

we are doing the oversight hearings, we are doing hearings. We are not. That is not true. The Appropriations Committee did one a month ago after I pushed and pushed. I appreciate the Appropriations Committee doing it. We will do another one in about a month, a little less than a month. That is fine. That is not a substitute for doing 60 hearings a year for 7 years, as the Truman committee did.

American taxpayers deserve better than they have gotten from this President and from the Congress for the last 5 years.

Senator REID and I have talked about this a great deal. Senator REID has aggressively supported the creation of a special committee, a bipartisan committee to investigate this kind of waste, fraud, and abuse. It is long past the time we do it.

I come back to the point I made originally. When I pick up a New York Times and see that \$300 million of contracts is given to a shell corporation in Miami, FL, with no name on the door of the building, a corporation headed by a 22-year-old as president, a 26-year-old masseur as vice president, I ask the question: Who makes those judgments? Who is responsible? Who is accountable?

From that several hundred million dollars, 50-year-old weaponry is sent to Afghanistan in the name of American taxpayers, in boxes that are not taped up properly, weaponry that comes, in some cases, from the 1960s, in China.

That is unbelievable to me. Some might be able to read the New York Times piece and say that is all right, I have read this before. I have read we were double charged for gasoline for our American troops in Iraq. I have read we were overcharged for meals. I read we paid for health clinics that did not get built. I read all these things. You know what, it is not such a big deal.

It is a big deal with me. It ought to be a big deal with this Congress. The American people, I think, are sick and tired of this and they deserve a Congress that is going to do something about it.

I obviously wish I didn't have to come to the floor to talk about this. I wish instead my energy was devoted to a committee that had subpoena power. The very first thing we should do—and, by the way, I am writing a letter to the appropriate subcommittee saying I want you to subpoena the principals in this contract and I want you to subpoena the general in charge of the Army Sustainment Command and I want them to come to testify and explain to the American people and explain to us how is it during wartime that we seem to blink and turn our head to what is, I believe, war profiteering. Who has allowed us be that immune to the interests of the American troops? This undermines and disservices the American soldiers. It certainly disservices the American taxpayers and does not represent the best interests of this country.

In the coming days I intend to come to the floor a good many times to speak about this and be a general burr under the saddle—which is a term that people are perhaps more acquainted with in my home State because we raise a lot of horses. But it seems to me the only way to get this sort of thing done is to be a problem and to embarrass those who do not want to do it, and I am prepared to do that. I think it is long past the time to say to the American people: You don't have to read it anymore in the newspaper. The newspaper is not going to be required to do oversight for this Congress. The Congress finally, at long last, will do its own oversight and will do a good job and tell the American people you can count on us. That has not been the case earlier when this war started because no one wanted to do the necessary kind of oversight because it was the kind of oversight that would probably raise some hackles and embarrass some folks.

I might also say, there was a piece of legislation passed—in fact, the Presiding Officer, Senator WEBB, and Senator MCCASKILL and others put it together last year, which I supported—which deals with a Truman commission. It is not the equivalent of a Truman committee. A Truman committee is a standing committee with subpoena power, but the Truman Commission is a step forward and I supported it. It will be a commission that operates on a one-time basis to develop recommendations and take a look at what is happening.

The Wartime Contracting Commission has a 2-year sunset, and I commend my colleagues for trying to put together and for successfully putting together a commission, but I do say that we need in this Congress a committee, a bipartisan select committee, with subpoena power and we need it now.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I may speak for such time as I might consume.

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

The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

AMERICAN HISTORY

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, in the Senate, we are surrounded by history. The same can be said of the Capitol itself and, of course, of Washington, DC. It is very humbling to think that when we travel around the Nation's Capital, we

are following the paths that many great statesmen walked before us.

Reflecting on our past can be a source of great pleasure, and it can lead to great insight. Learning about the lives of great Americans—the grand accomplishments and humanizing habits—is both entertaining and educational. Indeed, it is emblazoned in the rotunda in the Library of Congress that “History is the biography of great men.” The accomplishments of great Americans give us heights to which to aspire, and their failures give us guidance for our own pursuits.

Unfortunately, the pleasure of knowing history escapes many younger Americans. Study after study has shown that our students lack even a rudimentary knowledge of American history.

