades. Energy consumption has leveled off on a per capita basis, and energy spending as a percentage of GDP dropped significantly between the 1970s and early 21st century.

Many now consider our economy less vulnerable to the price of oil, no matter the cost of each barrel. To be sure, some progress has been made. But the economy is certainly not immune to expensive crude, and we cannot ignore historical precedent, which has established a trend of economic downturn in the wake of high oil prices.

In 2001, the EIA reported that there have been “observable, and dramatic changes in GDP growth as the world oil price has undergone dramatic change. The price shocks of 1973–74, the late 1970s/early 1980s, and early 1990s were all followed by recessions . . .” Our present experience has been a gradual and sustained increase in prices, not a price shock. And yet the lesson here is the same: an economy so dependent on such a volatile commodity can only be so strong. As we continue to export capital in order to import oil, and as oil-exporting nations grow more com-

petitive as a result, it will become increasingly difficult for our country's resilience to endure.

I will mark this, as per my request, and I will continue tomorrow with the second part.

I will stop at this point, yield the floor, and I thank the Chair.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION ACT OF 2008

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I have two topics to address, the first on the bill that Senator GRASSLEY and I have on HGH, to keep it out of the hands of people who don't need it, but I will wait a few minutes on that. We are hoping that maybe we can get clearance on the other side of the aisle. I have talked to both of these Senators who have objections, but I will talk about housing first.

We are now on our housing stimulus bill. It is called the Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2008. It was offered by Senator REID, but Senator REID had consulted, of course, with all of the relevant committee chairmen—Senator DODD, chairman of the Banking Committee; I am chairman of the Subcommittee on Housing of the Banking Committee; Senator BAUCUS on the Finance Committee; Senator LEAHY on the Judiciary Committee—and this is a carefully thought-out, modest, balanced package that aims at the bull's eye of our economic crisis, which is housing.

Make no mistake about it, unless we address the housing crisis, we are not going to be able to clear up this economy. In fact, unfortunately, the inverse is true. If we don't address the housing crisis, the likelihood of this economy plummeting into a rather deep recession is large. So there is an urgency to addressing this housing crisis.

The voluntary measures President Bush has supported, that Secretary Paulson—a man I have great respect for—has tried to put together, have not worked. That is a general and broad consensus, that it has not worked at all. The need to do something is greater than ever. Over 2 million people are likely to have their homes foreclosed upon in the next few years. That, of course, damages them greatly, but it also damages the financial institutions that hold the mortgages, estimated at each foreclosure to cost the mortgagor, or mortgagee, the financial institution, over \$60,000.

It hurts the people who live around them. Because what has been shown is that if there is a foreclosure within one-tenth mile of your home, your housing value goes down about .8 percent. And it hurts the overall economy,

because when people are not in their homes, or even people who are in their homes and who have fully paid their mortgage but they find their housing values declining, they spend less. The housing crisis is directly related to the fact that this Christmas season was the lowest spending Christmas season in about 7 years.

Then we have another problem also emanating from the housing crisis, and that is the credit crunch. We have a severe credit crunch occurring in our country today. All kinds of financial instruments are not being bought and sold. They do not have a market and there is a freeze. People are afraid to move. As a result of this credit crunch, our markets are frozen.

The Port Authority of New York, one of the most stable institutions in this country—it owns the airports, it owns a lot of the bridges—gets a steady, regular stream of income. No one believes it is ever not going to pay its bonds. Yet it had to pay 20 percent on temporary bonds because the markets are so frozen.

I heard from my roommate in that little house we live in, GEORGE MILLER of California, that the East Bay has a similar authority, and the East Bay of San Francisco had to pay about 17 or 18 percent. So this is a nationwide problem.

We have problems with student loans now. I read in today's paper that the Pennsylvania Student Loan Authority is no longer lending. So this is spreading way beyond housing, and it relates to a fear that we have not evaluated credit properly.

We have to do something about it. The package that has been put together and offered by the Democratic majority has five pieces—five easy pieces—that should be acceptable to everybody.

It includes two kinds of tax changes: raising the cap on mortgage revenue bonds, so that States can issue more of these bonds and help homeowners get refinanced; and it also includes what is called the loss carryforward, so home builders and others in the housing area, who are not able to actually go forward because they have losses, carry forward those losses and build homes again.

It also contains another \$200 million for mortgage counselors. This is a provision I originated with Senator CASEY and Senator BROWN, because we need someone on the ground to help those about to go in foreclosure to avoid it, particularly those who have the financial means to do it. Over 60 percent of the people who will potentially be foreclosed upon have that ability. We did allocate \$180 million in the omnibus bill, with Senator MURRAY's leadership. We went to her, and she was great, and put it right in. But of that 180, 130 has already been spent. It shows you the great need. We always predicted 180 wouldn't be enough. This is another modest amount—200.

The fourth provision is money for CDBG, Community Development Block

Grants, to go to the cities so they can buy foreclosed homes, they can buy vacant lots, and prevent the whole neighborhood from going down the drain because of the foreclosure crisis.

And, finally, the bankruptcy provision which my friend and colleague Senator DURBIN has authored, which I support, would say that homeowners, when they go into bankruptcy, can use their primary residence as part of the workout, which now, for some arcane reason, they are not allowed to do.

These are five modest provisions that can do a lot. But, unfortunately, there are some on the other side, including the White House, who are sticking to the status quo. They say, don't do anything. The Government should not be involved. They have ideological handcuffs on. The Government not being involved? That is reminiscent of the 1920s or the 1890s. It sounds like William McKinley or Herbert Hoover. That is no longer the economics the vast majority of Americans live by today. No Government involvement when someone's house is about to be foreclosed upon?

Earlier this week we saw status quo on the war in Iraq. Now we are beginning to see status quo on the mortgage crisis. The American people are crying out for change on the war in Iraq and on housing. And it is so regrettable that so many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, and it is so regrettable that the President, ensconced in the White House, is talking status quo when 75 percent of the people in America want a change in the direction in this country.

We can certainly debate that change. There are different prescriptions for it. But almost no one says status quo except, it seems, the minority in this body, the minority in the other body, and the President: The status quo, do not have the Government be involved, have these voluntary programs which do virtually nothing.

It is not going to work. So I would urge my colleagues to support us in this housing program. Senator REID has said he will allow amendments if we have changes in the housing program. I am not talking about whether we should debate the estate tax or debate Bush's tax cuts but real changes in these programs, modifications or additions. I heard my colleague from Georgia, Senator ISAKSON, who has a proposal for a \$5,000 credit for new home buyers. That is something that I would look at seriously. We can come together and have what unfortunately now has become a good, old-fashioned debate on this issue that affects us and come up with a consensus piece of legislation.

So, please, do not block the bill. Do not stand there with your arms crossed and say: Do nothing. There are 2 million homeowners about to go into foreclosure. There are 50 million homeowners whose home values are declining. There are 300 million Americans who see the economy hurdling south,

all of them crying out for us to do something.

The one thing on which there is a consensus, and there may be a broad consensus on what to do, that although I think there may be in our bill, but the one thing everyone agrees on is do not just stand there and do nothing. Yet my colleagues across the aisle, when we vote on this housing measure, who will try to block it with another filibuster, they are saying: Do nothing.

I don't think that is wise policy. Frankly, I don't think that is wise politics. I am sort of surprised because when we offered the package, we did it in the best of faith. And Senator REID has offered to allow amendments that are germane amendments to be debated to show that we do not want to say our way or the highway, but we did want to move forward on housing.

To repeat, the need to do something is real. Housing is the bull's eye of our economic problems. We can do things that almost everyone agrees will do some good. To my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, please, please, please, join us. We want to work with you and come up with a package that will turn our economy around, and the housing market and the other markets as well.

I am going to briefly ask to put us into a quorum call so I can discuss with some of the folks on the other side of the aisle whether we can move forward on the HGH bill.

Mr. GRAHAM. Would the Senator yield?

Mr. SCHUMER. I will yield.

Mr. GRAHAM. I would request to be able to speak for 10 minutes and then go into a quorum call, if that is OK.

Mr. SCHUMER. I do not have a problem with that. I will come back to the floor. I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from South Carolina be allowed to speak for 10 minutes, then we will come back and try to handle the HGH bill.

Mr. GRAHAM. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. GRAHAM. I appreciate the ability to speak. And I wanted to talk about the pending business before the Senate, the bill by Senator FEINGOLD, with 30 hours of debate about whether we should have a requirement for different agencies to report back to the Congress about where al-Qaida exists and how to defeat them and how to deploy our forces to defeat them.

I would argue that you do not have to be a military expert to understand where al-Qaida exists. They exist in all corners of the globe. Their goal is to prey on poverty, to take smart people and convert them to their cause. And how do we beat them? Fight them. Understand what they are up to so we can hit them before they hit us.

And whatever problems we have with coming together over domestic problems and domestic agenda items, it is important that we try to find common ground to deal with the problems facing the country domestically, but surely we can come together to authorize

an intelligence tool called FISA to make sure we understand where al-Qaida is, what they are up to, and what their plans are vis-a-vis the United States.

And this body, to its credit, the Senate passed a reauthorization of FISA that I think is a great balance between intelligence needs, tracking an enemy that we are at war with, and making sure that American citizens are protected in terms of their constitutional rights and civil liberties.

This passed 68 to 27 or 28 and went to the House and here we are without a bill. The bill has expired. The FISA legislation that the Congress came up with last year is now expired, and there is a hole in our intelligence-gathering capabilities. So those of us who wanted to find out what the enemy is up to—and I think that is the vast majority of this body—those of us who want to have a balance between civil liberties and being at war with a vicious enemy, we need to push the Congress, particularly our colleagues in the House, to get this FISA legislation reauthorized.

Al-Qaida is in Iraq. They were not there before. That is probably true. They are there now. And the reason they came to Iraq is to make sure we lost. They came to Iraq to make sure this effort of moderation among Muslims in a Muslim country fails. It is their worst nightmare for a Muslim nation such as Iraq to come together and align themselves with the West, coalition forces, adopt democratic principles, allow a mother to have a say about the future of her child, and to live under the rule of law and not the rule of the gun, and to accept religious differences. That is al-Qaida's worst nightmare.

The reason they were not there under Saddam Hussein's regime is he was not the problem to them. You know, dictatorships are very nonthreatening to al-Qaida. Saudi Arabia has been a problem because Saudi Arabia has aligned itself with the West at times and allowed American troops to operate out of Saudi Arabia, such as when Saddam Hussein attacked its neighbor, Kuwait. So al-Qaida has gone after Saudi Arabia.

But they were indifferent to Iraq because Saddam Hussein vowed to destroy the State of Israel, it was an oppressive regime, and pretty much not their problem. Al-Qaida's biggest fear, again, is tolerance, moderation, the rule of law, a role for a woman in society, and the ability to worship God in more than one way. That is why they are in Iraq.

And to say they were not there before Saddam Hussein and think that is a clever answer to our problems and the justification to withdraw misses the point and shows a lack of understanding of why they chose to go to Iraq.

Why do the Taliban fight in Afghanistan? They would like power back. Why are we fighting them? To make sure they do not get power back. So if you

really want to defeat al-Qaida and come up with a strategy to make sure they are diminished and defeated, do not leave Iraq before the job is done.

The greatest news of all from the surge is not the stunning political progress that has exceeded all of my expectations, it is not the economic vitality that is coming back to Iraq, not the reductions in casualties, not the reduction in sectarian deaths, the big picture, the big story line from the surge in Iraq is that Muslims aligned themselves with coalition forces to make sure that al-Qaida would be defeated in Iraq.

Sunnis in the Anbar province that were at this time last year very much living in fear of al-Qaida decided to take matters into their own hands, align themselves with us. And due to additional combat power and capability, we were able, along with the Sunni Arabs in Anbar province, to deal al-Qaida a devastating blow.

They have left Anbar for the most part. They are diminished in Anbar, still not completely defeated. And they are moving north. And we are right after them. They are up in the Mosul region. If we are patient and we are persistent and we keep the troop levels we need to keep them, along with the Iraqi security forces that have grown by 100,000 since last year, we will crush them. We will capture or kill them in large numbers as we have done over the past year.

The answer to the question of this legislation by Senator FEINGOLD: What do we do to defeat al-Qaida? We align ourselves with people in the region and throughout the world who will help us fight them. We do not leave them hanging. We do not withdraw because of the politics of the next election. We align ourselves with people who are willing to fight al-Qaida over there so we do not have to fight them here. And we do not withdraw in a way that would allow al-Qaida to get back off the mat, back into the fight. The first thing they would do is go to the moderates who have helped us and try to kill them.

So this whole idea of leaving Iraq because we need to fight al-Qaida is absurd. We need to fight al-Qaida wherever we find al-Qaida. And they are now in Iraq because they know this experiment in democratic principles and moderation that is going on in Iraq is a death blow to their agenda.

So if you want to defeat them, make sure Iraq succeeds. Their biggest nightmare, again, is a tolerant, moderate form of government in the Mideast. Iraq could be an ally to this country for years to come. It could be a place that denies al-Qaida a safe haven, that rejects Iranian expansion. The payoffs of winning in Iraq to our national security interests are enormous.

The question as to whether Iraq is part of a global struggle or a mere side adventure, I would give you some guidance there from Osama bin Laden himself. December 2004:

I now address my speech to the whole Islamic Nation. Listen and understand. The most important and serious issue today for the world is this Third World War. It is raging in the land of Two Rivers. The world's milestone and pillar is Baghdad, the Capitol of the caliphate.

This is Osama bin Laden telling his would-be followers where to go and what to do. The Third World War he talks about raging is raging in Iraq. That is why he wants us to fail in Iraq because he would like to be able to have a place from which to operate in Iraq to perpetuate his agenda.

He understands very clearly if we are successful in Iraq, if the Iraqi people themselves are successful, it is dealing al-Qaida a great blow. So the good news from the surge is that after having tasted al-Qaida life in Anbar province, the people of Anbar said: No, thank you. They are now taking their fate in their own hands with our help. And the idea of withdrawing from Iraq as some way to better fight al-Qaida is absurd, naive, and dangerous. The way you beat al-Qaida is align yourself with people like we found in Iraq. You help them help themselves, and you make sure that when Iraq is said and done in terms of battle and a greater struggle that we have won and al-Qaida has lost.

To leave prematurely would put this enemy back into the fight. I cannot think of anything more heartening to al-Qaida operatives throughout the world than to hear that the Congress of the United States is going to precipitously withdraw from Iraq, giving them hope where they have none now. They know they cannot win in Baghdad, Mosul, Fallujah, Basra. They understand that. It is very demoralizing to them right now. The only place they are holding out hope is here in Washington. Can they do something spectacular to create a headline throughout the world that would break the will of the American Congress to stand behind the Iraqi people, who are stepping to the plate and making not only Iraq safer but the United States safer? I hope the answer is no.

I hope we will not let terrorists, murderers, some of the worst forces known to mankind in the form of al-Qaida dictate foreign policy in the United States because they are willing to murder and kill the innocent to break our will.

I hope we are smart enough to reauthorize FISA because this hole in our intelligence-gathering capability is incredibly dangerous. Everybody acknowledges that we live in a dangerous time. Well, do something about it, reauthorize FISA now before we pay a heavy price.

As to those who think we can leave Iraq, and it is going to make things better with al-Qaida, I do not think you understand what al-Qaida is after.

I do hope that the Congress will come together and reauthorize FISA in a way to make us safe. I hope we will understand that the outcome in Iraq is not yet guaranteed, but we are on the right path. Let's don't do anything

here in Washington because of the next election that will haunt this country for decades. Let's not put every moderate force at risk in the Middle East by pulling the plug in Iraq and undercutting General Petraeus. This man and those who serve with him deserve our respect, our gratitude and, more than anything else, our support.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator SCHUMER be recognized for 5 minutes; followed by Senator TESTER for 5 minutes; and then Senator MCCASKILL for 5 minutes; she wanted an opportunity to speak; and then I be given the remaining 15 minutes. That consumes the half hour between now and 2 o'clock.

Mr. SCHUMER. Will my colleague yield?

Mr. DURBIN. I am happy to.

Mr. SCHUMER. I think I might need 7 minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. Senator SCHUMER for 7 minutes.

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

The Senator from New York.

HGH

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise in support of a very straightforward bill that will keep the dangerous human growth hormone, now known throughout the Nation as HGH, out of the hands of people who don't need it and toughen penalties on those who sell it illegally.

First, I thank my friend from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, for joining me in recognizing the importance of this issue. I also commend the district attorney in Albany, David Soares, for his hard work in uncovering a major multi-State HGH ring last year and helping to bring this issue the recognition it requires.

I was going to come to the floor originally and ask unanimous consent to move the bill because it had been blocked. A hold had been put on by my some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. I have now come to an understanding as to whom the people are, the two. Each of them has said they want to work with us to try and get the bill moving by early next week. So I will not ask unanimous consent. I know it doesn't move the clock forward, which I would like to do in hopes that we can come to a negotiation and get this bill passed early next week.

