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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 10, 2008, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2008

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, who unites us with Your love, help the Members of this body to fulfill their duties to You and to each other. Give them the spirit to feel the sorrows and trials of others as they become Your instruments in bringing deliverance to those on life's margins.

Preserve them from selfishness and empower them to walk in Your love. May they receive strength from Your promises, wisdom from Your precepts, and courage from Your Providence. Be their abiding reality as you lead them into paths of loving service. We pray in the Name of Him who is the truth and life. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable SHERROD BROWN, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. BYRD).

The bill clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 7, 2008.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable SHERROD BROWN, a Senator from the State of Ohio, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BROWN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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

FISA

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, nearly an entire year has passed since the nonpartisan Director of National Intelligence, ADM Mike McConnell, warned Congress that America's electronic surveillance law was dangerously out of date and in critical need of repair. The old law was causing us to miss substantial amounts of intelligence on terrorist suspects overseas, and it needed to be fixed.

Yet nearly a year later the problem has still not been resolved. For no good reason, the dangers posed by the old law remain. The Senate has done its part to correct the problem. Last month, we passed a broadly bipartisan bill that fixed the outdated FISA law

as well as the temporary bill that replaced it in August.

The only thing now standing in the way of intelligence officials having all the tools they need to monitor terrorists is the House Democratic leadership which is blocking the will of its own majority by refusing to vote on the Senate-passed version of the bill.

The House leadership's actions are quite irresponsible. Worse, they are dangerous. When a temporary 6-month revision of the FISA bill expired last month, House leaders said they needed 15 days to deliberate over a new revision that included legal protections for phone companies that stepped forward after 9/11 to help in the hunt for terrorists.

When those 15 days were up, House Democrats said they needed 3 more weeks. Then they left town for a vacation without acting, despite the urgent pleas of the Director of National Intelligence not to leave the bill undone.

Now, 3 weeks after House Democratic leaders said they needed 3 weeks to work out their concerns, they are ready to go on vacation without acting again, this time on a 2-week spring break. The patience of the American people is wearing thin. It is long past time for the Democratic leadership in the House to do its part.

They face a simple choice: Either take up the Senate-passed bipartisan bill that is guaranteed to pass their Chamber and be signed into law or go on another vacation, leaving the intelligence agents without the tools they need and America more vulnerable to terrorist attack.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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Some cynics in the House think there is a third option: They want to pass a new bill that sounds acceptable but which they know would not be signed into law. This is a distinction without a difference. Passing a bill that will not become law is no better than passing no bill at all.

Some news reports, quoting senior Democratic aides, have suggested that a stalemate on the surveillance issue is helpful to both sides politically. This should offend anyone who takes America's security seriously. And it is refuted by the 68 Members of the Senate, Democratic and Republican, who voted last month to put the recommendation of the Director of National Intelligence into law.

The Senate's solid bipartisan action followed months of hard work between the two parties on the bill that met three basic criteria: It allowed intelligence professionals to gather information from terrorists overseas, it protected companies that stepped forward in a time of urgent national need to cooperate in the hunt for terrorists, and it was guaranteed to be signed into law by the President.

If the House Democratic leadership acts responsibly, it will follow the same three criteria by sending a good bill to the White House before the end of next week. The most efficient path to success is to take up the Senate-passed bill which a majority of House Members, we already know, support.

The time for action has long since passed. Democrats have had nearly a year to address this problem. Again and again they have asked for extensions, then failed to act once the deadline ran out. They are akin to students who continually put off their homework then ask the teacher for more time, hoping the final deadline will never come.

The acts of the House Democratic leadership make their purpose abundantly clear. If they had their way, an improved surveillance law would never pass in the only manner that is acceptable to the Director of National Intelligence.

It is not too late for the House to do the right thing. They have a full legislative week ahead to allow a simple up-or-down vote on the Senate bill. Our forces fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan will not be leaving their units for spring break. The House should not recess for theirs until they have voted on the Senate's bipartisan FISA reform legislation; to do anything less would be grossly irresponsible.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT GEORGE S. RENTSCHLER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a soldier from Kentucky who was taken from his family, his friends, and his country much too soon. On April 7, 2004, SSG George S. Rentschler of Louisville, in my home State of Kentucky, was on a combat patrol in Baghdad when his ve-

hicle was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. He was 31 years old.

For the bravery Staff Sergeant Rentschler showed in uniform, he received numerous medals, awards and decorations, including the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Purple Heart, and the Bronze Star Medal.

Staff Sergeant Rentschler's loved ones will remember him as the finest coach, the fastest friend, and the most caring husband and son they ever knew. He loved to make people laugh. And he was, as his young son, Scott, succinctly puts it, the greatest dad you could have ever asked for.

An Army veteran of 10 years, Staff Sergeant Rentschler was raised in Louisville. As a kid he loved to play many sports, especially baseball and football. He enjoyed watching sports as well, particularly the University of Louisville, and he enjoyed the Kentucky Derby as well.

Following in his father Gilbert's footsteps, George was also an avid Detroit Lions fan. George's love of sports went beyond watching or playing, he was invested and actively encouraging others as a coach. "He coached his kids like crazy," says George's mother, Lillian.

George got involved with many youth leagues, coaching baseball and football. He even coached a baseball team while stationed at Fort Knox. Many of those boys came to pay their respects at George's funeral, wearing their baseball caps in honor of their coach who taught lessons both on and off the field.

George went to Southern Middle School and Central High School and graduated from Louisville Male High School. After high school George joined the Army. He served as a training officer at Fort Knox where he attended a noncommissioned officer's academy. He also saw duty at Ft. Hood, Texas; Bosnia; and was stationed in Germany.

George's mother, Lillian, says he especially enjoyed his involvement with U.N. missions because he liked going to other countries. "There wasn't any talking him out of it because he loved doing what he was doing," said Lillian. "He loved his country."

By the time he was deployed to Iraq, George was assigned to the Army's 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, based out of Baumholder, Germany.

Before shipping overseas, George was lucky enough to meet Rachel, who would become his wife. They met in a club in Louisville. Rachel noticed George because she thought he had the best manners of anyone there. She was so impressed, she got up and introduced herself.

George and Rachel married on September 11, 1998. Over their entire marriage, she cannot remember him ever being in a bad mood. George and Rachel raised two handsome sons, Scott and Brock. While George was deployed to Iraq, Rachel and the boys lived in Germany.

Family time was important to George, and whether it was an elaborate family vacation or a casual trip to a University of Louisville ball game, he always made time for Rachel, Scott, and Brock.

In George's many coaching endeavors, Rachel often wound up playing the "team mom." George told his family often how proud he was to serve in the military and that he loved the camaraderie of his fellow soldiers. He earned their respect by volunteering for the tough jobs.

George's love of coaching, of bringing out the best in others, carried over to his soldiering career. He talked about one day working in the Pentagon, to train and educate younger soldiers. And he was looking forward to making coaching his profession after leaving active service.

My prayers are with the Rentschler family today after their tragic loss. We are thinking of George's wife Rachel; his sons, Scott and Brock; his mother Lillian; and many other beloved family members and friends.

George was predeceased by his father Gilbert. Staff Sergeant Rentschler's funeral service was held at the Carlisle Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, and he was buried in Sturgis, KY. At the funeral service for her husband, Rachel said of George: "He died doing what he loved."

I want her and the Rentschler family to know George also died a hero, and this Senate honors SSG George S. Rentschler for his life of service. And we honor the immense sacrifice he made on behalf of a grateful nation.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

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

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

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

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

OUTSOURCING THE U.S. AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, over the course of this past week, I have come to the Senate floor every single