The most recent National Assessment of Education Progress found that elementary, middle, and high school students fall short in terms of what they know about U.S. history. According to the NAEP, the Nation's report card, roughly a third of fourth graders and eighth graders fall below what is deemed a “basic” level of proficiency in U.S. history. Our high schoolers fare much worse. More than half of 12th graders fall below the “basic level.”

The news does not improve as students move on to college. Older students fare poorly as well, even those who attend what are considered our top universities and colleges. A recent survey of college freshmen and seniors revealed that many students are ignorant of what many of us consider basic facts of American history. For instance, only 47 percent of freshmen knew that Yorktown brought the Revolutionary War to an end. Seniors did even worse—only 45 percent knew. Another example: 42 percent of college freshmen could not identify on a multiple-choice test the 25-year period during which Abraham Lincoln was elected President. And another: 15 percent of seniors did not know that the Declaration of Independence denotes the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The results are disappointing, to say the least. They reveal that younger Americans have a poor concept of what is necessary for good citizenship. What is the basis for the social compact of Americans? Many younger Americans do not know that our Government was founded on principles and values of innate equality and liberty. We have known about these deficiencies for a long time. Yet very little progress has occurred. This must change if American voters are to be able to evaluate candidates and issues on the basis of American principles and values.

It was 13 years ago that the Senate debated the national illiteracy of U.S. history. At that time, the Senate was considering controversial national U.S. history standards. These standards were flawed, neglecting important individuals, ideas, and events for the sake

of politically correct subjects. As poor as the standards were, they did respond to what many recognized as a serious and legitimate problem: the Nation's children were not learning U.S. history.

As Senator Slade Gorton noted during that debate:

The founding truths of this country may have been self-evident to the Founders, but as studies have demonstrated again and again, they are not genetically transmitted.

Studies have continued to demonstrate just that.

So what to do about it? Most of what we learn about our country we learn in school, but today's curricula does little to interest our students. So says former Secretary of Education William Bennett. In an article in *National Review* last year, he wrote:

It's not our children's fault. . . . Many of our history books are either too tendentious—disseminating a one-sided, politically correct view of history of the greatest nation that ever existed; or, worse, they are boring—providing a watered down, anemic version of a people who have fought wars at home and abroad for the purposes of liberty and equality, conquered deadly diseases, and placed men on the moon.

Today's textbooks, say scholars like Bennett, do not relate the drama of our Nation, they are lifeless and boring, and they shy away from conveying the uniqueness and the extraordinary nature of America. Ours is a very special Nation based on what our Founders called "truths." Is it conceivable that our unprecedented freedom, success, and leadership is influenced by these truths and the governmental structures designed to reflect them? You would not know it from some histories.

I believe our students would be well served by reading texts such as "A Patriot's History of the United States." I like the way the authors of this book describe their approach to writing a volume of American history. They say:

We remain convinced that if the story of America's past is told fairly, the result cannot be anything but a deepened patriotism, a sense of awe at the obstacles overcome, the passion invested, the blood and tears spilled, and the nation that was built.

That is the spirit we should convey to our children. And it does not have to be politically correct—just fair. Of course, American history cannot ignore the bad, but it also should not neglect individuals, ideas, and events that inspire.

My colleague, Senator LIEBERMAN, had it right in 1995. He said:

We do not need sanitized history that only celebrates our triumphs. . . . But we also do not need to give our children a warped and negative view of Western civilization, of American civilization, of the accomplishments, the extraordinary accomplishments and contributions of both.

Why is this important today? First, to quote my colleague from Connecticut again:

History is important. We learn from it. It tells us who we are, and from our sense of who we are, we help determine who we will be by our actions.

It is especially important in an election year, where knowledge of the past can help us evaluate events and candidates of today.

It is imperative that in these times Americans understand who we are as Americans. Americans must comprehend the principles and values on which this country was built because we are engaged in a great ideological confrontation with people who are dedicated to destroying us—a confrontation that will be arduous and difficult. The terrorist conflict in which we are engaged is one of values and principles, and future generations cannot act on these values if they are ignorant of American history.

When citizens begin to grow ignorant of who they are, one of the first symptoms is a loss of willpower. Learning about our past tells us who we are, and with that knowledge we are equipped to face the challenges and fight the wars we face today and in the future. Indeed, if future generations do not appreciate what we have—why it is so precious, why it needs defending—they will not do the hard things necessary to defend it.