There is widespread support for this legislation, people such as Major League Baseball, the NFL, the U.S. Olympic Committee, the U.S. Anti-Doping Agency, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. This bill is good for every parent, every coach, and every young athlete who cares about kicking drugs out of sports for good. The widespread growth of human growth hormone in Major League Baseball has put a cloud over our national pastime. But if there is a silver lining in that cloud, it is the opportunity that

recent scandals have presented to do something positive about the problem. "Dangerous opportunity," the Chinese say, and that is true in this case. That is what our bill does, change danger into opportunity. Change danger into something good, getting rid of HGH for those who should not have it.

No one disputes that HGH has some important medical uses—adults with AIDS, children with serious kidney disease can benefit from small, carefully administered doses of HGH. But in the wrong hands, HGH can lead to serious problems. Some of the worst side effects include cancer, heart disease, gigantism, impotence, menstrual problems, and arthritis.

As we remember, last year, former Senate majority leader George Mitchell did an excellent report on the use of drugs in professional baseball. One of the main themes was about the widespread abuse of HGH. The report says that because HGH is hard to detect through testing, it is very attractive to athletes. Kids look up to their heroes. They model their behavior after them. They want to be just like them. According to a Columbia University study cited in the report, athletes are second only to parents in the extent to which they are admired by children. So if a sports star says it is OK to illegally take steroids, HGH, or other performance drugs, it is almost certain children will follow. We have to make sure dangerous substances can only get to the small number of people who need them.

That is exactly what the bill Senator GRASSLEY and I have put together does. It adds HGH to the list of schedule III controlled substances, placing it alongside anabolic steroids in the eyes of the law. Congress did a similar thing with andro, another potentially dangerous performance enhancer in 2004. Adding a substance to schedule III creates a formal recognition that even though a drug has some medical use, it may lead to dependence. HGH fits this bill. Right now it is only illegal to distribute HGH to a person where there is no medical need for the person to get it. Adding HGH to schedule III adds in illegal manufacture and possession, along on with other serious crimes to the list. Penalties will be tougher. Someone could face up to 10 years in jail and serious fines for breaking the law. Most importantly, schedule III drugs must be regulated closely. This means that all legitimate manufacturers, distributors, and practitioners would have to register with the DEA. They would have to keep data and records on how they make, sell, and dispose of the drug.

HGH needs to be placed alongside other serious substances like it. One more youngster who starts using HGH and other performance-enhancing drugs is one too many. I welcome a debate with anyone who might want to disagree with that point. I hope we can come to agreement and pass by unanimous consent this important legislation.

I yield the floor.

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

120TH FIGHTER WING, MONTANA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the brave men and women of the 120th Fighter Wing of the Montana Air National Guard. The 175 members of the unit will be deployed to the 332d Air Expeditionary Wing for 60 days, joining 50 of their brothers-in-arms already operating out of Balad Airbase, just north of Baghdad.

These airmen will join nearly 200 or so members of nearby Malmstrom Air Force Base's Red Horse Squadron in Iraq.

All together, nearly 500 airmen and Army Reserve component soldiers based in Montana are now serving in Iraq. Our State is small in population, but our sacrifice is significant.

The 120th Fighter Wing has a storied history in Great Falls, MT—a city chosen for its 300 good flying days a year and outstanding training airspace. During World War II, the 120th was tasked with flying aircraft to the eastern front to fight the Nazis. Over 60 years ago, two A-20 light bombers took off in order to help our allies fend off Operation Barbarossa, the German effort to take over Eastern Europe.

As members of the 332d, they will join with their colleagues from the Wisconsin and Iowa Air Guards to provide close air support missions.

As the pilots of the 120th Fighter Wing will tell you, it takes a core of dedicated maintainers to keep the squadron in the air. Keeping our F-16s flying in the harsh desert environment is a tough task, but the men and women of the 120th are up to the challenge.

It has been reported that the U.S. military conducted five times as many airstrikes in Iraq in 2007 as it did in 2006. This clearly underscores the fact that the Air Force is a vital part of the mission in Iraq.

I have no doubt that the members of the 120th Fighter Wing will be an excellent addition to the forces in Balad during their rotation.

I want each of them to know they have the support of every Montanan. We honor their sacrifice, especially those on their second, third, or even fourth tours. We pray for their safety and take great pride in knowing that the men and women of Montana's Air Guard are serving us proudly.

And when the 120th comes home, it is vitally important that our Nation keep its promise to them by providing all the resources that they need for job training, medical care, mental health counseling, family counseling, or any other services that they need to return successfully to civilian life.

I am fully committed to making sure that every member of the Armed Forces has these resources available to them when they return or if they are currently here.

I wish to address the debate on the Feingold amendment. When I was sitting in the chair, I heard several Members talk about the war in Iraq. We need a change of course in Iraq. We need to get our folks home, make no mistake about it. Things are not glorious in Iraq right now. It is true violence is subsiding some. It is true some of the folks who were shooting at us are now on our side, pushing al-Qaida out of the country. That is a good thing.

The fact is, Iraqis want their country back. We need to join with them as allies, but they need to be the major offensive standing alone in the world. It is no longer a coalition fight. Everybody else has pulled out. We need to support Iraq. We need to continue our war on terror wherever it is in the world. But the fact that we are spending so much resources in Iraq puts our fight on terror around the world at risk.

The debate has been good, but I look forward to changing the course in Iraq so we can start focusing on issues other than Iraq, the issues that revolve around our economy. Kids can't get loans to go to college because economic forces out there have decreased the ability of lending institutions, as well as the fact that people are potentially losing their homes and probably are losing their homes as we speak. There is a lot of big issues, infrastructure, highways, bridges, water systems that are worn out that we need to start addressing. Quite frankly, I am concerned this country cannot afford to address any of those kind of things with our current conditions.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant majority leader.

HOUSING STIMULUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, later this afternoon the Senate will have an opportunity to vote on a procedural motion, a cloture motion, to end debate and to move to another issue. The issue we want to move to is the housing stimulus package. We are expecting resistance from the Republican side of the aisle. They don't want to debate the housing issue facing America. That is a serious mistake. I hope enough Republican Senators will step forward and join us to initiate this debate about housing in America. Our economy is in trouble. It is struggling. The first indication we had was in the housing market. We know we passed a stimulus bill recently, a bipartisan bill which the President signed. It is going to be a good bill, I hope, to help families across my State and across the Nation. But we all know intuitively that until the housing market gets well, our economy is not going to get well.

The housing market is very sick today. Last Friday, Moody's Economy.com reported that 1 out of 10 homeowners in America are holding mortgages on homes where their debt is larger than the value of their home; 8.8 million homes in America are so-

called underwater, as they say. That is the greatest percentage of homes in such a state since the Great Depression. Goldman Sachs estimates that by the end of 2008, as many as 15 million homes will be in that situation, almost double the number we know today. The Center for Responsible Lending estimates 2 and a quarter million homes may be lost to foreclosure in the next couple of years. Fitch Ratings has recently estimated that for subprime loans originated in the years 2006 and 2007, 50 percent of them could end up in foreclosure.

But the crisis goes beyond the families who have their mortgages foreclosed. Forty million American families who are currently making their mortgage payments, through no fault of their own, will see the value of their homes go down because of this housing crisis. Why? Because the value of your home is based on comparable sales in the neighborhood. When that neighbor 2 blocks over has a distress sale, an auction, because his house is in foreclosure and the house sells for less than fair market value, that is a calculation that affects the value of your home. Make your mortgage payments and still lose value in your home; that is what is happening.

So when we hear from some people that this is a narrow problem for a narrow group of people, trust me, it goes, unfortunately, way beyond. A third of all residences in America will lose value because 2.2 million homes will face foreclosure at rates that we have not seen since the Great Depression.

When the President was asked today in his press conference what should we do about this, he said: Let's sit tight. We just passed one stimulus bill. The checks are going to go out in May or June. Let's wait and see what happens.

It is that kind of bold, innovative attitude that led Herbert Hoover to do nothing in the Great Depression and for the situation to go from bad to worse.

This housing crisis is our wake-up call. If we do not rally on a bipartisan basis and do something about it, the economy is going to get worse. I do not say that with any sense of pride—just disappointment. My home is going to go down in value, too, in Springfield, IL. That is a fact. Though my wife and I make our mortgage payments, we are facing that reality.

So we have to do something about this. In Illinois, the fourth worst hit State in the country, it is estimated that nearly 45,000 homes will be lost to foreclosure and over 2.5 million neighboring homes will see a loss in value. Our State will see \$15 billion lost in housing values, and as property values go down, property tax receipts go down. That means that your city, your county, trying to raise money for schools, for police protection, is going to have less money coming in.

We should have seen this coming. I was on this floor sitting back there in the corner as a relatively new Member

in 2001 when we considered the bankruptcy bill. I wanted to put in a provision, and here is what it said: If you are a lending institution and you are guilty of predatory practices—those are illegal practices, where you mislead people into debt—you will be limited, if not precluded, from foreclosing on that home because you do not have clean hands because you were guilty of predatory lending. You cannot take over the home of someone if you tricked them out of their money and tricked them out of their home. I lost. I lost by one vote in the year 2001.

Do you know what I said when I offered this amendment in 2005? And I thought this was a stunning statistic. I said: "1 in 12 subprime predatory loans ends in foreclosure. And I said that is 'an astonishing statistic'—1 out of 12 subprime loans in 2005 ended up in foreclosure. Do you know what the number is today? One out of two. This is because we did not pass the kinds of laws we needed to pass to keep an eye on this industry, these mortgage bankers who are ripping people off.

Have you ever heard these stories in Colorado, in Alaska? Have you talked to these people? A lot of folks would have you believe they are people who are just smoothies, who think: We are going to make a little investment here, we are going to make this payment, and pretty soon we will have a big home, and we will not have to pay for it. Boy, those aren't the stories I am hearing. The stories I am hearing are of people, by and large elderly people, who are dragged into real estate closings, facing a stack of papers 10 times larger than this. The agent turns the pages and say: Keep signing. We will tell you when it is over. And they walk out the door with the understanding that everything is fine. Then they look at the fine print when things go bad. And what happens? There is a reset on their mortgage. The interest rate just went sky high. The monthly payment just went beyond their means.

That is the reality. There are provisions in some of those subprime mortgages where the interest rate can never go down—never—only go up.

I met a poor lady from Peoria, IL, 2 weeks ago, Carol Thomas, who is 70 years old, a widow, whose husband just died. She bought a single-level home because her husband was so sick he could not climb the stairs anymore in their old home. One of these business advisers came to her and said: Mrs. Thomas, what you ought to do is consolidate your debt. You hear that on TV all the time: Consolidate your debt. This poor lady did not know. She said: Fine. They took all her debts and consolidated them into her new home loan. They took a debt she had—a loan she received from her city for siding on her home—that was a zero-percent interest loan—and threw it into the consolidation. She was now paying interest on the zero-percent loan. When did she realize it? When the mortgage reset and her monthly payment went from \$500

to \$900 a month. Four hundred dollars a month may not be a crisis for a Senator or a Congressman; it was a crisis for Carol Thomas. She was about to lose her home, getting the runaround day after day from the mortgage company: Well, don't make the payment this month. Now you are in default. It is a shame you are in default. Maybe you should have made the payment.

She was beside herself. Well, we got it worked out with a couple phone calls. They finally renegotiated the mortgage. But the problem Mrs. Thomas faced is shared by many others. Do you think Carol Thomas in Peoria, IL, thought she was pulling something over on people? Not at all. She thought she was taking good advice. Unfortunately, the advice was bad.

We met a family here. Senator SHERROD BROWN from Ohio and I had a press conference the other day with the Glicken family from Cleveland, OH. Nice folks. John Glicken came in and had his Cleveland Indians jacket on and told his story. The same thing happened to him.

Well, he decided he would try to take advantage of the Bush administration's plan for saving homes, to save his home. So they said: If you want to make an application for a loan modification under one of these new programs, it will cost you \$425 to apply. John did not want to lose his home. He paid the \$425. He was turned down. So not only is he facing foreclosure, he is out \$425 for nothing.

In Ohio, the Center for Responsible Lending conservatively estimates that 85,000 families are at risk of losing their homes and almost 1.4 million families could lose nearly \$3 billion in value in their homes. State after State—Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Indiana, Maine, North Carolina—the list goes on and on. In every one of these States, the same stories.

Well, the question is, what are we going to do about it? There is one thing we can do that can make a big difference. We need to change the bankruptcy law. Listen to this: If you are facing bankruptcy but you are not completely out in the cold—you have an income coming in—you go into something called chapter 13. You walk into bankruptcy court, and you say to the judge: I am in trouble. I cannot pay my debts. This is my income. These are my assets. Here are my debts. Is there a possibility we can work out and renegotiate these so I do not lose everything? Chapter 13.

So when you go in there, the judge takes a look at it and says: Well, let's bring in your creditors and sit down and see if we can work out some kind of payment arrangement so you don't lose everything and they don't lose everything through foreclosure.

One of the things they can do is take a look at your mortgages. Do you have a mortgage on a vacation home, a vacation condo, for example? Well, the bankruptcy court can take a look at that mortgage, bring in the creditor,

modify the terms of the mortgage—change the length of the mortgage, for example—even change the amount paid on the mortgage, even change the interest rate on the mortgage. You can do that. You own a farm? Let's take the mortgage on the farm. The bankruptcy court can renegotiate the mortgage on the farm. The same thing with a ranch. But, wait a minute, what about your home? The law prohibits the bankruptcy court from modifying the terms of the mortgage on your primary home. All they can do is foreclose. That is it. Does that make any sense? A home is something that virtually everybody brings into that court. It is the most important asset we ever own, and the mortgage cannot be modified in the bankruptcy court for your home.

This provision of law in our housing stimulus package changes that. But we narrow it very strictly. It only applies if you live in the home. This puts the speculators out of business. We do not want the speculators to benefit from this.

Secondly, you have to qualify to get into bankruptcy court. You don't have any income, can't make it in there? You are not going to get into that court. They do a means test now to get you into bankruptcy court.

Third, it has to not only be an existing mortgage—not prospective, not for those 2 years from now, 3 years from now, but right now—but it has to be one of these subprime mortgages.

Then, what can the court do? The court cannot lower this new modified mortgage below the fair market value of the home. This protects the lender. Lenders are very lucky to get a fair market value out of a home that is sold at auction. But they are protected here. And judges can only reduce interest rates to the prime rate plus a reasonable premium for risk.

All of these things taken into consideration give the court the opportunity to modify the mortgage on your home so you can stay there. It is treated just like a vacation home, just like a farm, just like a ranch.

How many people will be affected by this? About a third of the people facing foreclosure. A third of those people will be eligible for this consideration. I think the good news is this: When we pass this bill, pass this change in the law, it is an incentive for these banks and lenders to sit down before you get into bankruptcy and work out terms that you can live with. That is not happening today. These lending institutions just are not doing that. They will if this provision in the law is included.

Now, who would oppose this? Think long and hard about it. It is a hard question, right? No. It is an obvious question. This change in the bankruptcy law is opposed by the Mortgage Bankers Association. Those same wonderful folks who brought us the subprime mortgage crisis oppose this change to allow people to stay in their homes—the same people.

Have you been listening to the Presidential campaign? I have. I have a colleague from Illinois who is involved in it. You know what it is about. It is about whether the special interests control this Chamber or we operate in the public interest.

Well, this will be a classic showdown when we have this cloture vote, and we need 60 votes to move forward on this housing stimulus package. The Mortgage Bankers Association is trying to stop this bill. They do not want this change in the Bankruptcy Code to give people a chance to stay in their homes, even though it has been narrowed and modified to the point where it is really strict. They do not want this. The same people who created this crisis in America by deceiving and misleading people into mortgages which were totally unfair and totally unrealistic do not want those people to have a chance to stay in their homes even if they can make a mortgage payment.

Well, it will be an interesting outcome. Let's see how this turns out. Let's see if the mortgage bankers are going to win or if the people whose homes are on the line will win this debate. It is just that simple, and it is just that straightforward. What a shame it would be—what an absolute shame it would be, if not scandalous—if at the end of the day the Mortgage Bankers Association, which created this mess in America, ends up winning on the Senate floor. If they do, I can understand the cynicism across this country about how this body works. People have a right to be cynical if at the end of the debate we cannot move to this housing stimulus bill. I think it is important we do.

Now, there is a Senator on the other side who wants to offer an amendment to give the mortgage bankers the last word in the bankruptcy court; in other words, that the mortgage bankers have to give permission before the court can modify the mortgage. Well, what is the point if they are going to have the last word? They have the last word right now. They can renegotiate a mortgage if they want to, but they are not doing it. They are not doing it on a voluntary basis. Unless and until those mortgage bankers know this mortgage can be modified, they are not going to sit down and negotiate.

Well, there is a big argument that comes back from the mortgage bankers: Oh, you know what is going to happen here. If you give a portion of these 600,000 people a chance to stay in their homes, we are just going to raise everybody's interest rate across America.

Well, let me tell you something. That is a vacant threat. The Georgetown University Law Center did a survey and study of this proposed change in the Bankruptcy Code and said it would have zero impact on the cost of credit across America—zero. So they can threaten all they want, but do they have any credibility? Does this industry have any credibility when we look at the mess we are in today?

