

left. Time has taken its toll. But for those remaining veterans, we owe them a debt of gratitude, and we should compensate them for service rendered on behalf of the United States. President Franklin Roosevelt called on the Army of the Philippines to stand with us, and they did. They fought and many were wounded. Some died in the process. If the United States is going to be known as a country that remembers its friends, we should remember our friends in the Philippines.

This provision is opposed by the Republican side—maybe not all, but some, and they object to it. They will have a chance to debate that, and I hope we can draw a conclusion soon and move this bill forward.

It is unfortunate that this bill, as important as it is for the veterans of the United States, has been subjected to a filibuster by the Republicans. They have done everything they can to stop this bill from coming to the floor. You would think that something as basic as veterans' benefits would be bipartisan. It certainly was in the committee. It should be on the floor of the Senate.

Last Thursday, Senator HARRY REID, the Democratic majority leader, tried to call up this bill, and he was told no; that he would have to file cloture. To put that in common terms, it means we would have to wait—wait over the weekend, not finish the bill last week—and have a vote, which we had earlier today. The vote was at 12 o'clock, a vote which the Republicans insisted on before going to the bill. The final total on that vote was 94 to nothing. There wasn't a single Senator of either political party who voted against proceeding to this bill.

So all we did was delay this bill for another 4 or 5 days, and we find ourselves at this very moment in the same position. The Republicans refuse to come forward and offer a plan for considering amendments under the bill. The time may come, and I hope it doesn't, when we face another cloture motion, another effort to stop this, a delay tactic from the Republican side of the aisle.

Last week, the Republicans used this delay tactic to stop a technical corrections bill, a bill which just cleaned up some mistaken language—poor grammar, poor spelling—in a bill passed years ago, and a bill that was important because it related to highway and bridge projects and that created good-paying jobs in the United States. The Republicans filibustered that bill. It went on for days and days and days. We thought, well, when it comes to a veterans bill, they are not going to use that filibuster again. But they did.

To date, the Republicans have engaged in 67 filibusters during this session of Congress. They have broken the record. I guess it is a source of pride within their Republican conference. The previous record was 57 filibusters over a 2-year period. They have broken that record in 16 months with 67 filibusters. Each and every time they en-

gage in these delaying and stalling tactics, it is an effort to stop legislation that would move us forward either in creating jobs, which are important for an economy that is facing a recession, or creating veterans' benefits for the thousands of veterans who expect and need a helping hand.

The Republicans continue to use this strategy. I don't know, perhaps someone has inspired them to do this, but I wish they would think twice. This country's veterans and their families expect us to work in a bipartisan way to try to help them. We have many times. But in this bill, in this critically important bill on veterans' benefits, the Republicans have thrown every obstacle in our path that they can legally under the rules of the Senate. That still leaves us with a major responsibility. We owe it to the veterans to get this job done.

I am glad Senator AKAKA is here, keeping his lonely vigil on the Senate floor. I know in a minute we are going to recess and come back in about an hour, but I thank him for his leadership on this important bill. I am hopeful after the break we can come back to the floor and finally find an accommodation and agreement on both sides of the aisle.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii is recognized.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that during today's session, all time during any previous recess and any upcoming recess be charged postcloture.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 4:30 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 3:30 p.m., recessed until 4:31 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. KERRY).

VETERANS' BENEFITS ENHANCEMENT ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN LITTLE

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I am honored today to pay tribute to an outstanding member of my staff. When I was elected to the Senate, one of the first things I had to do was to select and hire a chief of staff. It didn't take long for me to find John Little. He came to work for me in December 2004, even before I was sworn in as a Senator.

When I first met John, he was legislative director for the junior Senator from Alabama, my colleague JEFF SESSIONS. I asked JEFF if it would be all right if I approached John and hired away a key member of his staff. He was very gracious, and he told me that al-

though he would be hard to replace, he thought it would be a great opportunity for John and wanted to make sure he didn't stand in his way in any way.

One of the reasons I came to Washington was to be engaged in the issues of the day and try to find solutions to the problems facing Floridians and all Americans. Having spent my entire public career in the executive side of Government, I didn't know the inner workings of the Congress and looked for someone with that skill and knowledge. John Little brought that legislative experience from day one to my office and has been an invaluable member of my staff and someone I have relied on and counted on every single day I have been in the Senate.

John's experience on the Hill started when he was a very young lawyer, fresh from passing the bar and eager to work in Government. He worked his way up from being a young staffer writing legislative correspondence to becoming a legislative aide handling policy in the areas of education and health care. John had the respect of his peers and would eventually become legislative director. He is known in the Hill community for being bright, aggressive, conservative and even-keeled. He knows the implications of both large and small shifts in public policy and the impact they might have on families and communities. He brought to the people of Florida a great amount of knowledge and experience and was a problem solver when we had problems we faced.