In a speech to Harvard University's graduating class of 1978, Alexander Solzhenitsyn confronted the West's weak confrontation of communism.

It is probably worth noting here another item in the survey of college students I mentioned earlier. That survey found that about a quarter of freshmen were unable to complete this sentence correctly: "The major powers at odds with each other in the 'Cold War' were the United States and [blank]." A quarter of the students could not come up with the name—Soviet Union—and it was a multiple-choice quiz.

Solzhenitsyn's speech is particularly instructive even as we face a different ideological threat today. He warned:

No weapons, no matter how powerful, can help the West until it overcomes its loss of willpower.

Some of the debates we have been having in the Senate raise the question of whether we are there again.

Thirty years after Solzhenitsyn, we need to summon willpower for this new conflict. We are engaged in a struggle against a radical ideology whose adherents want to eradicate us. The enemy we are fighting hates us because of our values and our principles, the origins of which are unknown to many young Americans. But a lack of willpower has inhibited our struggle against these global terrorists.

Last year, the Senate spent many hours debating whether to withdraw from Iraq before we had completed our mission. We have spent too much time arguing over terrorists' civil rights. Solzhenitsyn, in fact, presaged our current debate in 1978 when he observed:

When a government starts an earnest fight against terrorism, public opinion immediately accuses it of violating the terrorist's civil rights.

Such accusations are a sign of a lack of will to defeat an implacable enemy.

This brings me to a final figure, another Soviet dissident and another witness to the destructive power of dangerous ideologies, like Solzhenitsyn. These are both men who understand the necessity of willpower in the face of evil.

A couple of years ago, writing in the journal "The New Criterion," Roger Kimball, in his essay "After the suicide of the West," discussed the insights of the Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, who lived both through the fascism of the Nazis and the communism of the Soviet Empire. He was also active in the Polish Solidarity movement. Kimball paraphrases Kolakowski and illuminates why knowledge of our history is so key for the maintenance of our willpower. Kimball writes:

Kolakowski is surely right that our liberal, pluralistic democracy depends for its survival not only on the continued existence of its institutions, but also "on belief in their value and a widespread will to defend them."

One can surely question whether the next generation of Americans really believes in the value of our institutions. After all, what is it they have to base their judgment on when they know very little about the institutions themselves?

A few years ago, in 2003, the Library of Congress recognized Kolakowski for his intellectual achievements. After receiving his award, he made a speech in which he passionately explained why history is so important and why it is an important matter for discussion.

He said:

Historical knowledge is crucial to each of us: to schoolchildren and students, to young and to old. We must absorb history as our own, with all its horrors and monstrosities, as well as its beauty and splendor, its cruelties and persecutions, as well as all the magnificent works of the human mind and hand; we must do this if we are to know our proper place in the universe, to know who we are and how we should act.

And he goes on:

One might ask what is the point of repeating these banalities? The answer is that it is important to keep on repeating them again and again, because these are banalities we often find it convenient to forget; and if we forget them and they fall into oblivion, we will be condemning our culture, that is to say ourselves, to ultimate and irrevocable ruin.

Studies of our young people's knowledge of history confirm the wisdom of this observation and raise questions about the risk to our history of falling into oblivion.

"Thankfully, historical amnesia still has a cure," Secretary Bill Bennett reminds us. "Let us begin the regimen now."

We need a cure, because as long as we suffer from this amnesia, we will be fighting two wars: a war against our enemies who wish to do us harm and a war against our will, the loss of which will let them.

The fate of future generations depends on how we answer the enemy's challenge today. To do that, we must

clearly understand the values and principles that make us who we are. The truth is no one will fight long, either literally or figuratively, for values and principles he doesn't understand.

Americans must know what is worth fighting for, must maintain the willpower to do it, and must apply the lessons of our past to our current threats. So we must find a way to help students understand the values and the principles upon which our Nation is founded. The solution begins at a fundamental level of learning and education. Our students need textbooks that capture the life of history—Bill Bennett suggests a national contest for better history textbooks—and draw young people to the study of our Nation's story.