Four years ago, we were dealing with 1 out of 12 subprime mortgages going belly up. And now half of them? When you hear those stories, State after State, family after family, of the way they were deceived into this situation, when our lack of law and lack of regulation led to this circumstance, does that tell you the mortgage bankers were the victims here? No way. It should be in their best interest to avoid foreclosure.

What happens when a property goes into foreclosure in court? Well, the lending institution spends a fortune in legal fees, and then they may end up with the property when it is all over. Then they have to cut the grass and pick up the newspapers and the mail and make sure the place is presentable, and then try to sell it at an auction, if they can. Most of them cannot, incidentally, now. They are lucky if they get a fair market value out of it. But they want to stick to their rights under the law.

The one part of it that I like the best is when the mortgage bankers come out and say this is about the sanctity of the contract. The sanctity of the contract? Sanctity suggests holiness. If you read any of these contracts I have read and hear the terms of the mortgages these people facing foreclosure had to deal with, there is nothing holy about it. It was an unholy attempt to rip these people off, to put them in homes they could not afford under terms they never understood and then let the market work. This is not about the sanctity of any contract. When that bankruptcy court modifies your vacation condo mortgage, your farm mortgage, your ranch mortgage, they are modifying a contract. What happened to the sanctity of the contract there? That basic standard should apply when it comes to a person's home.

When we get to this bill later today, it will be a procedural motion. We need 60 votes. It will be a face-off between the mortgage banking industry, the people who brought us this subprime mess and those on their side with the Herbert Hoover mentality that says: Don't get involved; let it work out; in a year or two, it will all be behind us—and those who think we ought to stand up to allow people to stay in their homes, giving them a chance in court to modify their mortgage terms so they have a fighting chance to stay in their homes. I think that is a basic American value.

I hope my colleagues in the Senate will come down on the side of those families and on the side of bringing this housing crisis to a resolution in a responsible way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

REPORT ON TRIP TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, in late November, Senator INOUE and I traveled to the Middle East to assess the security situation there. I want to

share some of the insights from our travels, especially as they relate to Iraq. We visited Tunisia, Iraq, and several other countries. We met with senior U.S. State Department, intelligence, and military leaders regarding U.S. policy in Iraq, in the Middle East, and in Europe.

Our first stop was in Tunisia where we met with U.S. Ambassador Robert Godec and his staff regarding political, economic, and social conditions in Tunisia. Tunisia is a moderate Muslim country which has strongly supported women's rights. The Tunisian economy has averaged 5.6 percent growth each year, with an 80-percent level of home ownership. It is a real democracy. The United States has a close working relationship with Tunisia, including strong military-to-military contacts. Tunisia straddles the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, creating a strong interest in regional security issues, particularly concerning Iraq. During our visit, we had many discussions about the situation in Iraq and the possible impacts on the rest of the region.

We have discussed many of these same issues with the Foreign Affairs Secretary of State Saïda Chtioui and Minister of Defense Kamel Morjane. Tunisia is interested in strengthening the foreign military financing relationship with the United States. We call that FMF.

Before departing Tunisia, Senator INOUE and I presented a wreath at the U.S. North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial in Tunis. There are 2,841 American servicemen who are buried in that cemetery. It was established in 1948 and covers 27 acres. It sits near the site of the ancient Carthaginian city destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and lies over part of the Roman city of Carthage. The cemetery is located in the part of Tunis that was liberated from the Germans by the British 1st Army in May of 1943. We last visited that area with Senator Hollings, who is now retired from the Senate. He made the landing there in World War II. Many of the men who were interred there gave their lives in those landings and in the occupation of Morocco and Algeria, and the subsequent fighting which ultimately liberated Tunisia. Some have seen those scenes in the recent movies that were shown of World War II. Others involved there died as a result of accidents or sickness in North Africa or while serving in the Persian Gulf command in Iran. But I want to tell the Senate it is a very impressive sight and it is touching to see how well that cemetery staff takes care of the cemetery. It is a United States military cemetery, and our visit to that cemetery left Senator INOUE and me very humbled since we were involved in World War II ourselves.

We then traveled to Iraq, where we spent 2 days meeting with senior U.S. and Iraqi Government officials. We arrived at the Baghdad International Airport, formerly known as Saddam International Airport, which is located ap-

proximately 16 kilometers west of Baghdad. It has both a civil international terminal and a smaller military ramp. The Baghdad International Airport is served by a class 1 runway of 13,000 feet, and the military side has almost 9,000 feet. The military runway was bombed by coalition aircraft and closed early in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 1st Expeditionary RED HORSE Group and the 447th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron helped repair the runway, and it is once again operational. It opened to commercial aircraft in 2003. It can handle 7.5 million passengers a year. I tell the Senate that because it is partially back. I think that is what I am trying to tell the Senate. Many things are returning to normal in various parts of Iraq.

Baghdad International Airport has been refurbished as part of a \$17.5 million contract to rebuild Iraqi airports in Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul. This project is administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Coalition forces began returning control of Baghdad International in June of 2004 with the turnover of the air traffic control tower and checkpoints. The process was concluded with the exchange of the main gate on August 25, 2004. Our major access to Baghdad is in civilian control of Iraq now.

Upon arriving in Iraq, we traveled to the international zone formerly known as the Green Zone. This area in central Baghdad houses most of the city's diplomatic and Government buildings. Part of this area was Saddam Hussein's family playground, including the Presidential palace, which is now the U.S. Embassy annex, numerous villas for Saddam's family, friends, and former Baath party loyalists, along with an underground bunker which reminds one of Hitler. We were informed it was also the home to Saddam's man-eating lions, which have since been moved to Iraq's national zoo. I am happy to say.

Most of our briefings took place in the Presidential palace, which, as I said, is now part of the American Embassy. We discussed the current situation in Iraq with U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker and his key staff.

Let me tell the Senate a little bit about Ambassador Crocker. He is a most impressive individual. He grew up in an Air Force family, attended schools in Morocco, Canada, Turkey, and the United States, and joined the Foreign Service in 1971. Since those early years he has served in a variety of hot spots around the world. His assignments have included Iran, Qatar, Iraq, Egypt, as well as right here in Washington, DC. He also served as U.S. Ambassador in Pakistan, Kuwait, Syria, and Lebanon. This man has an impressive list of senior assignments during which he represented our country, and he is representing us very well now in Iraq.

In January of 2002, Ambassador Crocker reopened the American Embassy in Kabul. In 2003, he served as the

first Director of Governance for the Coalition's Provisional Authority in Baghdad. He was subsequently confirmed by this Senate as our Ambassador to Iraq on March 7, 2007. We have here a true Middle Eastern expert representing our Nation in this country.

Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus are a great team. Their partnership serves our country well.

I was very impressed by that team and by the Department of State officials working throughout Iraq. Whether serving in the Baghdad Embassy or in numerous provisional reconstruction teams that are now known as PRTs that are located throughout the country, they deserve much credit and they deserve our support. I was especially pleased with the progress the PRTs have made over this past year. Their efforts are important to achieving our counterinsurgency strategy by bolstering moderates, promoting reconciliation, fostering economic development, and building provincial capacity.

The PRT initiative is a civilian military interagency effort that serves as the primary interface between U.S. and coalition partners and provisional and local governments throughout Iraq. They are helping Iraq develop transparency and stable provisional governments by promoting increased security, the rule of law, political and economic development, and providing the provincial administration necessary to meet the basic needs of the Iraqi population. Twenty-five PRTs serve all the provinces in Iraq. Ten full-sized teams stretching from Mosul in the north to Basra in the far south serve the majority of Iraqis. Coalition participation includes the British-led PRT in Basra, the Italian-led team in Dakar, and the Korean-led team in Erbil. The PRTs work closely with U.S. and coalition military units to strengthen provisional governments.

Ten of the twenty-five teams are the new "embedded" PRTs, as they are called. These civilian-led teams work hand in glove with the brigade combat teams or the U.S. Marine regiments to support the surge in Anbar Province and in the greater Baghdad area.

Manning of these PRTs is diverse. Personnel represent our Department of State, USAID coalition, and the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the gulf region division of the Army Corps of Engineers, and our contract personnel. The office of Provincial Affairs within the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad provides the policy guidance and support to the overall PRT program. This program is one of the significant things we saw that has taken place in Iraq since the surge, and it has been very successful.

As part of the President's new way forward, PRT personnel doubled from 300 to over 600 team members country-wide by the end of last year. The PRT's financial support comes from a variety of sources, including coalition partners and donor nations, with the majority

coming from the United States, of course. Principal programs associated with PRTs include the U.S.-funded community stabilization program, the provincial reconstruction development committee program, the local governance program, the civil society program, and the Inma agribusiness program,—by the way, Inma means growth in Arabic—amounts to progress. Progress has taken place as a result of the surge.

During our visit, it was announced that security conditions had improved enough to allow the drawdown of U.S. combat troops from Diyala Province. This was the first drawdown of combat forces since the surge began in 2007, and these forces will not be replaced. This redeployment without replacement reflects the overall improved security conditions within Iraq, improved capabilities of the Iraqi security forces, and the increased participation of concerned local citizens. Improved economic factors and declining tribal conflicts in the province have made the drawdown possible. I think General Petraeus's ability to reach out to the tribal leaders has contributed greatly to what we have seen in terms of the progress being made in Iraq.

Diyala Province has been plagued by rampant corruption in the past. Leaders placed their ambitions ahead of the needs of the constituency. There was a lack of food, water, electricity, and fuel, and residents viewed Iraqi security forces as sectarian. Tribal conflicts divided the population. We met with some of those forces. Iraqi security forces and the government of Diyala Province worked diligently over the past 18 months to bring stability and services to that province. Acts of violence have dropped in the past year by 50 percent alone. The surge enabled the coalition and Iraqi security forces to dominate the terrain and secure the population, allowing the government to function properly and to shift focus from defense to reconstruction and providing essential services. We saw progress. That is what I am trying to say. We saw with our own eyes the progress that is taking place in Iraq since the surge.

We met with Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih and his staff and personally stressed the importance of moving forward on the political reconciliation. The national Government must reconcile. We must keep in mind that Iraq's political system, though, is still in its early stages of development. Its leaders are trying to establish a government and resolve fundamental issues in the midst of continuing violence.

Iraqi leaders agree political progress can be improved. However, there have been steps forward during the past several months. While the so-called benchmark legislation has been slow in terms of the national legislature, I believe that actions will flow from the laws that have been passed and those that have already been enacted. Steps

are already being taken. We were encouraged by the distribution of oil revenues despite the absence of an agreement on the overall revenue-sharing law.

I don't know if the Senate knows it, but many people went from Alaska to talk about our basic concept in Alaska of our system of a general fund, a basic fund where we put aside 25 percent of all of our oil revenue. That is our security for the future. We tried to convince Iraq to do something like that, and I am pleased to say they are going to do something like that. But they have a different circumstance, of course, since they have so many differences between their provinces. But the concept of working on a national basis to provide for a distribution of oil revenues throughout the provinces is still proceeding.

We received an extensive briefing from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker on the impact of the recent military surge and the declining level of violence throughout the country. General Petraeus highlighted the success our soldiers and their Iraqi partners have had in taking control of many sanctuaries from al-Qaida in Iraq and disrupting extremist networks throughout the country. Since the surge of offensives began in June of last year, attacks and civilian deaths, we were told, have decreased by 60 percent. I believe that is progress.

Iraqi security forces are having a greater impact on the battlefield. In the last year, they have added over 100,000 new soldiers and police and increased their capabilities. Senator INOUE and I met with some of the leaders of the Iraqi Army in Iraq and with heads of the police from some of the areas. I am confident they were moving as quickly to eliminate conflicts between their people, between the Sunnis and Shiites, and between the various tribes. Most important was the new role of tribal leaders in trying to bring about a peaceful situation within Iraq. In 2008, the Iraqis will add 30 additional battalions to compensate for our reduction of about one-quarter of our combat forces by the end of July. In areas of Iraq, the atmosphere resembles the spring of 2003, where many communities were feeling liberated. This time, they are feeling liberated from al-Qaida and the extremist elements that have come in after the defeat of Saddam Hussein.

In many provinces Iraqis are completely in charge. In some areas, in fact, there are no coalition forces there at all.

The rejection of al-Qaida and the military extremists has led to the rise of concerned local citizen groups, more than 75,000 strong, and comprised of both Sunni and Shia volunteers. These groups are helping to secure their communities, provide intelligence on the enemy and report improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, and weapons caches. You should have heard some of the stories we heard about how citizens are

coming forward to say where these caches are located and where the weapons are, because they have confidence in their own people, that they are going to be in charge of their own security. This move has saved the lives of countless Iraqi civilians and coalition soldiers.

We discussed the overall security situation throughout the country with LTG Ray Odierno, Commander of the Multinational Corps, and his key staff. This is a photo of the meeting we had with that staff. It was an interesting briefing.

Since our visit, LTG Odierno has redeployed to Fort Hood, where he has reassumed his responsibilities as the Commander of the 3rd Corps. He is a very capable individual who I believe will be assigned to more senior positions, and we will hear a lot from this officer in the future.

We flew to forward operating base Kalsu, south of Baghdad, where we met with the commander of the 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 25th Infantry Division, COL Michael Garrett, and his senior staff. This is a photo of the Senator and I had taken with him. Colonel Garret impressed us with his leadership and insights into the complexities of his mission. This 3,600-soldier brigade is home-stationed at Fort Richardson, AK. That also gave us a good reason for visiting with them. We were impressed with what they are doing.

This 4/25th brigade was preparing to rotate back to Alaska. They served in Iraq for 15 months, from September 2006 to December 2007.

Two years ago, there was no 4th Brigade Combat Team, Airborne, in the 25th Infantry Division, or in Alaska. Colonel Garrett and the corps of his paratroopers grew it from a battalion to a robust airborne brigade, and they deployed to Iraq after it had been literally put together in Alaska.

The brigade was headquartered at forward operation base Kalsu, in Al-Hillah Province, but also worked in Babil, Karbala, and Najaf Provinces. I am not sure I like the way my helmet looks in this photo. Senator INOUE took his off before the photo. It was an interesting meeting under a tent with Army soldiers deployed in the field.

Unfortunately, 53 of the 4/25th made the ultimate sacrifice while valiantly serving America in Iraq. We in Alaska will always remember them. I can tell you that along with all Alaskans we have expressed our love, admiration, and honor for their service and are doing our best to make sure their survivors are well cared for.

The 1st Brigade Combat Team, Stryker, of the 25th Infantry Division also spent 15 months serving in and around Mosul. They returned home to Fort Wainwright, AK, at the end of 2006. By all accounts, they did a tremendous job providing security in that region of Iraq. They were led by COL Mike Shields, a very capable and talented leader.

We also met with senior Iraqi military and police officials from Al-Hillah

Province. They agreed the security situation in this province is much improved, with the number of attacks significantly down. The mayor, army, and police leaders had a close working relationship with the Alaskan-based brigade.

Before departing Iraq, we asked to see a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicle, an MRAP. I had a photograph taken of it as I left this vehicle. It carries 6 passengers and weighs 16,000 pounds. It is the smaller and lighter version of MRAP variants and is designed for urban operations. This is the new protection for our forces. It is a category 1 vehicle used by our soldiers and marines in Iraq for mounted patrols, reconnaissance, and direct interaction with the civilian population. This is protecting our forces from the threat of IEDs, and this has saved many lives since its deployment. To date, we have fielded 2,317 of these MRAP vehicles in Iraq and Afghanistan. We are in the process of adding 9,000 or more by the end of this year, which I hope will be the end of the war. Anyway, these vehicles are good news and this shows what our country can do in a short period of time. Those other military vehicles did not have the level of protection as MRAPs. This is a survivable vehicle. I think the Senate should be congratulated for moving rapidly to get the money up and get the program up. I congratulate Senators WARNER and LEVIN for their support in this regard.

We have worked together with the Appropriations Committee and Armed Services to make sure these vehicles were supported and delivered in the shortest time in history. They were originally flown directly to Iraq. Now that significant numbers are coming off the production line, they are now going over by ship. These are the most successful vehicles for urban warfare we have ever had. We need them there. I think they will be largely responsible for completing the operations we have to finish in Iraq.

I have taken a little more time than I thought I would. But the reason for my report is that my personal conclusion, from what I saw and heard, was that the surge has worked. There is still work to be done and still support we have to give these people in the field. This is no time to consider a withdrawal from Iraq under the conditions such as the Russians withdrew from Afghanistan. I urge those who have any thought of such a withdrawal, a mandated withdrawal, to look at the history of the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan. It was one of the most costly in history in terms of the deaths of the Russian soldiers who were trying to get out of that country. They turned around and literally fled from the country under difficult circumstances, where they were ordered out by their political masters without regard to the safety of the people involved. I will not participate in such a withdrawal. If we withdraw, it must be because we have

finished the job and the Iraqi military and police forces can take responsibility for their own security.

As Israel has done for so many years, I believe Iraq will come to be able to defend itself. We have to stay the course in order to do that. The people who were lost there deserve for us to finish the job.

47TH ANNIVERSARY OF PEACE CORPS

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, this week we mark the 47th anniversary of the U.S. Peace Corps and I ask the Senate to recognize the men and women who represent the best of America and volunteer to serve those less fortunate around the world.