Through his work and in getting to know John personally, I have come to admire him greatly for his strength of character, a trait I greatly admire in him. In the face of challenges, John courageously rose to meet those challenges. He never wavered in his love of this institution or his love of this country, and he has served the people of Florida and the Senate, an institution that I know he loves, very well.

Over these last few years, John has demonstrated tireless dedication and loyalty to me and the people of Florida. We have successfully turned back attempts to breach Florida's ban on offshore drilling. We have sought and secured funds for restoring the Everglades. We have fought to ensure Florida's military people and bases have the resources they need to perform their duties. Throughout these and other achievements, John has remained humble and committed to ensuring the policies we have pursued were in the best interests of the people of Florida.

For those who know the life of a chief of staff for a Senator, it is not glamorous. The hours are long, the issues are complex and innumerable, and you rarely have the opportunity for an uninterrupted weekend. For these reasons, John has accepted a position in the private sector—a great opportunity for John. This speaks to his skill and knowledge as one of the great

qualities he possesses as chief of staff in the Senate. I am sad to see him go, but I am confident he will continue to find ways to serve the public good. He will be missed.

I thank him for his service, and I wish him all the best in all his endeavors. John is truly a friend. I will miss my personal day-to-day contact with him, but he is someone with whom I hope to have a lasting, lifelong relationship.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. McCASKILL). The Senator from Alaska is recognized.

TONY BLAIR

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, last evening I had the honor of attending a dinner of the Atlantic Council, and at that dinner they honored the former Prime Minister of Great Britain, the Right Honorable Tony Blair. I want to quote from his speech, and I ask unanimous consent to have his whole speech printed in the RECORD after my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. STEVENS. He said this:

The transatlantic alliance is, of course, a product of historical connection, culture, language and tradition. But most of all it is an alliance of belief, of shared values, of a common outlook not just about nations and their common interest but about humanity and its common destiny. Out of the travails of the twentieth century, the alliance drew its history and its strength. In the fight against fascism, and communism, it confronted and defeated totalitarian ideology. Millions of our citizens died for the victory. Through their sacrifice, we gained our freedom.

More than that, we came to a profound understanding about what it is to be free. We realized through the pain and suffering, the difference between deferring to those in power and deciding who they are; between the rule of law and the caprice of dictatorship; between the right to speak out and the silence of the fearful.

Now with those twentieth century battles over, it is tempting to think that this alliance has served its purpose. But here is the important point about it. It was never, and is not now, an alliance only of interests. It was and is an alliance of conviction. We, in the West, don't own the idea of freedom. We didn't fight for it because of the happenstance of birth in Europe or America. It is there, in the DNA of humankind. It is universal in nature and appeal. We developed it, but we didn't invent it.

Now is the time to stand up for it. If we want our values to govern the twenty-first century, we must combine hard and soft power. We must show unhesitating resolution in the face of threats to our security; and we must show that our values are indeed universal, that they encompass not only freedom but justice, and not for us alone but for the world as a whole. We must show these values are global. And build alliances accordingly, starting with the renewal of our own. And we need to do it with energy and urgency. In the Middle East this is time critical. We must act now.

Two things I now perceive more clearly than in office. The first is: the fundamental shift of the centre of gravity, politically and economically, to the East, to China and of

course India, but more broadly to the Middle and Far Eastern nations.

This evening I will focus elsewhere, but suffice it to say that we are still, in the West, not in the state of comprehension or analysis we need to be, fully to grasp this shift. China and India together will over the coming decades industrialize on a scale, and at a pace, the world has never seen before. In China especially, the implications are huge. Whatever the present controversies, a strong strategic relationship with it is vital; as it is with India. We are so much better able to fashion the terms of such a relationship if we do it in unison. That alone would justify and re-justify our alliance.

This is a challenge of diplomacy and statesmanship of one kind.

The other challenge arises from the security threat that occupied so much of the last years of my premiership. Today, as we meet, our armed forces face the prospect of a continuing campaign in Afghanistan and Iraq. I hope one thing unites us all. Whatever the debate about the decisions that brought us to these countries, there should be no debate about the magnificent and sustained heroism of our armed forces. British and American troops and the forces of other allied nations deserve our full support and our gratitude.