The solution, however, must go beyond changes to curriculum. As a nation, we must learn to embrace our history again and discard the politically correct, relativistic version of our history that has persisted for far too long. We must act now to preserve for future generations what we know to be so important. Let us get about the job.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

HOUSING CRISIS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, over the last year, Americans across the country have watched as our economy has faltered, and for far too many families the economic downturn has hit home in the form of a foreclosure. This is a time when we badly need a strong and effective response from the administration led, in part, by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

But instead of helping the millions of families who are struggling to stay above water, HUD has been almost constantly distracted by the ethical questions that have been facing its Secretary, Alphonso Jackson. Ten days ago, I felt the problem had reached a breaking point, so I called for Secretary Jackson's resignation. Today, Mr. Jackson announced he has decided to move on, and President Bush must now nominate a new Housing Secretary with the experience and the credibility to attack this crisis rather than hide from it.

Mr. President, I hope this development is a sign that the administration wants to finally make the needs of American families a priority. I hope it is a sign that the administration wants to work with Congress on a meaningful response to the crisis that has swept across this Nation. I hope President Bush will change his position and sup-

port our effort to pass legislation that will help millions of families who are facing foreclosure today.

This week, we will give President Bush and the Republican Senators that chance again as we take up the Foreclosure Prevention Act for the second time this year. Until now, it seems that some on the other side of the aisle have been more responsive to Wall Street than Main Street.

So I hope my colleagues who were home over the break have listened, as I have, to the concerns of their constituents and have now returned ready to work and address our Nation's housing crisis. This truly is a crisis. I wish to spend a couple minutes talking about why we have to take action now.

As many as 2 million American families are going to lose their homes to foreclosure this year. Each foreclosure represents a family whose dream of a comfortable home and secure future has been dashed. Each foreclosure weakens the foundation of our entire economy and our communities. Foreclosures have left our neighborhoods full of vacant homes. Foreclosures have left our families distressed and troubled, and communities are now reporting a higher crime rate as a result of this crisis. State and local governments are seeing their tax revenues drop even as their needs are piling up. We in Congress can help prevent this by investing in our communities and providing support for families who risk losing everything.

The Foreclosure Prevention Act would make changes in bankruptcy laws so that more financially troubled families could keep their homes. It would change lending laws to prevent more borrowers from accepting terms they don't understand and cannot afford. It would provide an additional \$200 million to help housing counselors continue to reach out to families who are at risk of foreclosure.

I wish to focus on the last point because it is extremely important. Too many homeowners today don't know they can get help when they get behind on their mortgage. Too many of them don't contact their lender when they miss their first payment. Too many are just intimidated or don't feel they can trust anyone. The Foreclosure Prevention Act would give counseling agencies the resources they need to reach out and let borrowers know they have options. Counseling can help families negotiate with their lenders, readjust their payments, or learn how to budget their expenses better.

Last month, I had the opportunity to meet a single mother from Ohio. She had fallen on hard times which, in turn, led her to fall behind in her mortgage. Luckily, with housing counseling made possible by NeighborWorks America, she and her children were able to stay in their home. She explained to me that when she got behind, she was simply overwhelmed; she didn't know what to do. She said this is not something about which they teach you in school.

Our economic health in this country depends on Americans having a safe and stable place to live and raise their families. We want every family to know there is help out there. The Foreclosure Prevention Act would help make sure families that risk losing everything get the help they need before it is too late.

Across this country, people are worried about whether they are going to be able to keep their homes, whether their jobs will be eliminated, and how they are going to pay for health care when they or their children get sick. These are real families, and these are real communities in need of help.

We need to pass this reform immediately. Americans want action. We wanted to pass it last month, and we were stopped by Republican efforts to block this bill. So I hope now, as we have returned from the recess, President Bush and our Republican colleagues will support our efforts. I hope they will come with us tomorrow, stand with us, and pass meaningful reform that will give homeowners the help they need, allow them to keep their homes, give their families hope, and ultimately make our communities strong again.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business for as long as I may need.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, many of my fellow Americans are very aware of the exhilaration but also the dangers and risks of commercial fishing in Alaska's Bering Sea. The pictures and the stories—and even the sounds—are brought into our living rooms every week on the Discovery Channel program "The Deadliest Catch." Many have seen it.

When the Bering Sea fishing fleet finds itself in trouble, they rely on the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard to truly make order from the chaos. These stories have not escaped Hollywood's attention. It is not only seen on "The Deadliest Catch," but there was a 2006 feature film, "The Guardian," starring Kevin Costner and Ashton Kutcher, which paid tribute to the Coast Guard search and rescue teams based at Air Station Kodiak in Alaska. Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak is home to aircrews and rescue swimmers who endure some of the