Since its inception in 1961, 190,000 volunteers have served in 139 countries. You may be aware our colleague Senator DODD served in the Dominican Republic in 1968.

My good friend and associate in law practice, Jack Roderick, took his family to India to serve as the Peace Corps regional director in 1967 and 1968. Jack tells me that, like many volunteers, he feels he got more out his experience than he could have ever given.

His two daughters were 11 and 13 at the time and they attended Indian schools and learned to speak Hindi. The experience changed their lives.

The 1,000 volunteers Jack worked with in India faced many health risks due to the difficult living conditions. But they were committed to the mission of the Peace Corps and worked with the people of India to improve the country's agricultural production.

Today, 36 Peace Corps volunteers from Alaska are working in countries around the world including Mongolia, Uganda, Ecuador, Romania and Cambodia. They work directly with the people of these countries and help improve education and develop small businesses. They work with small farmers to increase food production and teach environmental conservation practices. They fight malnutrition and help provide safe drinking water. They fight the spread of HIV/AIDS and assist people affected by this disease which is devastating many developing nations.

When these volunteers return home to Alaska they share their unique experiences and perspectives with their communities and help expand our understanding of places which for many of us are just a name on a map.

A member of my staff, Ray Sorensen, spent 2 years in Haiti with the Peace Corps. Since he returned he has enjoyed visiting elementary schools and sharing stories, photos and Haitian music with students. This type of cultural exchange provides students with an understanding not available from their textbooks.

The objective of the Peace Corps is to eventually work itself out of a job. We all hope for the day when there is no need to fight against poverty and disease and all nations enjoy the prosperity with which we are blessed. Until that time, we should support the men and women of our Peace Corps and the good work they do around the world.

I congratulate the Peace Corps on its 47th anniversary and wish it continued success.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. WEBB. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business and to take such time as required for myself, Senators HAGEL, WARNER, and LAUTENBERG to discuss the reintroduction of S. 22, the GI bill legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. President, my first day in office in the Senate, I introduced legislation that we had worked on from the time of my election through the interim period, before I was sworn in as a Senator, that would address a true inequity in terms of how we are rewarding military service.

The legislation was designed to provide a level of educational benefits for those who have been serving since 9/11 that would be equal to the service they have given. The way that would be measured would be for us to do the best we could to shape legislation that pretty much mirrored the benefits that those who came back from World War II received.

I am very pleased today to be reintroducing this legislation with refinements that we have been able to gain through 14 months of discussions with all people who work in this area, and to also mention that we have new and very important lead cosponsorship as well. As of today, we will now have 35 sponsors in the Senate for this piece of legislation, plus we will have the full national support of the major veterans organizations, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, The American Legion, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the Military Officers Association of America, and other veterans groups. I will also point out that the combined veterans organizations, when they made their proposals to the Veterans' Committee about what the veterans budget should look like—the so-called independent budget that is put together every year—included a policy proposal for legislation that has all of these pieces in it.

I am very pleased and excited at where we are right now on this piece of legislation. I am very gratified to have with us on the floor today Senator CHUCK HAGEL who, in October, became the lead cosponsor on the Republican side, and Senator JOHN WARNER, who has agreed to be a lead cosponsor, both of whom I have known for many years. I wish to say a little bit about that and also ask that they join me in discussing where we need to go on this.

I have known Senator CHUCK HAGEL for 30 years. We both came up into Government together, working on veterans issues. We are the only two ground combat veterans from Vietnam to be serving in the Senate. We have worked on many issues over the years and have worked together on, I think, some very

important efforts last year in trying to bring some sense into the rotational cycles that have been ongoing with respect to the occupation of Iraq and the war in Afghanistan.

I first was able to serve under Senator JOHN WARNER when I was a 25-year-old marine, my last year in the Marine Corps, when he was Under Secretary of the Navy, and then as Secretary of the Navy. He was instrumental in helping me as I left the Marine Corps, moving on to other parts of my life. I was privileged to follow Senator WARNER—not only into the Marine Corps, but also into the position of Secretary of the Navy during the Reagan administration, and I am very proud to be serving with him as the junior Senator from Virginia.

I think that Senator HAGEL, Senator WARNER, Senator LAUTENBERG, who is a World War II veteran who benefited from the GI bill, are all an indication of the will and the heart of the people who know what it is like to step forward and have to serve their country, when it comes to trying to reach a proper reward for service, and to assist those who have stepped forward to serve our country into the most meaningful future that they can obtain. This bill does that. We have listened to the veterans groups. We have listened to other colleagues about the different pieces of legislation they have. We have incorporated a provision in here at the suggestion of Senator LINCOLN of Arkansas that is a very good provision that will assist those in the National Guard and Reserve to have a meaningful GI bill for their service.

So this is legislation that I believe is ready to go and, as I said, we are reintroducing it today with 35 sponsors. I am very hopeful that our body and the other body can pass this legislation this year. This is the kind of bill where time really matters because educational benefits pursuant to military service are a transitional benefit. They are designed to assist people when they readjust from military life back into civilian life. Those who have been serving since 9/11 have been leaving the military as their enlistment expires, and they need this type of benefit.

I am hopeful, again, that we can move this bill forward swiftly.

I yield to the Senator from Nebraska.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. HAGEL. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague, Senator WEBB, for his generous comments and for his leadership in writing and initially introducing this legislation. I also thank my friend and colleague, Senator WARNER from Virginia. As has been noted by the junior Senator from Virginia, the senior Senator from Virginia has had many years of important experience. He has contributed many years of service in many capacities to this country. When you take the service of the two Senators from Virginia together, it is a remarkable story. I am privileged to join them, as well as over

30 of our colleagues, and a distinguished Senator in his own right and World War II veteran, Senator FRANK LAUTENBERG of New Jersey.

We all share similar experiences in our service to our country, but most of the veterans in the Senate, and I suspect in the House of Representatives, also share the common experience of using the GI bill which was enacted after World War II to educate a generation of Americans who changed the world, who transformed the world.

I put the GI bill in the same universe of importance as the original Homestead Act enacted in the early 1860s which truly transformed this country. I think the original GI bill did much the same.

What Senator WEBB is talking about, what Senator WARNER, Senator LAUTENBERG, and others are committed to is a relevant new GI bill that addresses the challenges of the 21st century. We in this country not only appreciate, but revere, the service of our military, and that is as it should be. These are selfless men and women who have committed themselves to a higher cause than any other cause, and that is the defense of their Nation, defense of their fellow Americans. They ask nothing in return. Each generation of Americans who has fought for this country, who has served in uniform has never expected anything in return because they have considered it a privilege to serve this country in uniform.

But one of the reasons the GI bill was first enacted after World War II was to reinvest in our country, to reinvest using the loyalty, commitment, and resources of Americans to even go further and do even more for this country and society in the world. Education does that. An important foundational element in the history of the country over the last 200 years, as any other, has been public education. It has been public education. It is the tradition of our country, not just to reward service, to acknowledge service, but be smart about that service and reinvest in our society. That is essentially what this is. This is reinvesting in our society. It is assuring that those who have given so much to our country have an opportunity to develop skill sets in education to compete in the most competitive world history has ever known, to go beyond expectations, go beyond what is possible. This is not just a payback or reward.

I wish to make a couple of general comments about the bill that I think not only are appropriate but need to be addressed. I have noted that there have been some who have questioned the need for this bill when we have a current GI bill which was authored by a friend of everyone in this body, a distinguished American who left us last year, the late chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee with whom Senator WEBB worked, Congressman Sonny Montgomery from Mississippi.

On a personal note, it is because of Congressman Montgomery I met my

wife who was working for Congressman Montgomery at the time.

In the early 1980s, he took the reality and the need of our time and the relevancy of this bill, the GI bill in law, and made it appropriate to what the circumstances were 25 years ago. We are in a different place in the world today. We are engaged in two wars. We have 190,000 troops in those two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. We have new pressures, new challenges, and new opportunities. So it is appropriate to re-address this issue that has played such an important role in educating our veterans and investing and reinvesting in this country and in society.

This does not displace or replace any other educational program. Today, the largest grant aid program the Federal Government sponsors is the Pell Grant Program, an important program. I believe most all of us on the floor of the Senate support that program. I surely do. It is a program based on financial need, and it is appropriate. It is one area in which I happen to believe the Federal Government can play a role, a meaningful role. It gives these Pell grant awardees some options.

Just as what we are addressing today, we need to ensure that these people who have sacrificed for this country are given the same kind of options that other programs in the past have allowed.

Senator LAUTENBERG will talk about that issue. Senator WARNER will talk about that issue. This program needs to be updated and upgraded.

I mention the cost issue because it is an appropriate issue at a time when we are running \$400 billion deficits. But I remind everyone here, Mr. President, that we are spending approximately \$15 billion a month on war—two wars. We are getting to nearly \$1 trillion spent on two wars over the last 7 years. Surely we can find the resources necessary to upgrade and update the requirements for a 21st-century country as it relates to our veterans.

I want to also address one other issue that I have heard from some who say: Senator, if we do this, if we go forward with this program and modernize the GI bill, wouldn't it undermine our recruitment and retention efforts? That is an interesting question, again, a relevant question. You recognize the fact that, first, we have an all-voluntary service, so people have choices. We want the finest, brightest, most capable young men and women we can find, and we have been able to do that over the last 25 years—build the best trained, best educated, best led, best equipped, most motivated force in the history of man. But we are on the edge of ruining that force structure.

Why do I say that? The Chief of Staff appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee for the last 2 days. In order for the Army to continue to recruit enough manpower to fight in two wars, as well as the other obligations, we have had to define down the standards of the U.S. Army—waiving

criminal records, waiving drug records, waiving high school diplomas, and high school equivalence in order to attract enough people.

In addition to that, we have put hundreds of millions of dollars of large incentive bonuses on the table, \$40,000 at a time, for reenlistment and for sign-up bonuses, plus the promise of down payments for houses. So we are already in the marketplace for competing with young men and women to serve this country.

Isn't it far better to invest in education? Isn't it far better to give these young men and women more educational opportunities if they decide or when they decide to leave the service after they have served this country in an honorable way? Isn't that more important in many ways to recycle that commitment and loyalty and talent into a new investment in education that will serve these young men and women far longer than a \$40,000 bonus? Far more.

I think just the opposite. I think it enhances recruitment. I think this enhances the quality of our service. I think this helps us get back to defining our standards up. No institution can long survive when it defines its standards down. There will be a consequence for that, and we are seeing that consequence today, as I think General Casey made very clear in his comments before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

In conclusion, I am very proud to be part of this effort. I am, like my colleagues, hopeful the Senate and the House and the administration will act on this bill this year. It is, as Senator WEBB noted, a timely, important, and critical issue for our country and our force structure.

I will continue to do everything I can to be part of that effort and work hard to that end.

Again, I very much appreciate the leadership of Senators WEBB, WARNER, LAUTENBERG, and others who have brought this bill forward.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I am hopeful to join in the debate. I see my colleague from New Jersey. Does he have a pressing matter? I can wait until he completes his remarks, if that will help him.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, this is what happens when we get on the floor of the Senate and longtime friends meet. I defer to the distinguished Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. I thank my colleague.

Mr. President, I have looked forward to this moment. This is a special day for me in many respects. But, first and foremost, what a privilege it is to stand on this floor with three magnificent combat veterans—my colleague and dear friend of 35 years, JIM WEBB; FRANK LAUTENBERG of New Jersey, and my good friend from Nebraska, CHUCK HAGEL—all of these three gentlemen

are combat veterans. Two were awarded the Purple Heart. My military career was far more modest.

I would also like to thank the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, particularly its chairman and ranking member Senator AKAKA and Senator BURR for their leadership on behalf of our veterans. I look forward to working with them on this initiative.

And finally I just want to say thank you to all who have been working on this bill, particularly to JIM WEBB, who led the effort, drawing on his experience as a young marine officer in Vietnam; as Assistant Secretary of Defense, explicitly assigned to the affairs of the Reserve and Guard units; and then in a position that we both shared as Secretary of the Navy. All of that experience he draws on to bring forth this bill and to lead this effort. Your career in the Senate, I think, will be marked by many successes, but this will be one of the foundations of that success. I say to my colleague that you will always look back upon this accomplishment with a humble sense of pride knowing that you "led the charge."

I am very optimistic that we will prevail with this legislation. There may be challenges, but we will prevail. We will prevail because it is the right thing to do.

I also want to say thank you to my country that gave me an education, for my modest periods of service in World War II in the Navy and service in the Marines during the Korean war. It was not as valorous as the careers of the sponsors and cosponsors joining in this debate.

Mr. President, I am grateful to have been the recipient of two GI bills and I wouldn't be standing here today—it is as simple as that, had it not been for the GI bill. Three months after I was discharged from the Navy, my father died. He was a very wonderful, successful medical doctor. He had served in World War I in the trenches in France as a medical doctor, caring for the wounded. I mention that only because I am not sure I would have had the means within our family structure to go on and receive higher education without the GI bill.

The original GI Bill of Rights was enacted in 1944, and in successive Congresses they made changes to it. But the key to the bill that the two of us from World War II—Senator LAUTENBERG and myself—is that our group of veterans could go to any college or university of his choice, subject to academic or admission requirements. I want to repeat that. There wasn't a college or university in the United States to which they could not attend, for the GI bill covered the full tuition costs of all institutions of higher education. Today's GI bill, largely through the efforts of Sonny Montgomery, a dear friend whom we all value, simply does not have the financial provisions to enable young men and women of this generation to go to any campus they desire. There are low caps on the

amount of tuition the current GI bill will cover. And so we have carefully structured in this bill the opportunity for institutions of higher learning to step up and share in this program.

I would like to briefly outline the sharing provision. Under this legislation, the full basic educational benefit will allow GIs who have honorably served to have the full cost of tuition covered at any public college or university in their home State of residence. Veterans will also be given a monthly stipend tied to the Department of Defense's geographic rate for housing, and a small stipend for books. For veterans who choose to attend a private college or university—or an out-of-State public college or university—admittedly, this basic benefit might not cover the full costs of tuition. Thus, this bill will provide an educational enhancement for veterans who complete at least 36 months of honorable active duty service. The Federal Government will match—dollar for dollar—any additional financial contributions private and public colleges and universities voluntarily contribute toward their respective tuition costs. We believe that many institutions of higher learning will participate in this concept, thus vastly increasing the educational choices for veterans, commensurate with the choices that World War II veterans received.

Mr. President, we talk a lot about academic freedom. It is one of the most cherished things we have in this country. It is a part of the fundamental system of higher education. With that academic freedom, from campuses all across this country, have come great ideas, great inspiration, and solutions which have helped this Nation structure itself as the strongest and most powerful in the world today. But that academic freedom comes at a price. And much of that price is borne by the young men and women today of the all-volunteer force who go forward, raise their right hand, and assume all the risks associated with military service and preserving our freedom.

Educators should stop to think about that. It is important that institutions of higher learning, when possible, have as a part of a student body, young men and women who have proudly worn the uniform of this generation. And this bill puts forward a financial structure for the sharing of tuition costs. I was privileged to go to two schools in my State: Washington and Lee University and the University of Virginia. One a private institution, the other a public institution. But most of the private institutions today, fortunately because of their extraordinary standing and achievements, have tuition rates which cannot be met by a GI completing honorable service and relying on the current GI bill tuition caps.

This bill enables a voluntary, I repeat voluntary, cost sharing between the U.S. Government and the academic institution. I think we owe no less to the preservation of academic freedom

at these schools, that freedom being guarded by the young men and women who seek admission, and who have honorably served this Nation. Therefore, if a GI has the requisite academic credentials for admission—we are not asking that any special exception or deviation should be done by these schools.

These valiant men and women deserve nothing less than our full measure of support and unending gratitude for their service and sacrifice. A GI bill for the 21st century, to provide educational benefits for uniformed personnel who are sacrificing so much to preserve our freedom, is the least we can do.

So in closing, Mr. President, I say thank you. I have so much, individually, to be thankful for. Simply stated, I would not be a U.S. Senator today had it not been for the GI bill of World War II and Korea. I want the same opportunity for the current and future generations of "fighters for our freedom."

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, first, I wish to say how proud I am to be on the floor with my three colleagues who are sponsoring this, with Senator WEBB as the lead sponsor on this very important legislation. Senator WARNER and I kind of outrank the others in terms of when it is that we served. I point out that we have two commissioned officers here and we have two noncommissioned officers. Senator HAGEL, I think, outranked me. I was a corporal.

I am so pleased to be here with my colleagues. I got an undeserved credit because it was said I was a combat veteran. Well, I served in the combat theater, and my job was to climb telephone poles while the bombing was going on in Belgium. I would not say there were the same dangers as someone on the line, but people got hurt and worse doing what I was doing. But I want to clear the record because I didn't carry a rifle. I carried a carbine, which is a lot smaller weapon, and, fortunately, I didn't have a chance to fire it. But it wasn't fired at me either.

I look at what we are doing here and think about what it means to those who are serving and what it meant to me in my life. My parents were brought to America when they were infants, but they were people who would be classified as blue-collar people—no education but wanted to work hard. Honesty was constantly preached: Be mindful of your responsibility to others, do whatever you can, work as hard as you can.

