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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 8, 2008, at 12:30 p.m.

Senate

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2008

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JIM WEBB, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

O God, our sovereign King, You have given us the gift of another day. Thank You for the opportunity to serve You by serving others.

As our lawmakers labor for liberty, empower them to promote the welfare of this land. Give them the wisdom to look to You for support and blessings. Lord, may they not trust in human efforts alone but humbly acknowledge that You, Almighty God, preside over the destiny of nations. As they look back, help them to see Your hands working in our history and thereby find strength to face the future with optimism and thanksgiving. Let Your goodness and mercy sustain them throughout life's seasons. Remind them that You never ask them to do more than You will provide the strength for them to accomplish.

We pray in the Redeemer's Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable JIM WEBB 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, April 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 JIM WEBB, a Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ROBERT C. BYRD,
President pro tempore.

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

SCHEDULE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following my remarks and those of Senator MCCONNELL, if he chooses to make some remarks, there will be a period for the transaction of morning business until 3 o'clock today. Senators during that period of time will be allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

At 3 o'clock the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3221, which is the vehicle we have used to move the housing legislation. As previously announced, there will be no votes today.

HOUSING VOTES

Mr. REID. Mr. President, thanks to Senators DODD, BAUCUS, SHELBY and GRASSLEY and their staffs, we have had some good bipartisan work on this housing bill. This bill will help communities, homeowners, and the homebuilding industry. This bill is not a silver bullet, but it is an important first step, so I hope we can pass it quickly and overwhelmingly so we can send it along to the House of Representatives.

We have nine pending amendments. I have asked my staff to see what they can do to work with the Republicans to see if we can come up with votes tomorrow morning on those amendments that are germane. The Parliamentarian has had a chance to look at those. A number of them are clearly germane, and I hope we can vote on them tomorrow morning.

IRAQ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, this is an important week not only because we are going to finish the housing bill this week but also because General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will testify. There are a number of questions they must be asked by Members of the Senate. The first one is will our troops come home soon or when will our troops come home. And I think they should be asked if the Iraq war has made America safer.

When the surge began more than a year ago, President Bush labeled the strategy "return on success." As the surge succeeds, according to the President, our troops would come home. We

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



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are already hearing General Petraeus has recommended to freeze the troop levels. In fact, there will be more troops after the freeze takes place than before the surge started. I assume President Bush will accept this request by General Petraeus. By the President's own measure, without our troops returning, there will be no success.

General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will be asked a number of other questions. We have seen what happened a week or 10 days ago in Basra: al-Sadr was attacked by the Iraqi armed services. Al-Maliki, the leader of Iraq, didn't notify the American troops or anyone else and simply took off after al-Sadr. That attack was basically a failure. The police didn't police. The Iraqi police didn't police. At least 1,000 Iraqi soldiers laid down their arms and quit. In fact, they didn't lay down their arms, they gave them over to al-Sadr's forces. Because of that, British artillery was asked to engage, and they did. U.S. troops were asked to come in, and they did. U.S. air support was asked to come in, and they did. We lost a number of soldiers and a significant number of soldiers were wounded.

As some of my colleagues will recall, when this attack by al-Maliki's forces took place, President Bush said: This is what it is all about. This shows the success of what I have been telling everyone.

Our troops in Iraq face a civil war that is growing more violent by the day—by the day. Any notion of renewed commitment to peace among Iraqi factions is betrayed by the news every day. Yesterday, five American soldiers were killed. In one attack, 2 were killed and 31 were wounded.

General Petraeus has to be asked the question: Why is this happening? The battle, as we see in the papers today, is intensifying between al-Sadr and al-Maliki. We have heard today's news that the Sunnis are becoming more violent. The Green Zone, which is supposed to be a safe haven, the safest part of Iraq, has seen a series of attacks over the last couple weeks. People have been killed in the Green Zone. Our soldiers are now being killed in the Green Zone.