But this struggle is not limited to those fields of conflict. Out in the Middle East, it is there in the activities of Hezbollah in Lebanon, of Hamas in Palestine; it is played out in the street of Arab opinion every day. It has spread across the world. More than a score of nations have suffered terror attacks in the last year, still more have foiled them. They do not include only the usual list, but Thailand, Nigeria, China itself.

In the Middle East, the ideology that drives the extremism is not abating. The Annual Arab Public Opinion survey published last week was not striking simply for its specific findings but for its overall picture. The basic ideological thrust of the extremists has an impact way beyond the small number of those prepared to engage in terror. In sum, it shows an alarming number of people who buy the view that Islam is under attack from the West; the leaders to support are those like Nasrallah and Ahmadinejad who are perceived to take on the West; and there is a contrast between Governments and their people that is stark.

The extremism is a tiny minority activity; the ideas, prejudices and sentiments that drive it, are not. The truth is that the roots of this global ideology are deep, far deeper than I first thought in the aftermath of September 11.

I believe the eventual outcome is not in doubt. But it is possible, dangerously, to underestimate the size of this challenge. And it is possible completely to misunderstand its origins.

This global ideology is based on a total perversion of the true faith of Islam. Its revolutionary rhetoric and attachment to so-called liberation movements is a sham designed to hide its profoundly reactionary and regressive character. It is totalitarian in nature and compromising with it will lead not to peace but to a ratcheting up of demands, none of which are remotely tolerable.

But it plays cleverly on the insecurities and uncertainty deep within Islam. It speaks to a sense that the reason for its problems is not to be found within, but as victims of outside aggression.

So today the issue hangs in the balance. The Middle East is without doubt a region in transition; but in which direction will it travel?

Like it or not, we are part of the struggle. Drawn into it, Europe and America must hold together and hold firm. Not simply for our own sake, but for that of our allies with-

in Islam. If we do not show heart, why should they?

If they don't see our resolve, how much more fragile is theirs?

So how is this battle won?

We have to recognize that though the circumstances and conflicts of the twentieth century are very different from ours, nonetheless, one thing remains true in any time and for all time: That if under attack, there is no choice but to defend, with a vigour, determination and will, superior to those attacking us. Our opponents today think we lack this will. Indeed they are counting on it. They think that if they make the struggle long enough and savage enough, we will eventually lose heart, and our will fade. They are fanatics but they have, unfortunately, the dedication that accompanies fanaticism.

We cannot permit this to happen. Where we are confronted, we confront. We stand up. And we do so for as long as it takes. This ideology now has a nation, Iran, that seeks to put itself at the head of extreme Islam. They need to know what we say, we mean and, if necessary, will do. If we exhibit this attitude, peace is more likely; because they will not miscalculate or misread our character. But if they think us weak, they will fight all the harder and risk all the more.

They need to see our belief. We should not apologize for our values, but wear them with pride, proclaim their virtues loudly; show confidence; ridicule the notion that when people choose freedom this is somehow provocation to terror; and do so together, one alliance.

This struggle did not begin on September 11th 2001. It isn't the fault of President Bush, of Israel, or of Western policy. The idea that we suppress Muslims in the West is utterly absurd. There is more religious freedom for Islam in London than in many Muslim countries.

Madam President, I found his statement very convincing. I urge Senators to read it.

EXHIBIT 1

SPEECH BY THE RIGHT HONORABLE TONY BLAIR

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Two things I now perceive more clearly than in office. The first is: the fundamental shift of the centre of gravity, politically and economically, to the East; to China and of course India, but more broadly to the Middle and Far Eastern nations.

This evening I will focus elsewhere, but suffice it to say that we are still, in the West, not in the state of comprehension or analysis we need to be, fully to grasp this shift. China and India together will over the coming decades industrialise on a scale, and at a pace, the world has never seen before. In China especially, the implications are huge. Whatever the present controversies, a strong strategic relationship with it is vital; as it is with India. We are so much better able to fashion the terms of such a relationship if we do it in unison. That alone would justify and re-justify our alliance.

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This struggle did not begin on September 11th, 2001. It isn't the fault of George Bush, of Israel, or of Western policy. The idea that we suppress Muslims in the West is utterly absurd. There is more religious freedom for Islam in London than in many Muslim countries.

You can argue about the rights and wrongs of the military invasion of Iraq or Afghanistan, but to allow for a single instant that this action justifies not simply terrorism but the idea that the West is innately hostile to Islam, only has to be contemplated, rationally, momentarily, for its nonsense to be manifest. We get rid of two brutal dictatorships; put in place a U.N. led democratic process; plus billions of dollars in aid: Where exactly is the hostility to Islam? And the only reason our troops are forced to stay is because of terror attacks carried out by this ideology in defiance of the democratically expressed wishes of the Muslim people of both countries.