When I got out of high school, I got a job loading milk trucks. Because going to war was imminent, I enlisted when I was 18. I served with 16 million other people in uniform at that time.

We used to talk about college around the dinner table, when we had dinner together, and my parents would say you have to get an education. My fa-

ther took me into the mill he worked in when I was 12 years old. He said: I want you to see what it is like. It was a textile factory in Paterson, NJ, an industrial city. As we walked in the building, he said: Do you hear the noise? The whole building would vibrate. And I said: Yes, Dad. And he took me up to the machine he operated. It was a big old machine with a wheel that converted fibers into fabric. He said: You see how dirty it is here? Yes, Dad. He said: Do you see how dark it is? Yes, Dad. And he took my hand and he rubbed it across the silk fibers he was working on, and it left a film. He said: You see that? That is bad for you.

My father, when he did that with me, was 37 years old. Six years later, he was dead. Cancer that developed occupationally. My grandfather worked in the same place. And not unlike those who worked in the coal mine or some other place, my grandfather was 56 when he died.

So for me, being in the military was a responsibility that I willingly took on. My friends, my neighbors, we all did it. The future was not particularly bright. But then, when all of that was finished, I had a chance to go to a university. And Senator WARNER, with his usual grace, he said that you could go to any school you wanted. I don't know that it wasn't just the recognition that we needed financial help, but I think there might have been a little give also on the standards that you had to meet. I don't know that in today's world we would have fared quite as well. I was lucky enough to go to Columbia University. They welcomed me. And I stood there in amazement when I graduated because none other than GEN Dwight Eisenhower handed me my diploma. He was then the President of Columbia University. I was a little upset that he didn't recognize me. We had both served in Europe. I didn't understand why he didn't say: Hello, Frank.

It was exciting to be in a university—exciting to know that somehow or other I was not only going to be able to help myself, I was going to be able to help my widowed mother and my kid sister and be something different than still loading milk trucks in Clifton, NJ. I was excited because not only did I learn subjects—statistics and finance and the kinds of things one learns at business school, in particular—but also I learned there was a different way of life; that there was something you could do besides standing with my folks when they had to buy a store because the mills closed. I learned you didn't have to live in cramped quarters and that maybe there was something else out there you could do.

So when I look at what we are talking about today, I am particularly motivated to see that with the leadership of Senator WEBB and with the help of the three of us, that we get this legislation through. We know when there is a debate here and it gets to veterans'

support, usually that quiets the troubled waters and we talk to one another, almost civilly at times, and we gather support from one another and are encouraged. We might feel differently about which programs ought to get more funding, but we are all concerned about the medical care, the post-service conditions that come up like post-traumatic stress disorder. And when we read stories about service people who get so distraught that they destroy their lives, that is often a sign of the kind of stress and the kind of trauma that people have been left with after they serve. So when we look at this legislation's opportunity, it is consistent with our need to show our respect and gratitude to the people who serve and who served in a war that is far longer and more vicious than any one ever dreamed it might be.

Because in previous wars, and the war that Senator WARNER and I served in, it was not the case that your enemy wanted to give their life and thusly would not be frightened off by anything you do. Their principle was to destroy the enemy. In the current war, the enemy is willing to destroy itself to destroy us. So the kind of violence that has been exhibited in this war is different than in any other war. Vietnam was the place where it was learned that people would die for a cause, but it was not like this war where people want to die. So conditions are different.

So here it is, very simply put: There are scholarship assistance programs like the Montgomery bill which provides 38,000 dollars' worth of support for education, for the cost of maintaining one's self, as well as room and board. But the average cost of a public education today is \$51,000.

Well, it still is significant when someone graduates college with huge debt, and typically they are relatively young, wanting to start a family, wanting to get going in life. So it is simple math. Many of our veterans just cannot make up the difference and thusly are denied a college education. So this has real consequences.

People with a college degree earn nearly double the salary of those who do not have one. We have got to close the gap between the current cost of college and the amount that the GI bill pays for. Remember, America built something that was called and supported as the "greatest generation." Now, why, with all the technology, with all of the richness this country has, with all of the talent this country has, can we not create another "greatest generation"? We should move on that. There is only one way to get there, and that is to provide the ladder up to that success. You have got to take the first step. The first step is to make sure you get as much education as your mind and your body and your will can handle.

So when we look at what we owe to or can do for these veterans, to me, this is the ideal thing. I would hope

that whatever party, however high the seniority is, that we all get together on this one and say: Veterans, we appreciate those of you who served, who left your families, in service. I was at Fort Dix, a major base in the State of New Jersey, for people who were going to deploy or be deployed back in Iraq. Many of them have served months already. These were not people who were living on a base where there was a culture to accompany their families, where there was a clinic, where there were schools, where there were libraries. They were in towns, they were paying their expenses, they have mortgages to deal with.

This is a time to say: We owe you something. We owe you something big. We are going to make it up to you. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this legislation. Join us in giving something back to our veterans that really stands out, that shows a lasting bit of gratitude for the valiant service that all of them have put in to serve their country.

I congratulate my colleagues for their effort, and Senator WEBB for his leadership. And I hope we will see success.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES
PETTY OFFICER THIRD CLASS JEFFREY L.
WIENER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to speak for a son of Kentucky who journeyed to Iraq to save the lives of his fighting brethren, only to tragically lose his own. On May 7, 2005, PO3 Jeffrey L. Wiener of Louisville, KY, died in combat operations near a hospital in western Iraq. The hospital corpsman was 32 years old.

"My son was a hero and died doing what he loved, helping people no matter who they were," says Jeffrey's mother, Diana Wiener. An emergency medical technician in civilian life, Petty Officer Third Class Wiener dedicated himself to healing others.

For his bravery in uniform, Petty Officer Third Class Wiener received numerous medals and awards, including the Purple Heart and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

Jeffrey moved to Kentucky later in life, after growing up in Lynbrook, NY. He settled on his life's calling at an early age and began volunteering with the local fire department at 13.

Always helpful, Jeffrey eagerly assisted everyone at the firehouse with any task. What little free time he had left when not volunteering went to the school wrestling team. Jeffrey graduated from Lynbrook High School.

As an adult, Jeffrey worked in New York's Nassau County EMS and served as captain of a volunteer fire department. Jeffrey was committed to his profession as a paramedic and constantly pursued the latest training activities.

Jeffrey eventually settled in Louisville, moving to help his mother raise his younger brother David. He got a job with Jefferson County EMS and made an immediate impact on his new friends and coworkers.

Jeffrey "was always real gung-ho, straightforward, no beating around the bush," says John Cooney, a Louisville paramedic who partnered with Jeffrey. "That was his demeanor."

Jeffrey proved his value in short order when he suggested to his supervisor that the Louisville paramedics use something called a Reeves stretcher, which is more maneuverable in tight quarters than the standard carrying board. Jeffrey was familiar with it from his time in New York.

Jeffrey's supervisor agreed and put him in charge of training everyone on the new device. Major Rocky Johnson, Jeffrey's supervisor, told family and friends gathered at a memorial service for Jeffrey that to this day the Louisville paramedics call the device "the Wiener board."

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Jeffrey was moved to serve his country in uniform, and joined the U.S. Navy Reserve in 2002. He then underwent special training to become a hospital corpsman.

The Navy hospital corpsman is a respected and revered position in our Armed Forces, and the most decorated rating in the U.S. Navy. Hospital corpsmen are often attached to Marine units and are trained to handle emergency medical procedures near the front lines of battle. For the man who had been eager to heal since age 13, it was the perfect mission.

Jeffrey was assigned to the II Marine Expeditionary Force and deployed to Iraq. "He took care of his troops," says LT John Rudd, a Navy chaplain who served with Jeffrey.

Jeffrey made friends with his fellow sailors as easily as he had with coworkers in Louisville or New York. One fellow corpsman, who hailed from Lexington, KY, knew Jeffrey but couldn't remember his name. Jeffrey told him to call him "Louie," because he was from Louisville.

Hospital corpsmen are often affectionately called "Doc" by the Marines they serve alongside, and Jeffrey soon earned the nickname "Doc Wiener."

As much as Jeffrey relished the opportunity to serve, he dearly missed his family. Jeffrey married his high school sweetheart, Maria, in 1998, and together they raised two beautiful daughters, Mikayla and Theadora.

Jeffrey's older brother Joshua also served in Iraq and was there when Jeffrey arrived. Today, Joshua is in the Marine Forces Reserve and a fireman in New York City.

Jeffrey's younger brother David is also a marine and currently on his second deployment.

Jeffrey was looking forward to what life would hold for him and Maria when he left active service. He was considering continuing his EMS work, or going to the Department of Homeland Security. And many in his family believe his true calling was to become a doctor.

Jeffrey was buried in Calverton National Cemetery in Calverton, NY, on

May 16, 2005. Many friends from the Navy and the fire departments and EMS departments he had worked in over the years attended. Jeffrey was posthumously promoted to the rating of Hospital Corpsman Second Class.

I know I speak for all of my colleagues when I say our prayers go to the Wiener family for their terrible loss. We are thinking today of his wife Maria; his daughters Mikayla and Theadora; his mother Diana; his father Wayne; his brothers Joshua and David; his sisters Wendi, Jessica, and Delayne; the Barberio family; and many other beloved family members and dear friends.

"Jeffrey's desire to serve in the military was prompted by his desire to be a part of bringing peace," says his mother, Diana.

Mr. President, no one can doubt Jeffrey Wiener's compassion after he chose to dedicate himself from an early age to relieving the suffering of others.

And no one can doubt his bravery after he donned his uniform and volunteered to tend to our fighting forces in Iraq.

This Senate is humbled by PO3 Jeffrey L. Wiener's service and sacrifice. His family and friends are blessed for knowing him in life. And his State and Nation are stronger for his efforts in freedom's cause.

LOUISVILLE SCULPTOR ED HAMILTON

For more than 30 years, Americans have set aside one month every year to remember in a special way the contributions of African Americans to our national life. Black History Month has its roots in an old February tradition of celebrating the life and work of Frederick Douglass, the great writer and abolitionist. But its expansion over the years has given us an opportunity to recall the many other Black men and women whose personalities enliven our Nation's history but whose stories were often overlooked by those who recorded it.

Today, Black History Month is also an occasion to draw attention to outstanding African Americans of our own day—people like Ed Hamilton, one of America's great artists I and one of Kentucky's favorite sons.

As a boy growing up on Walnut Street in Louisville, Ed learned the value of hard work and the importance of family from his Dad, a businessman and a World War I vet. And from his Mom, he learned to think big. "You can do anything," she always said. And so, roller-skating around the tight-knit neighborhood around the Hamilton family home at Walnut and 7th, Ed would learn to dream.

It is one of the ironies of history that so many great artists and thinkers barely ever left their hometowns. The whole world opened up to Shakespeare in a tiny town in England. Rembrandt saw all of history on the faces of merchants in Amsterdam. The Divine Comedy was written in exile. And for Ed Hamilton, Louisville has always been enough.

Ed and his family have lived in the same house on 43rd Street for decades. And all of his sculptures—from the Amistad memorial in New Haven to the African American Civil War Memorial monument here in Washington—were brought to life in the same Shelby Street studio. "Louisville has been my lifeblood," he says.

Ed's memories of post-war Louisville are vivid—right down to the sharp smell of the stockyards and the sweet smell of hops that floated from the breweries. He remembers spending too much time at the Lyric Theater—and being fascinated as a young boy by a bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln at the public library on 4th and York. It was the seed of his life's calling. Next year, more than half a century after Ed gazed at that bronze statue of Lincoln outside the public library, Kentucky will celebrate the bicentennial of Lincoln's birth with a new statue of Lincoln, this one by Ed, at Waterfront Park in Louisville.

Ed's life didn't always follow a straight path. As a kid, his mom wanted him to be a doctor. But a teacher at Parkland Middle School saw his talent as an artist and decided she wasn't going to let him waste it. So she called his Mom at home. "I think Ed's got something," she said, "and I want to help him develop it."

At Shawnee High School, other teachers did the same. Ed developed a love for sculpture—and for a pretty girl named Bernadette—during his time at the Art Center School. They got married. And for the last 40 years, Bernadette has been his confidante and special muse.

Early on in their marriage, Ed taught ceramics and sculpture at Iroquois High School. He enjoyed the work. It was a stable job. But everything changed after a chance encounter in 1973. That's when Ed met Barney Bright, the only man in Louisville who actually earned a living as a sculptor. "Barney invited me into his studio," Ed later recalled, "and my entire life changed."

Channeling the entrepreneurial spirit of his parents, Ed decided to set out on his own. And after a few years of working on abstract pieces and some impressive but minor liturgical art, the big breakthrough came. It was a commission for a bust of Booker T. Washington at Hampton University in Virginia. Ed always told Bernadette they didn't need to move to a big city for his work. If he was good enough, he said, they would come to him. Now they were.

When the Hampton commission came, in the early 1980s, Ed had never been on a plane before. So when it came time to visit the school, he took a Greyhound bus. It stopped in every town and hamlet for 600 miles. When they told him he had the job, he called Bernadette to tell her the good news and to tell her he was coming home in a plane.

Other important commissions followed: a statue of Joe Louis in Detroit;

the Amistad Memorial in New Haven; York, the slave who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their western expedition, in Louisville; and then, the Spirit of Freedom monument in Washington, an epic work that teaches thousands of Americans each year about the vital role the slaves played in the Union victory in the Civil War.

The movie "Glory" focused on a single regiment of Black soldiers. The Spirit of Freedom honors all 200,000 of them, including nearly 24,000 from Kentucky alone. This fighting force of former slaves made up about 10 percent of the Union Army. Twenty percent of these brave soldiers and sailors died in battle.

The Spirit of Freedom was 6 years in the making. Ed says he used to dream about it in his sleep. The final product features 3 soldiers and a sailor on one side. On the other side are the grandparents and parents of 3 children, one of whom is on his way to battle. Another child is an infant.

The message of the statue is clear: When the war began, everyone in the family it depicts was a slave. When the war ended, they were free. Some had lived their entire lives in bondage, but their children would not. Black men had helped secure a life of freedom for themselves, their families, and future generations and helped unite a country.

The Spirit of Freedom is a tribute to the soldiers who fought. It's also a special gift to their descendants. One woman, who came from Seattle to see it, sent a letter to the museum's director when she got back home. Here's what she wrote: "I don't know what I expected when I came to see the memorial, but when I came up out of the escalator and this statue rose in front of me my eyes were filled with tears."

Ed has two big binders of letters just like these at home. This one, from a woman in Louisville, is typical: "Dear Ed: How wonderful for you to make history come alive for generations to come. Now you are making history yourself as a sculptor and an African American. It is all wonderfully earned and deserved."

Ed's gotten a lot of awards. In 1996, he was given the Governor's Artists Award in the Arts. In 2000, he was made an honorary doctor of Humane Letters at Spalding University. In 2001, he was inducted into the Gallery of Great Black Kentuckians. In 2004, he was made an honorary doctor of arts at Western Kentucky University.

But he wears his fame lightly. Locals are surprised to see him walking down the aisles at Kroger. And he always answers his own phone. "I don't believe my own press," he says. "This is all fleeting."

Speaking once about the Spirit of Freedom statue, Ed called it an "honor" for him to pay tribute to the thousands of Black men who gave their lives in the service of freedom but who were not allowed to march in the victory parades after the war was over.

In this Black History Month, it is an honor for me to pay tribute to Ed Hamilton on behalf of all Kentuckians and on behalf of the many thousands of people across the country who have been touched by his special gift.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mrs. McCASKILL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes and that following my remarks, the Senator from South Dakota be recognized to speak as in morning business for 20 minutes, and following him, the Senator from Washington be recognized for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have a brief statement I want to make involving a police officer who was killed. I will come back and maybe you could allow me a couple minutes interspersed with all of this.

Mr. DODD. I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for 15 minutes after the Senator from Washington.

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

The Senator from Missouri.

CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. McCASKILL. Madam President, I rise to speak briefly about patriotism and common sense. Every once in a while you open the morning paper and you go, huh? I had one of those moments this morning. In our Constitution, there are certain legal requirements to run for President of the United States. One of those is to be a natural born citizen. The article in the morning paper I read raised legal questions about the definition of "natural born citizen."

Actually, it talked about an ambiguity that could be interpreted in a way that would mean a child of someone in the Active military, stationed somewhere around the world, could have a baby, and that baby could never be President of the United States. In fact, Senator MCCAIN was born in the Panama Canal Zone while his father was Active-Duty military in the Navy stationed in the Panama Canal Zone.

Clearly, that is a notion that defies common sense and certainly offends all of our patriotism. I can envision someone actually being misguided and trying to bring some kind of legal action to determine whether Senator MCCAIN should run for President. That would be a waste of public time and resources. We should quickly and without fanfare fix this ambiguity and make it clear that any child of anyone serving in the Active military should, in fact, be qualified to run for President.

I will offer legislation I am confident everyone can agree on. How refreshing that notion is. It very simply defines "natural born citizen" to include any child born to a member of our military regardless of where in the world they

may be serving. In America, so many parents say to their young children: If you work hard and play by the rules, in America someday you could be President.