The chorus for a smarter strategy in Iraq is growing among defense and military experts. COL John Gentile, a West Point history professor who has served two tours of duty in Iraq, has said directly about Petraeus's action in Iraq, as reported in headline news today in the Wall Street Journal, among other things:

We've come up with this false narrative, this incorrect explanation of what is going on in Iraq. We've come to see counterinsurgency as the solution to every problem and we're losing the ability to wage any other kind of war.

General Petraeus must respond to the criticism of Lieutenant Colonel Gentile.

General Petraeus is responsible solely for the conditions in Iraq. He has re-

sponsibilities nowhere else. But others, including Secretary Gates, Admiral Mullen and Congress and the President must consider Iraq in the context of America's interests throughout the world. So General Petraeus must be asked: Has the war made us safer?

Based on every measure, the answer is a resounding no. Because of Iraq, our military's readiness for full-spectrum combat is stretched dangerously thin and becoming more so every day. Our troops are serving their second, third, fourth, fifth—and some are believed to be headed to Iraq for the sixth time. This is taking a tremendous toll on them and their families and the overall status of our military.

We are not ready for an unexpected crisis that could arise overnight someplace other than Iraq. Each additional tour results in substantially higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder. On one tour, 12 percent of the soldiers are coming back with post-traumatic stress disorder; three of four tours, approaching 30 percent.

I, in my office last Friday, was leaving, and a young man and his wife were there with a baby. The young man married this very pretty lady, his wife, the mother of his child, when he was 15. She was 19. He joined the Army and went to Iraq. I said: How are you doing? He said: Not very well. These were his words: My cognitive abilities are gone. He is having trouble thinking. That is what post-traumatic stress disorder is all about.

The military is in such dire need of recruits. I can remember when I practiced law I did some criminal defense work. One of the things we would try with some of these young men who were in trouble was to see if we could get them in the military. The answer was no; they had criminal records. It is not the case anymore. If you haven't graduated from high school, the military will still take you. If you have committed a felony or a serious crime, the military will still take you. In fact, one out of every eight of our new recruits—that is 13 percent—have received a waiver for past criminal misconduct. Some of these are felons, these people who are going into the military after having committed a crime. But even with these people who have no high school diploma, those who have been involved in serious crimes, we are still struggling in meeting our recruitment goals.

As has been reported in all the print press and the electronic media today, we are losing our combat-hardened leaders, those with experience—sergeants, captains. There was a good report on the radio this morning about what are we going to do for colonels and generals 15 years from now, if all the captains are leaving.

We recognize General Petraeus's responsibility is Iraq, but in these hearings, these meetings with General Petraeus, he is going to have to understand we have taken our eye off the ball in other crucial areas of the world,

including Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea, Iran, all through the Middle East. America's No. 1 enemy, bin Laden, remains free. Al-Qaida is going strong. Because of Iraq, courageous men and women of our National Guard don't have the manpower and equipment to do their job and protect us here at home. Because of Iraq, our moral authority is lost in the eyes of many. Our foreign allies are unwilling to stand by our side. General Petraeus is going to have to respond to some of these questions: When will our troops come home? Has the Iraq war made our country safer? These are the questions that matter. The American people deserve a fair assessment of both.

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 for the transaction of morning business until 3 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

HOUSING PROBLEMS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader for his kind words about the housing bill that is before us. This is the measure on which we are working on a bipartisan basis to deal with what is one of the most serious economic problems we face today in America and across the world. There has been so much subprime mortgage paper put out from adjustable rate mortgages and teaser mortgages in the United States that it has gone into financial systems in many countries, and they are facing similar problems to the ones our financial system faces here.

I believe there are a lot of steps that are important that we take at the macro levels, things the Federal Reserve does and what the Treasury can do and what the government-regulated, government-sponsored entities can do. But it is also my firm belief that this problem is one that we are going to have to save community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood, and family by family. That is why I have an amendment filed today, Bond amendment No. 3436, to avoid these problems in the future.

I have listened to a lot of homeowners, and one of the real problems we have is right now there is not a clear and simple disclosure of payments and interest rates for adjustable rate loans with the so-called teaser rates. The teaser loans with interest rates and payments that jump up to unaffordable levels played a large part