Our brave and respected military should never have to spend a minute worrying whether that saying is true for their child. I hope we can quickly, by unanimous consent, pass this into law so there is no question that those children of the men and women who give it all for us can someday grow up to lead this great Nation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

MASTER SERGEANT WOODROW WILSON "WOODY" KEEBLE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, today I rise to honor MSG Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Keeble for earning the Medal of Honor for his heroic service to our country in World War II and the Korean war. Although President Bush won't present the medal to Master Sergeant Keeble's family until next Monday, this is indeed an historic event as he is the first member of the Great Sioux Nation to be awarded this honor.

Master Sergeant Keeble went beyond the call of duty not for a medal, but for the mission he believed in and the country he loved. His legacy is a great source of pride for his family, his fellow South Dakota Sioux, and all Americans. The example he set for the just cause of defending freedom and democracy is truly heroic.

Master Sergeant Keeble was born in Waubay, SD, in 1917 to parents from the Sisseton-Wahpeton Sioux tribe. Master Sergeant Keeble's mother died at a young age, forcing his father to enroll him in the Wahpeton Indian School so he could get an education and three meals a day.

After graduating, Master Sergeant Keeble worked at the school and became well known for his baseball pitching, a skill that would serve him well in combat. In fact, the Chicago White Sox were actively recruiting him to play professional baseball when he was called into action in World War II.

After basic training, Master Sergeant Keeble served with "I" Company of North Dakota's 164th Infantry Regiment. He trained in Louisiana and was soon deployed to Australia to prepare for operations in the Pacific Theater. There, Master Sergeant Keeble's regiment was assigned to the 23rd Infantry Division, better known as the Americal Division.

On October 13, 1942, Master Sergeant Keeble landed on Guadalcanal in support of the First Marine Division, which had suffered heavy losses from the relentless Japanese forces. This was the first offensive operation the U.S. Army had conducted against the enemy in any theater of World War II.

Fighting alongside Marines, Master Sergeant Keeble gained valuable experience in jungle warfare that would later prove valuable in future operations.

The campaign on Guadalcanal saw some of the most brutal combat of the

war. Japanese troops adopted the "ban-zai charge" tactic of attacking in human waves and hand-to-hand combat would sometimes last through the night. During this operation, Master Sergeant Keeble developed expert control of his Browning automatic rifle. He also earned a reputation for bravery as one of the best fighters on the island because his pitching skills came in handy as he used his incredibly strong arm to effectively throw grenades into enemy bunkers. James Fenelon, a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe who fought beside Master Sergeant Keeble once said, "The safest place to be was right next to Woody. I don't know how many rounds he carried, but he had bandoliers on each shoulder. His gun just never stopped—no matter where you were, there were Japanese. He was unbelievable."

Master Sergeant Keeble was awarded his first Bronze Star and Purple Heart at Guadalcanal for his meritorious actions in ground operations against the Japanese. His division fought so valiantly that they received a Navy Presidential Unit Citation for their support of the Marines. After Japan surrendered, the 164th occupied the Yokohama region of Japan.

After the war, Master Sergeant Keeble returned to Wahpeton and resumed work at the Wahpeton Indian School. He married Nattie Abigail Owen-Robertson on November 14, 1947, and settled down to start a family.

However, Master Sergeant Keeble's rest would not be a long one as the 164th was reactivated in 1951 to serve in the Korean war. After training at Camp Rucker, Alabama, several of Master Sergeant Keeble's fellow sergeants were to be selected for deployment to the front lines in Korea. After agreeing to draw straws to decide who would take this unwanted duty, Master Sergeant Keeble volunteered to take a short straw saying, "Somebody has to teach these kids how to fight."

The leadership and bravery Master Sergeant Keeble displayed in volunteering continued through his time in Korea. He was assigned to George Company, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. His strong character, robust leadership, and jungle combat experience brought him several quick promotions to the level of Master Sergeant. The Regimental leadership saw his potential, and placed him in charge of the first platoon.

On October 15, 1951, in a particularly bloody battle near Kumsong, North Korea, all of the officers of G Company were either wounded or killed in combat. Master Sergeant Keeble was among the wounded, but demanded he be released after treatment and volunteered to lead the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Platoons in assaults against the enemy.

On October 17, Master Sergeant Keeble was again wounded, and again returned to battle after being treated. His actions on the following day, October 18, earned him the Silver Star for continuing to lead his men after being

hit by grenade shrapnel. During this battle, Master Sergeant Keeble suffered two bullet wounds to his left arm, a grenade blast near his face that nearly removed his nose, and a badly twisted knee. On October 19, doctors removed 83 pieces of shrapnel from Master Sergeant Keeble's wounds.

The following day, October 20, 1951, would prove to be Master Sergeant Keeble's most heroic. After insisting he be allowed back to combat, Master Sergeant Keeble cemented his place in history. While leading the 1st Platoon up a steep hill during this battle, he saw that machine gun fire from three enemy emplacements had pinned down the entire 2nd Platoon on the same hill. The steep, rocky terrain was of tactical importance and Master Sergeant Keeble took it upon himself to ensure the operation carried on.

Master Sergeant Keeble crawled ahead to the 2nd Platoon. He then continued to advance on the enemy by crawling forward on his own. Although the enemy began to train all of its fire on Master Sergeant Keeble, he continued to hug the ground and advance until he was close to the emplacements. He then activated a grenade and successfully destroyed one of the enemy positions. Continuing his assault, Master Sergeant Keeble moved towards the remaining two machine gun posts and single handedly destroyed both of them with grenades. After removing the last position, he was stunned with an enemy concussion grenade, but pressed on after he recovered. Master Sergeant Keeble then resumed his advance and neutralized the remaining enemy personnel with his rifle.

In all, Master Sergeant Keeble eliminated nine machine gunners and seven riflemen. His heroic determination to press on and endure enemy fire inspired his fellow servicemen to rally and continue advancing on the enemy. By the end of the campaign, Master Sergeant Keeble had received five separate wounds to his chest, both arms, and both legs. Despite all of these injuries, Master Sergeant Keeble only received one Purple Heart, with the Oak Leaf Cluster, bringing his total to two. He was also awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and the Bronze Star First Oak Leaf Cluster.

Although he has been recommended twice for the Medal of Honor, it was never granted. That is why I rise today and honor Master Sergeant Keeble for finally being recognized for his truly remarkable heroism and valor. While he died in 1982 in part due to complications resulting from his war injuries, I am sure he would be proud to know that he has finally been given this honor he earned long ago.

Master Sergeant Keeble stood proudly for his country, his tribe and his family. He was strong, humble, compassionate, and committed to defending freedom. His actions were extraordinary and his bravery overcame the chaos that surrounded him. Master

Sergeant Keeble once said, "There were terrible moments that encompassed a lifetime, an endlessness, when terror was so strong in me, that I could feel idiocy replace reason. Yet, I have never left my position, nor have I shirked hazardous duty. Fear did not make a coward out of me."

I am proud that next Monday, President Bush will be presenting this honor posthumously to Master Sergeant Woodrow Wilson "Woody" Keeble. His bravery is undoubtedly deserving of the Medal of Honor he has finally been awarded after a 55-year wait. The legacy he has left is a source of pride for his family, the Great Sioux Nation, and the country he nobly served.

Madam President, I would like to, if I might, shift gears and speak for a moment to some of the debate that has been going on on the Senate floor this week dealing with, primarily, the resolution that has been offered by the Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. FEINGOLD, dealing with the withdrawal from Iraq and also the more recent resolution which has been the subject of debate here today on the Senate floor. But I think it is important that we also, as we debate these issues, acknowledge the good work that has been done by our troops.

Make no mistake about it, we are making progress in Iraq. The Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, GEN Michael Maples, who was this week here in Washington and testifying in front of the Armed Services Committee, commented that violence across Iraq has declined to its lowest level since April 2005 and violence against coalition troops is at the lowest level since March of 2004. Things are, indeed, trending in the right direction, especially compared to a year ago.

Although these trends are certainly reversible, the fact remains that the security situation in Iraq has improved significantly. The surge has and is working. The surge has worked despite relentless efforts to undermine it by several Members on the other side of the aisle.

At one point last year, we had people saying the surge had not accomplished anything. We heard a Democrat on the floor of the Senate saying that General Petraeus, our commander in Iraq who has so brilliantly led the surge, had been "made the de facto spokesman for what many of us believe to be a failed policy" and that "the reports you provide to us really require the willing suspension of disbelief." Thankfully, they were wrong—utterly wrong. Nevertheless, the other side is continuing their wrongheaded approach by offering legislation again this week that would undo all of the progress our troops have made in Iraq. Once again, the extreme left in this country has demanded a vote on cutting off funds for our troops and near immediate withdrawal from Iraq. The leadership on the other side continues to make obligatory gestures to satisfy that extreme leftwing base.

The Senate voted four times last year on versions of this bill that we debated earlier this week to cut off funds for the troops in Iraq, and on four separate occasions the Senate rejected it. The legislation was defeated by overwhelming bipartisan margins. It never received more than 29 votes. Yet again this week, we went through the exercise of having yet another debate on this issue.

I think it was about a year ago this week, actually, we had a rare Saturday session where Members were called back in to make votes on an Iraq withdrawal resolution, again designed to score political points to undermine progress in Iraq rather than to get anything else done.

I think it is important to note—as we think about how we best combat the terrorist threat we face in this country and how we assist those young men and women who are carrying that fight overseas for us—we find today the House of Representatives has adjourned for the week after having acted on, I think, the naming of five post offices, when the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act has still yet to be voted on in the House of Representatives.

The Senate, before we took off for our last recess, voted by a margin of 68 to 29 to pass the terrorist surveillance bill through the Senate. It had broad bipartisan support in the Senate. If it had been taken up on the floor of the House, it would have passed there with broad bipartisan support as well. Yet we have the House today adjourning to go home, having acted on five resolutions to name post offices, without addressing what is one of the most important issues we all need to deal with here; that is, making sure our intelligence community and our law enforcement community and our men and women in uniform have the tools at their disposal to do the job we asked them to do.

It is critical that the intelligence community have that legislation passed so we can close gaps in our intelligence collection. We need that to get a better understanding of international al-Qaida networks and to gain insight into future terrorist plans and to disrupt potential terrorist attacks.

So I would hope cooler heads will prevail around here, that Congress will do the right thing for the protection of the American people, the right thing to aid those who are diligently working day in and day out—those in our intelligence community, those in our law enforcement community, those men and women in uniform who are fighting to keep this country safe—that they have the tools at their disposal to carry out the important responsibility we have given them to protect Americans. Acting on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and giving our intelligence community, under this terrorist surveillance bill, the authorities it needs to intercept communications that are being conducted by terrorists around the world would be an

important place to start. Right now, we have a gap in that intelligence collection because the House has failed to act on this very important piece of legislation. It is irresponsible.

It is important that we put the politics of this matter aside and we deal with the important issues that will keep America safe and ensure future generations of Americans are not subject to terrorist attacks. So I hope my colleagues will get the message, will come back into session, and take care of business, which is to get this important legislation passed, and act with the Senate in a broad bipartisan way to put a bill on the President's desk that he can sign into law that will make sure our intelligence community has the resources and the tools they need.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have been talking often to my distinguished Republican colleague.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3221

Madam President, I now ask unanimous consent that at 4:45 p.m. today, the motion to proceed to S. 2634 be withdrawn, and the time until then be equally divided and controlled between the leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, with the leaders controlling the 20 minutes prior to the vote and the majority leader controlling the final 10 minutes; that at 4:45 p.m. the Senate proceed to vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 3221.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I thank the Chair. Reserving the right to object, Madam President, I would ask the majority leader if he would modify his consent request that if cloture is invoked on the motion to proceed and the Senate does indeed proceed to the bill, there then be up to five amendments per side related to housing and economic growth.

Mr. REID. Five amendments per side?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Related to housing and economic growth.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I am anxious to try to work something out. We have Republicans who have indicated to me they have amendments to offer. I have Democrats who have come to me and actually given me the language of amendments they want to offer. So it is not as if Republicans are the only ones who want to offer amendments to the housing stimulus package.

So the answer to the question is yes, but I just cannot give carte blanche. I will be as fair and reasonable as I can be. That is pretty wide. It does not require germaneness. It does not require

relevancy. All it requires is it be related to housing and something dealing with the economy. If cloture is invoked on this matter, I want to legislate. I think this bill, which I think is so essential to the American people, would be a much better piece of legislation if it were bipartisan in nature. So I don't know if that gives the Republicans enough comfort, but I will try to be fair. I want to try to work this out. I think the number of five is fine. They suggested three. I think five is fine. I am not going to be trying to micro-manage what they do, but I think it is something that, in fairness, the Republican leader would want to see what amendments were going to be offered and he would have the ability to say no to that. I think I should have—I have an obligation, a right, to look at what they do.

I will repeat: I can't do any more than say I will try to be as fair as humanly possible. I acknowledge the legislation has some controversy, and that being the case, there should be amendments allowed on it and I will do my best.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Consequently, I gather the majority leader is objecting to my request that he modify his consent.

Mr. REID. Yes. I think it was kind of a weak objection to his modification, but it is one.

While the distinguished Republican leader is on the floor, I ask that my request be modified for the vote to occur at 4:55.

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

The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to revise the previous consent order for the speakers on our side to be 5 minutes for the Senator from Washington, 5 minutes for the Senator from New York, 5 minutes for the Senator from North Dakota, and 5 minutes for the Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask to have the vote at 4:56, because I have a brief statement. A police officer was killed in Nevada, if I could make a brief statement.

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

TRIBUTE TO TROOPER KARA KELLY-BORGOGNONE

Mr. REID. Madam President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to honor Nevada State Trooper Kara Kelly-Borgognone.

On Monday night, she was killed responding to a terribly difficult assignment, where there was a suspected bomb at a gas station in Spanish Springs, NV, which is a suburb of Reno-Sparks. While en route to the scene, her patrol car was struck by a driver headed in the wrong direction.

Trooper Borgognone was rushed to Renown Regional Medical Center in critical condition. She succumbed to her injuries and died.

Trooper Kelly-Borgognone gave her life protecting the people of Nevada,

just as she did every day. Even in passing, she saved more lives by donating her organs.

In the final hours of her life, her brothers and sisters and the Nevada Highway Patrol stood guard by her side. They cared for and protected their fallen sister, just as they care for and protect us every day.

This is the way it is all over the country—not only in Nevada.

So today, as their solemn vigil—that is the police officers—comes to an end, standing with their fallen sister, we will try in some small way to share the burden of grief for police officers who fall all over America in the line of duty.

Our hearts and prayers are with the trooper's husband Dirk, and their two daughters, Blair and Ashlyn. I hope it is of some comfort for them to know the life of their mother and the life of Dirk's wife is a life that was given in service to the people of the State of Nevada.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

FORECLOSURE PREVENTION ACT

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I rise this afternoon in support of the Foreclosure Prevention Act because we have to take action now to help so many families in this country who have been hurt in the mortgage and credit crisis.

The bill that we will hopefully vote to move to shortly is going to help provide the resources to keep our families in their homes, help our communities recover from this foreclosure crisis, and help struggling businesses to weather this shaky economy. The bill we will consider going to will provide some commonsense solutions to help address the problems that are at the heart of our country's economic woes. It is an opportunity finally for us to invest in our communities now so we can prevent millions of families from going into foreclosure.

I wish to share with the body quickly a story of a constituent from my home State, a man named Clifford, who lives in Olympia and who let me know about what happened to him, which is happening to so many Americans. He thought he had achieved the American dream by owning a home. His home, he said, represented stability to him. It was his investment in his future. But he, similar to many Americans, lost his job in a factory. The bills started stacking up. The stress wore on him and his family. His wife, who had diabetes, got sick and she had to have surgery. Before he knew it he was several months behind in his mortgage.

Suddenly, all his dreams for a secure future evaporated.

He told me how he struggled to work with his mortgage company and he couldn't catch up. Eventually, he made a phone call to Consumer Counseling Northwest, and through the help of that counseling, he was able to get his payments reduced with his mortgage

company, get back on track, and keep his family home.

That is why in this bill we are going to vote on, we have included critical funding for housing counseling that will allow our families across the country to make a phone call—not to their mortgage company to say I can't pay my bill but to a housing counselor who can sit down with them and their family to get their finances back in order so they do not have to go to foreclosure.

We know the housing crisis is impacting millions of families. In fact, experts tell us it may impact as many as 2 million families in this coming year alone. We can help prevent that if we can give these families a place to go, a counselor to help them, and the ability to be able to manage their finances.

Why is it so important? Not just for those families who lose all their wealth and their home if they have to foreclose but for the neighborhood: So their home doesn't become a blight in the neighborhood, losing the value in the rest of the homes; so their community and neighborhood is safe and so we are strengthening the economy.

These and many other provisions we will hear about as my colleagues talk about this bill are critical. We cannot wait for another year. We can't wait and see what happens in June or September or December. We need to act now, and I urge my colleagues in the Senate to vote with us for cloture to move to the housing bill we are proposing today—the Foreclosure Prevention Act—so we can begin the process to help families stay in their homes.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I, too, rise in support of this outstanding bill. The bottom line is, despite what the President said today, most Americans feel we are in an economically difficult times. The President says we are not in recession. The President doesn't think we are going in recession. For most, the debate is not whether we are or will be in recession but how deep it will be.

So the bottom line is very simple: We have to do something about this economy. There is no better way to turn the economy around, to prevent the recession from being long and deep, than dealing with the housing market because housing is at the center of the economic problems we have today. Housing is the bull's-eye at which we should aim if we want to rectify the economy.

The proposal before us is a good one. It has five important measures. They are modest, but they are thoughtful, and they are aimed right at where the problem is.

Now, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are probably going to block our proposal. They are becoming the "Dr. No" of this Congress. We have a crisis; everyone knows housing is at

the heart of the crisis. No one believes the administration's voluntary ideas have worked. Yet we are hearing we shouldn't do anything that is governmental. That makes no sense.

Early this week we heard stay the course on the war in Iraq. Now we hear stay the course in terms of the economy. Don't you hear it? The American people want a change in course, a change in direction. We are trying to present that to them in a nonconfrontational way, in a way we had hoped and thought would be bipartisan. Because when we put this proposal together, we realized there were a couple of provisions—particularly the bankruptcy provision—that others objected to, but the rest of the provisions seemed quite unobjectionable. Yet here we are hearing, for instance, from the administration that we don't need more housing counselors because we have already allocated \$180 million. That was our proposal. In fact, I originated it and had good help from Senator BROWN and Senator CASEY and then Senator MURRAY, who helped put it into the omnibus bill. But of that \$180 million, \$130 million is gone already. It shows you the need. Do we need some more mortgage revenue bonds? Many States are tapped out and cannot help mortgagors, even if they wanted to. Loss carry forwards will help those who build homes move forward for getting out of the housing recession. Yet the administration and most of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle seem to just say no.

My colleague from Georgia has a very interesting proposal that I would certainly entertain. What we ought to be doing on this bill is having a debate, offering amendments relevant to housing—not the future of the country and not whether we should extend the President's tax cuts or the estate tax; that is irrelevant to this bill—but having a debate on provisions such as those in our bill, debate on the provisions such as the ones from the Senator from Georgia and come up with a product that can help move us forward. Instead, all we hear from the minority leader is no, no, no, no.

The economy is in a degree of serious trouble. The housing market is at the core of that trouble. There are 2 million homeowners who will be foreclosed upon, most of whom through no fault of their own. Those foreclosures will help bring the economy further down. Why don't we do something careful, targeted, modest, and not terribly expensive?

The only thing I hear from the President anyway is: Well, Government shouldn't be involved. That is the reasoning of maybe McKinley, maybe Hoover but certainly not Republicans in the post World War II era. All of a sudden, we are having a throwback to these earlier days. Unfortunately, if we adhere to that kind of thinking, the boom and bust cycles that have plagued the American family will continue.

So I urge this administration to change its mind. I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who seek a degree of bipartisanship to reach out to us and work with us. We will modify our provisions, change some, maybe even drop one or two to get a good product. Please don't just say no. Please don't say the only thing we should debate is the same thing we have debated before: whether we should extend the President's tax cuts. We have been there, done that. We have new problems and we need a new direction. This bill begins to provide it. I hope my colleagues will support it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I wish to acknowledge the kind remarks of Senator SCHUMER with regard to a proposal I have made. For the public's edification and amplification, nobody over here is just saying no, except the majority leader just said no to offering our amendments to the stimulus package we want cloture on. What we are going through right now are some gymnastics and the gymnastics are this. Members on both sides of the aisle want to do something because we do recognize there is a housing problem, because there are ways we can help the American public. But you can't address all those ways if you don't allow all those ideas to be debated as a part of the amendment process on the legislation.

So I appreciate the kind remarks of the Senator regarding my proposal, but a favorable comment doesn't do us any good if you can't offer the amendment on the floor. I don't think I have all the good ideas. I don't think they have all the good ideas. I think, collectively, we probably do have all the good ideas. But this is not about just saying no. This is us saying yes to a process that is open, a process that is debatable, a process where we can reach out and try and help the American people, particularly those who are having great difficulty because of the housing market today.

So I wished to throw that in. My remarks were intended to be about Iraq, which I am going to close with, but I had to respond to the statements the Senator from New York made.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Madam President, would the Senator from Georgia yield for a moment before you go to the Iraq comments?

Mr. ISAKSON. I am happy to yield.

Mr. MARTINEZ. I wished to follow up on the Senator's comments because there are a number of amendments that would be worth considering when we look at the problem we are facing.

First, I heard the Senator from New York. He is wrong to suggest that the President and the Republicans do not understand there is a problem in America. People are being foreclosed on, and there are families sitting at the kitchen table to see how to save that precious piece of the American dream

they have—their home. We are trying to help in that regard as well.

The stimulus package we did a few days ago was a bipartisan measure. What we should do now with the housing package is work that as a bipartisan idea as well, coming together as both Republicans and Democrats to make it better. The Senator from Georgia has a terrific idea, one I support and I think would make a lot of sense in the current situation in Florida in the housing market, and there are a number of other ideas. One has to do with whether mortgage brokers—Senator FEINSTEIN and I bipartisanly have come together on this—whether there ought to be a national registry for mortgage brokers. Senator CARPER and I have worked together on a number of things that would improve the housing passage.

We cannot simply say or follow a pattern that seems to be the current pattern in the Senate, which is that it is put forward by the majority, which then forecloses the ability of the minority to have amendments. The minority leader proposed five amendments per side, and that was rejected. This bill will go down if all they want is a symbolic moment for the Senator from New York to tell the Republicans how they are heartless and don't care about the poor and don't understand that America has problems with housing, and then we will go about our business as usual. If they do that, cloture will not be invoked and nothing will be done. Five amendments to a side seems to be a reasonable way of doing it if we want to get something done.

Mr. ISAKSON. Madam President, I thank the Senator from Florida, and I acknowledge that he is a former Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, who has done tremendous work on the housing issue. I concur with each of his remarks.

I will close with this. When you talk about “just say no,” we ought to have been on the stimulus debate when we got back here on Tuesday. For some reason, and because the majority wanted to, we have been debating the Iraq situation while the stimulus and housing sit on the sidelines. I hope we can get through these gymnastics and get to a situation where we can debate good ideas on both sides and not preclude and leave people out. Instead of saying “just say no” to amendments and to a sincere effort, say yes to what this body is all about: deliberation, decisions, and doing what is right for the people of America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I would not try to make a deal on behalf of the majority leader, but my guess is that if the other side is agreeable to amendments that deal with housing, we would probably have an agreement. Every time we put something on the floor, we get an abortion amendment or an amendment to provide tax breaks

for wealthy people. I would guess that if there are housing amendments, Senator REID will want to visit with Senator MCCONNELL about this.

STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE

Mr. President, I want to speak for a moment about what happened today. cnmmoney.com says:

Pain in the pocketbook within a few weeks. Gas could cost \$3.50 a gallon. By spring, the price could hit \$4 a gallon.

While there are predictions of \$3.50 and \$4 a gallon for gasoline, we still have the U.S. Department of Energy putting oil underground in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. They have been putting 50,000 and 60,000 barrels a day. By the way, in the second half of the year, I have been told that they plan to put as much as 125,000 barrels a day.

When the price of oil is around \$100 a barrel, as it was trading at \$102 barrels earlier today, it is putting upward pressure on gas prices. Our Government is taking oil from the Gulf of Mexico in the form of oil-in-kind transfers and putting it into a reserve. Instead of putting that oil into the supply pipeline to reduce prices, they are sticking it underground. The Energy Information Administration indicates that, on average, the price of regular gasoline last February was \$2.22; in August, \$2.78; in February, \$3.02; and it is headed north.

Yet, the U.S. Government takes royalty-in-kind oil, and our Department of Energy is sticking it underground in big salt caverns to save it for a rainy day. They are putting it in the SPR, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

I support the SPR, but it is about 97 percent full. Why on Earth would we put upward pressure on oil and gas prices to take \$100-a-barrel oil and stick it underground? Here is where it is going: Bayou Choctaw, West Hackberry, Big Hill, and Bryan Mound. These are the locations where the Department of Energy is sticking it underground. It makes no sense at this time when prices are so high.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation and intend to try to move it on an appropriations bill, if I must, to stop this. There is no reason to take 50,000 or 60,000 barrels a day out of supply. This especially includes sweet light crude. This is a subset of all oil, sweet light crude, which is even more valuable. We have heard testimony at a hearing before the Energy Committee that indicates that this diversion of light sweet crude could add as much as \$10 to a barrel of light sweet crude trading on the market. It is putting upward pressure on prices.

In addition to this, there is unbelievable speculation going on in the futures market. Fidel Gheit, with Oppenheimer & Company, testified:

There is absolutely no shortage of oil. . . . I am convinced that oil prices should not be a dime over \$55 a barrel. Oil speculators include the largest financial institutions in the world. I call it the world's largest gambling hall. It is open 24/7. Unfortunately, it is to-

tally unregulated. This is like a highway with no cops and no speed limit and everybody going 120 miles per hour.

Investment banks are buying their own storage capability to keep the oil off the market. As he says, this is a 24/7 gambling hall. Who pays the price for this unbelievable speculation? It is the American consumer that pays with ever higher prices for oil and gasoline. There are experts who say the price of a barrel of oil is trading at least \$30 above where it is justified in being, given all other issues between supply and demand.

In addition to this lack of regulation of hedge funds and other activities in this carnival of greed, there is excess speculation in the futures market. On top of that as I have indicated, our own Government is making it worse by taking oil and sticking it underground. It is not rocket science when oil is where it is and gasoline prices are where they are and headed north.

The President, when asked about that today in the news conference, said, “I have not heard this \$4 issue.” Well, read the newspapers from time to time. Gas prices are going through the roof. This Government is sticking oil underground and putting upward pressure on prices. There is no justification for doing this. We ought to have a pause, and we ought to say to the Administration that the 50,000, 60,000, or 70,000 barrels a day being put in storage today is impacting prices. It may be 125,000 barrels in the second half of the year if the Administration gets its way. This oil needs to go into the supply stream, and that would put downward pressure on gas and oil prices.

Some say, well, it is a populist issue. You ought to produce more domestically. Here is where we should produce. Some of us were cosponsors of a bill that became law in 2006 to begin that production in what is known as the Lease Sale 181 area of the Gulf of Mexico. I agree with that. The Gulf of Mexico is our greatest resource asset. I think putting this oil in the ground at this point is nuts, and we need to stand up for consumers and for a decent price for oil and gas. We ought not have a government policy that makes things worse.

My understanding is that my 5 minutes is up. I will speak about this subject later.

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

Mr. GREGG. Madam President, I wanted to speak a little bit to the situation we find ourselves in. We have been here before. This is “deja vu all over again,” to quote Yogi Berra. We were under the same stricture when we were debating the agriculture bill a couple months ago. The Senate, by definition, is an institution that is supposed to work its will on legislation. The legislation doesn't come to the Senate under a closed rule as they have

in the House, where the House leadership says this amendment will be offered, and that amendment will be offered, and time will expire and we have to vote. The whole concept of the Senate is that you have an open and free-flowing debate, where people can bring their thoughts to the floor. You don't limit amendments and they can be on about anything. As a practical matter, the Senate then votes after it has fully digested the various ideas that have been put forward.

This approach the Senate has always taken was first defined and most effectively defined, ironically, by George Washington, when he said that the Senate is the saucer into which the hot coffee is poured—the coffee being the House ideas. Now, the majority leader seems to view the Senate as an adjunct of the House, that we should actually be a replication of the House, that the majority leader should have the unilateral right, first, to bring a bill to the floor, which he has done, but once he does that, he should not have the unilateral right to determine what the amendments will be, how many will occur, and how long the debate will be on those amendments.

This is not an autocratic institution. In fact, the Senate is about as far from an autocracy as you can get. Each Senator has the capacity to have a fairly strong impact around here. Each Senator has the right, under the rules of the Senate, to make their case. So the majority leader should not be surprised when he suggests he is going to immediately file cloture on a bill—which is fairly substantive—stimulus II, as it is called—in order to shut off amendments from our side, our side is going to say, no, that is not the way the Senate works. We want to be heard. We want to be able to have the capacity to have our amendments.

The package they are talking about bringing forward may not be a stimulus at all. In fact, it may be the antistimulus package. What they are suggesting is a change in bankruptcy laws that will raise the cost of mortgage insurance—and it is estimated by 1 percentage point—for all Americans who try to get a mortgage after this, if this law were to become effective. It is populist politics, no question about that. You can beat the desk and say we are going to give relief to mortgages by allowing people to go into bankruptcy court and write their mortgages down. But the practical effect of that will be that the market will react and mortgage prices will go up, because people who lend money will have to anticipate that risk. That is what interest rates on mortgages account for—the risk of repayment of that money.

So it is a terrible idea, the practical implications of which will be not to stimulate the housing market but to undermine the housing market. There are initiatives here that might stimulate the economy; some have to do with housing. The Senator from Georgia has a superb idea. But some are

tangential to the housing issue but would have a significant impact on our economy. For example, we could begin the process of straightening out our health care system. That would certainly help the economy. We could extend the dividend and capital gains rates. That would have a huge impact on our economy, if people knew they were going to have an extension of the capital gains rates. We could address the issue of employing and attracting to America more smart people to work in America, so they could be individual engines for economic activity, by extending the H-1B program.

There are a lot of good ideas that could stimulate this economy. There is absolutely no reason that the majority leader should try to use his position as majority leader to shut down the opportunity of the minority to bring those ideas and amendments forward. Let's vote on them. I can understand that the majority leader wants to move things along, and he does not want to have his Members make any difficult votes. That is his responsibility, I suppose to some degree, as leader. That is not the way the Senate works. The Senate is designed to be a place where you can put forward challenging ideas, debate them, and then vote on them.

We can deal with this bill in a fairly prompt way, but we cannot deal with it in a prompt way if those of us on our side of the aisle who believe we have some good ideas that maybe the majority leader does not like are not allowed to bring those ideas forward as to how to stimulate this economy.

We went through this exercise on the Agriculture bill, and it did not work. The leadership of the Senate and the majority leader finally decided we better get to the amendment process after 2 weeks of basically trying to shut down the amendment process.

There is no reason to go through this process again. Let's have an open amendment process where we in the minority agree to a certain number of amendments, but we certainly are not going to agree to preclear those amendments with the majority leader because he does not have that authority under the way the Senate works.

Madam President, I will have to oppose cloture on this bill at this time, although I would certainly like to see us get to this bill and do some serious consideration of how we stimulate this economy because I would like to see us extend the capital gains rates, extend the dividend rates, bring more smart people into this country to energize our economy, and address our health care needs to energize our economy. Those are issues I would like to see debated and voted on as we move forward.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, what is the time agreement?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 11 minute 27 seconds for the minority and 8 minutes 18 seconds for the majority.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, my colleagues desire to do a colloquy. I am pleased to yield to them as long as there is some time left somewhere along the way. I yield the floor, and I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized after this colloquy concludes.

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

The Senator from Delaware is recognized.

Mr. CARPER. Madam President, I understand the time that has been allocated—I think 8 minutes left on our side—is leader time that has been allocated to Senator DODD, the chairman of the Banking Committee. He is not going to be here until after the vote to use that time. Our staff has been good to say that the time might be made available to me. I wish to enter into a colloquy, if I may, with Senator MARTINEZ, who is a former Secretary of HUD in a previous life and a valued member of the Senate Banking Committee.

We are going to have a vote in a few minutes on whether to proceed to a housing recovery package which has a number of positive elements in it. It is one that was largely put together by the Democratic side, but there is a willingness on our side to certainly accept amendments offered by our Republican friends.

As it turns out, the administration's top three priorities, as Senator MARTINEZ knows, in the housing recovery package that we might go to at this time would be GSE regulatory reform for Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the Federal Home Loan Banks, FHA modernization, and it would also include the ability for State housing authorities to issue additional taxes and revenue bonds that can be used for helping refinance homes that are going or have gone into foreclosure. Those are the top three proposals of the administration. The third one is actually in our Democratic proposal on housing recovery. The other two, Chairman DODD and Senator SHELBY met, I am told last night, with the ranking Republican and the chairman on the House side on FHA modernization, and they have made good progress toward a final consensus, maybe a good preconference agreement. On GSE reform, the House has passed by a wide margin legislation to provide for that regulatory reform and also to provide for the creation of an affordable housing fund, something strongly pushed and supported by Senator JACK REED for a number of years.

There is a whole lot, frankly, that we have in common. We are going to vote in a few minutes on a motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to the proposal that was brought to the floor by our Democratic leader. My fear is we are not going to get consent to proceed to the bill, which, on the face of it, is unfortunate because I believe there is a whole lot more agreement here than one might imagine.

I yield to my friend from Florida to add to this discussion and take away

whatever he might wish. I actually believe there is more in common by far than there is in disharmony.

Mr. MARTINEZ. Madam President, I appreciate the Senator's efforts to move this process forward. He and I have been committed to the idea that there are problems the American people are facing as it relates to housing that are impacting the overall economy, and we need to act.

I agree with the ideas the Senator has put forward. There are a number of other good ideas out there. Senator FEINSTEIN and myself have cosponsored a bill regarding mortgage brokers. The proposal by Senator ISAKSON from Georgia, while perhaps a modification might be appropriate in terms of the cost of it, I think is a great idea. The idea is that we encourage families, through tax incentives, to buy homes, unoccupied homes, foreclosed homes, to try to lower the inventory of unoccupied homes; to do, frankly, part of what I don't believe is a terrific idea, which is to increase CDBG to deal with neighborhoods where there are foreclosures going on. I think a better idea is to put people in those homes through tax incentives. These are debatable points. They are good ideas that can be commonly shared.

The whole point is, we have to stick with it. This ought to not just be a symbolic act today to say: Oh, gee, we tried to do something on housing, and in a typical way, we each went to our respective corners and could not agree. We have to keep working on this issue. We are not that far apart. The ideas are mutually understood. GSE reform has been on the table a long time, and it has to be done. On FHA modernization, I know that Ranking Member SHELBY, Chairman DODD, and the House Members have been working diligently to get to something on that. We are close on that issue. That could be part of this package. Those things will help create more liquidity in the mortgage market, they will help put Americans back in the housing business.

The news today on the mortgage and housing starts was not good news. I was fortunate when I was at HUD that the news only got better every month. This month's news on housing starts, on the price of homes dropping, issues such as these, is not encouraging. We have to act. We have an obligation to act, not just make a political point.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CARPER. Reclaiming my time, Madam President, I say in conclusion that the American people want us to get things done. They want us to address the mortgage crisis. There is a way to do that that involves some very good Democratic ideas and some very good Republican ideas. Frankly, there are a number of good ideas we share in common, and there is a whole lot more we share than we do not.

At the end of the day, I think Senator ISAKSON's tax credit idea could be accepted in some form to go with some

increase in CDBGs, community development block grants. We could do both, maybe not as much of either as was originally proposed but a little of both. Let's see how they work and then, after a year or so, see if there is one or the other that makes more sense to do additionally.

I think what is going to happen today, unfortunately, is we are going to have this vote on a motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed on the housing package. It is going to go down. My hope is that as soon as it goes down, if it does, my leader, Senator REID, and the Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, will go through a finite list of amendments, maybe five or so on a side. We are not interested in nongermane amendments. We are interested in amendments that speak directly to the housing crisis on our side and the Republican side, and we ought to be able to define that list. Senator ISAKSON's idea is one. Senator MARTINEZ has a couple of good ideas, one he shares with Senator FEINSTEIN. Senator SPECTER has some ideas on bankruptcy provisions that I may not support, but they certainly deserve to be debated and heard. And we have some ideas on our side as well.

My hope is, again, if this goes down today, that it is just a hiccup and not a heart attack, that we are going to come back and actually go to work to develop a consensus package that I know is there. It is literally there within our grasp. We can have not just a Democratic or a Republican win or a win for the administration, but we are going to have a win for the hundreds of thousands of people who are in danger of losing their homes. We can do something about this in the next several days, and we need to. I am going to join hands and arms with my colleagues, Senator MARTINEZ, Senator DODD, Senator SHELBY, and others who care as passionately about this issue as we do, to join our leaders in making sure we do get the job done.

I yield back whatever time I have remaining. I thank my friend from Alabama for his graciousness in yielding time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama is recognized.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, what is our time on this side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is 8 minutes 8 seconds remaining. The majority has 3 minutes 40 seconds.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I understand the pending business has been the legislation by Senator FEINGOLD, Senator REID, and Senator MENENDEZ to require another report within 60 days involving the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Secretary of Homeland Security, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of National Intelligence. All of them are supposed to drop the war on terrorism they are leading and have explained to us repeatedly and in meticulous detail and write another report.

They keep asking for reports. They asked for a report by General Petraeus when we sent him to Iraq last summer. We voted overwhelmingly, a bipartisan vote, to send him. We were worried at the time, I have to admit, about how things were going in Iraq. I remember asking him: General Petraeus, if things don't get better, if you believe we cannot be successful, will you tell us? He said that he would. He also said he believed we could be successful if we utilized the plans and ideas and programs he was going to execute and was executing. He went and he came back and gave us a report in September. GEN Jimmy Jones, a retired Marine general, and 12 other participants went to the region and returned to give us a report, as did the Government Accountability Office.

We heard all those reports, and we sent General Petraeus forward and we said, continue on, because we were beginning by September to see some substantial reduction in violence in the neighborhoods in Iraq. We didn't know if it was permanent, how far it would go, but the trends were beginning, for at least a few weeks prior to his report, to look considerably better.

As a result of all of that, we allowed General Petraeus to continue with the plan as he explained to us because we evaluated that the strategy he was implementing was working. Since then, we continue to see the most miraculous, one must say, reduction in violence—60, 80, 90 percent in some areas in the country, 60 percent nationwide reduction in violence. We have had circumstances where the local people have joined in awakening groups, or citizens groups, and have turned against al-Qaida. Some of the people had been working with al-Qaida, frankly, but they realized this was a violent, vicious, dominating group with whom they had no prospect of ever living peacefully.

General Conway, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, testified this morning before the Armed Services Committee, of which I am a member, and he discussed that issue. The marines met with these local tribal leaders and made an arrangement, and they turned on al-Qaida, attacked them and have killed them, and they have helped us kill them because they do not agree with them anymore and they have learned the true nature of this group.

The violence is dropping, and Shia groups and councils and awakening groups are forming in other areas of the country. In Al Anbar, a mostly Sunni province, remarkable progress toward stability and a decline in violence has been made. So why do we want to ask for another report?

I note that this bill, S. 2634, was dropped in the same day and by the same people who authored the bill to demand a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq. The Iraq Study Group, an independent group, said that such a withdrawal would be a "victory of historic proportions" for al-Qaida.

I want to be frank: The people who are proposing this report, the people who have called for the precipitous withdrawal from Iraq want us out of there and do not care about any of the consequences.

We are a great nation. We committed our military. We committed our Nation. We committed our resources. We committed the lives of our military by more than a three-fourths vote to this enterprise, and in recent months we have had a most dramatic turn for the better. Why now would we want to promote a precipitous withdrawal? Why now would we demand more and more reports that, if read carefully, have no potential to lead to a constructive benefit toward the mission we have undertaken? I don't think it would do anything other than make it more difficult for our military, more difficult for General Petraeus and our Defense Department to be successful.

So I urge my colleagues to oppose this. Let's be mature as a nation. Let's not snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. This matter is not over, don't get me wrong. I don't portend to suggest in any way that these better numbers and downward trends in violence and progress made politically is guaranteed to continue. We are going to have hiccups and problems, I am certain, but it is certainly going in the right direction today.

I would urge us not to destabilize that, not to pass resolutions that can only be interpreted by our allies, by the Iraqis, by our own soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines that are there in Iraq as an ambivalent attitude toward what they are doing, by placing their very lives at risk for this policy. Why in the world would we want to send such a message?

I think it would be a big mistake, and I ask my colleagues to join with me in opposing this legislation.

I thank the Chair and would ask how much time is left on this side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 27 seconds remaining.

Mr. SESSIONS. I yield back the remaining time, and, Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, the mortgage foreclosure crisis in Michigan is dire. Nearly 80,000 homes are expected to be lost to foreclosure by 2009. Michigan ranks third in the country in foreclosure rates, and fifth in the country in number of foreclosure filings. Michigan has seen an increase in the number of foreclosure filings of 282 percent since 2005.

My State is not alone in this crisis, nor are homeowners facing foreclosure the only ones being affected. The entire

housing industry, and by many accounts our entire economy, is being dragged down by mounting mortgage woes. It is urgent that we move forward on this bill to address these problems and provide immediate help across the Nation. We need to keep families in their homes, and we need to keep this crisis from further weighing down our economy.

Recently, I convened a series of roundtable meetings in a number of Michigan communities. Leaders from local and State government, as well as organizations who are in the trenches working with families facing foreclosure, came together to discuss practical ways to help homeowners and protect our economy from further damage. When I asked for their feedback on this bill, they thought it would help address a number of the problems they highlighted.

Across Michigan, there are communities that would like to rehabilitate abandoned and foreclosed properties so that surrounding property values do not continue to fall. But currently the funds do not exist to do that. This bill provides \$4 billion in Federal block grants to areas with the highest foreclosure rates to help rehabilitate abandoned or foreclosed properties and prevent further damage to local housing values.

Across Michigan, foreclosure prevention counselors are overwhelmed, and a lack of funds is tying the hands of local groups trying to help keep families on track. This bill would provide \$200 million for this much needed preforeclosure counseling.

There are also many homeowners who are facing the financial pressures of owing more on their mortgages than the current dollar value of their houses, a situation known as being "underwater." There is a critical need for more affordable loans to help these families refinance and stay in their current homes. Most homeowners do not want to uproot their children and leave their community behind, even if the balance of their mortgage is greater than the current market value of their home.

This bill would help address this problem by authorizing States to issue \$10 billion in new tax-exempt bonds to help homeowners refinance adjustable rate mortgages. States will have the flexibility to use the proceeds of these bonds to refinance mortgages. This is a key component to turning the current mortgage market around.

Ameliorating our foreclosure crisis will require a team effort among Federal, State, and local governments, community and neighborhood organizations, and lenders, brokers, and borrowers. This bill recognizes that fact. It provides an opportunity to help keep struggling families in their homes. It provides an opportunity to help restore our housing markets so that families can own a home. It provides an opportunity to help keep declining property values stable. We need to take up this

bill now, debate it, consider amendments, and then pass it. To not do so would be to sit idly by while a multitude of Americans needlessly suffer.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, momentarily we will be having a procedural vote, a cloture vote on a motion to proceed to what has been styled a housing bill. I will be urging my colleagues to oppose the cloture motion to proceed to the housing bill.

Having said that, it is my hope that at some point during the vote we will be able to negotiate between the majority and the minority a process for fairly considering alternatives, and I have had some discussions with the majority leader to that effect.

In fact, I offered a consent earlier this afternoon that there be up to five amendments per side permitted, if we turn to the bill. It is still my hope that at some point we will negotiate a process by which we can have fair consideration of alternatives.

Now, my colleagues and I just completed a news conference at which we laid out a comprehensive growth plan for America in a variety of different areas that most Republicans believe would advance the economic security of our country. Portions of that proposal might well be offered as an amendment to the underlying bill, were we to be permitted to do that.

It is my hope that the majority leader and I will have further discussions after this vote about a process by which we might be able to turn to the bill that would be fair to both sides. After all, I know there are some bipartisan discussions going on that will improve the bill. Senator CARPER has been in discussion with Senator MARTINEZ and others on both sides of the aisle with suggestions that might have bipartisan support that are not a part of the current proposal upon which we will have the procedural vote shortly.

So until such time as we can get an agreement that is fair to both sides, and gives other Senators who have ideas an opportunity to offer those ideas and have them voted on by the entire Senate, I urge my colleagues to oppose cloture on the motion to proceed to the proposal as it stands right now.

Hopefully, at some time in the near future we will have a chance to amend it, to modify it, to offer new suggestions to it to improve it, and maybe have the same kind of experience we had on the FISA earlier this year where we came together on a bipartisan basis and passed something overwhelmingly.

We had a similar experience at the end of the stimulus package in the Senate. We came together at the end and passed a package overwhelmingly. There is no good reason we cannot have an amalgam of both Democratic and Republican ideas added to this proposal that would strengthen it, make it more bipartisan, make it more likely that it would become law.

So for the short term, I would urge my Members to oppose cloture on the

motion to proceed. Hopefully, we will be able to work out some kind of process for handling this in a fair way.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. The reason the rules of the Senate are set up as they are is to give Senators the ability to protect themselves.

However, the motion to proceed has been abused. Everything that we have tried to do, everything—we have had to file cloture on a motion to proceed—is unnecessary. I have stated publicly for the press, everyone who would listen to me, that this is a piece of legislation that we should work on.

The Republicans, all Republicans, should understand they lose nothing by moving forward on the motion to proceed. If they find after that that the Democrats are totally unreasonable, then we do not get cloture on the bill. That is the procedure. Why waste all of this time, 30 hours? Why make us go through this process?

If cloture is not invoked, who knows if we will ever get back to the bill again. I will try. We will not go off it right away. I told my distinguished Republican colleague that.

America is facing a foreclosure crisis, a dramatic economic slowdown. Today the Commerce Department declared such. Yet at a press conference the President held today, he said America is not heading toward a recession. Who agrees with that other than the President? Countless economists disagree with that.

The American people know that whatever you call it—a slowdown, a slump, a downturn, or recession—people in every 1 of our 50 States are struggling to make ends meet and looking to us to set things right again.

The housing crisis is the eye of the economic storm. Here are the facts: The number of homes being foreclosed upon across the country rose 57 percent in January, last month. Home prices experienced the steepest drop in 20 years, sagging 9 percent in the final quarter of 2007, and the worst had not come by then.

Foreclosures are expected to exceed 2 million in the coming years. Nationwide, that would wipe out \$223 billion in home equity. Some of that is in neighboring homes. This does not include the lost value of homes that undergo the actual foreclosure process.

In Nevada, the numbers are worse: 95 percent increase in foreclosures last month, 61 percent in the Reno/Sparks area. The situation is bad and likely to get worse all over the country. But we have an opportunity today to make a responsible and necessary step to make things better.

My friends on the other side of the aisle are aware of these challenges. I think, and I respectfully say, it is a bad decision for Republicans to follow again the advice of the respected leader to not vote for cloture on a motion to proceed.

I repeat, if we get on the bill and you find that you do not like what is going on, there are 49 of you. Do not vote for cloture on the bill. My friends on the other side of the aisle are aware of all of the challenges we have. They read the same newspapers, attend the same hearings, live and visit the same neighborhoods around the country because all of the neighborhoods are the same, with rare exception.

They recognized the Nation's economic challenges by working with us to pass the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008. It did not have everything in it that I wanted passed. We passed something the President did not want. That is good. It was a bipartisan effort. That plan was a decent first step, but it was only a start, and I said so at the time.

Secretary Paulson, whom I admire, deserves credit, too, for helping to lead the mortgage industry to voluntarily respond. These efforts will help but, once again, they are just a step, a baby step. Less than 3 percent of the homes at risk would avoid foreclosure under the administration's plan; 97-plus percent would not.

This will help a little. I repeat, a baby step. Baby steps will not solve this crisis. A less than 3-percent improvement will not solve the crisis. We need more than baby steps, we need bolder steps. The bill now before us is a bolder step.

It will make a real tangible difference to homeowners, neighborhoods, and our economy. More than 700,000 families will benefit from this bill; 80,000 vacant foreclosed homes will be put back to productive use; 30,000 jobs and a \$10 billion boost in economic activity will be created.

This bill could be a real bipartisan accomplishment. It would be a sign to the American people all across this country that we can help. I hope my colleagues will support this cloture motion.

One of my friends who is great at working both sides of the aisle—my friend is a Democrat. He worked with a number of my friends on the other side of the aisle. And he said: Here are some of the amendments they want to offer. ISAKSON wants to offer a piece of legislation which is a tax credit for housing purchases. I like it. I think it would be a nice addition to our bill, would improve the bill.

Appraiser oversight and independence: Senator MARTINEZ, who was formerly the HUD Director and Cabinet officer, thinks there should be appraiser oversight and independence. I like it. That is a good idea. That is something we should debate and see if it should be put on this bill and approved.

I was told that Senator SPECTER wants to make some changes on the home mortgage bankruptcy provision. I do not agree with Senator SPECTER, but that is something that is valid and should be able to be offered on this piece of legislation.

All I am saying to my friends is they are making a big mistake by objecting

to our proceeding to this bill. There is no reasonable, rational reason for doing that other than to stall. I think that would be a shame.

I hope there would be an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote on this most important piece of legislation so that we can move forward on it and attempt to work something out on the amendment process. If we do not work anything out, I repeat for the third time in the last 10 minutes, they do not have to give us cloture on the bill. They have nothing to lose. There are 49 of them.

But I think they are sending the wrong message to the American people today, saying this bill we have, which calls for things the President says he wants done: revenue bonds—he called for that in the State of the Union—more money for mortgage counselors. That seems fairly reasonable to everybody. I think that is something we should do. The bankruptcy provision, which I think is such a step forward, the provision that we have dealing with community block grants is important to bring houses that are in foreclosure back to be a productive part of what we are doing.

Everything we have called for in this piece of legislation is reasonable and fair and sound. And we should do it. I would certainly hope that my friends on the other side of the aisle will stop doing what they are doing. I think it sends a terribly bad message to the American people: Republicans do not want to legislate on anything—anything, even the housing crisis.

I cannot imagine what they benefit from doing that other than slowing down the process. It will prevent us from doing something later on in the year. But we are going to continue to work on this legislation. If they defeat cloture, we are going to keep talking about it and talking about it because this is the eye of the storm. This is what is causing most of our problems in the economy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If all time is yielded back, under the previous order, the motion to proceed to S. 2634 is withdrawn.

NEW DIRECTION FOR ENERGY INDEPENDENCE, NATIONAL SECURITY, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT AND THE RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY CONSERVATION TAX ACT OF 2007—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will report.

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. 340, H.R. 3221.