And if it is hard and bloody, how bizarre to blame the allied forces, there under a U.N. mandate and who are trying to keep the peace, rather than those using terror to disturb it.

Yet this paradigm that it is 'our' fault that this terror threat is with us, has infiltrated a large part of Middle Eastern public opinion and actually influences significantly a large part of our own. It has to be taken on.

And here is the good news. The same poll shows most Muslims want peace. Most support a two-state solution in Israel and Palestine. The modern minded rulers of the successful Arab economies are also admired. People in Iran don't hate America even if its leader does. Go beneath the surface and there are allies out in the region and within Islam; people who believe strongly in their faith, but know that the twenty-first century is not about civilisations in combat but in alliance. In other words people are open to persuasion.

And here is the point. To win this struggle, we must be prepared to confront; but we must also be prepared to persuade.

This is a battle that can take a military or security form. But it can't be won by military or security means alone. It is a baffle of ideas. To win, we must persuade people of what we stand for and why; and we must do so in a way that answers their concerns as well as our own.

We believe in freedom and democracy. We also believe in justice. We believe in equality. We believe in a fair chance for all, in opportunity that goes beyond an elite and stretches down into the core of society. That, after all, is the American dream; free not just in politics but free to achieve, to fulfil your ambition by your own efforts and hard work, to make something of yourself, to give your children a better start than you had.

To win this battle, we must demonstrate these values too. That is why the Middle East peace process matters. It is the litmus test of our sincerity. We should not in any way dilute our commitment to Israel's security. We simply have to show equal commitment to justice for the Palestinians.

In the coming months, we have a chance to put it on a path to peace. It will require Israel to do more to lift the burden of occupation and give the Palestinians a sense that a state is possible. It will require the Palestinians to do more to get the robust capability on security to give the Israelis a sense that a state is possible. It will require a different and better strategy for Gaza. And it will require a relentless, insistent focus on the issues, from the U.S. and the international community, macro- and micro-managing it as necessary, to get the job done. President Bush and Secretary Rice have made that commitment. This can be done. It has to be done. It is not optional. It is mandatory for success.

The origin of this extremism does not lie in this dispute; but a major part of defeating it, lies in its resolution.

Then, wider than this, we have to work with the modern and moderate voices within Islam to help them counter the extremism and show how faith in Islam is supremely consistent with engagement in the twenty first century, economically, politically, and culturally. There is a vast amount of toil and time and energy to be expended in building bridges, educating each other about the other, creating the civic and social networks of reconciliation.

I would go further still.

In Africa, we have a cause of justice which cries out to be pursued; one that is, at the same time, a moral imperative and a strategic investment; one that needs the attention of East and West. In climate change, we have an issue that demonstrates that justice is also part of the compact of responsibility between this generation and those of the future.

My argument is therefore this. The struggle can be won. But it can only be won by a strategy big enough and comprehensive enough to remove the roots as well as the branches. The battle will, in the end, be won within Islam. But only if we show that our values are theirs also.

The problem with so much of Western politics is that the argument is posed as one between the advocates of hard power and soft power, when the reality is, we need both.

This is where America and Europe, united, should act. America has to reach out. Europe has to stand up. Not a single one of the global challenges facing us today is more easily capable of solution, if we are apart; if we let the small irritants obscure the fundamental verities; if we allow ourselves to be assailed by doubt about the value of our partnership, rather than affirm, albeit self-critically, its strengths.

We need now a powerful revival of our alliance. In the world so rapidly changing around us, we cannot take a narrow view of our interests or a short-sighted view of our destiny. We can't afford to take fright at these changes and go back into isolationism. We can't avoid the challenges. But we can master them. Together.

The transatlantic partnership was never just the foundation of our security. It was the foundation of our way of life. It was forged in experience of the most bitter and anguished kind.

Out of it came a new Europe, a new world order, a new consensus as to how life should be lived.

Today times are different. Every era is different. What is necessary is to distinguish between what endures for one time and what endures for all time.

In our history, we discovered the values that endure. We learnt what really matters and what is worth fighting for.

And we learnt it together.

Today, the challenge to those values is different. But it is no less real. Our propensity to avow those values will shape the way the twenty first century is governed. Will these values become, as they should be, universal values, open over time to all human beings everywhere; or will they be falsely seen as the product of a bygone age? That is the question. It is fundamental. It is urgent. It is our duty to answer it.

Mr. STEVENS. I wish to address another matter, as I have a moment. I understand there is no time limit now; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. STEVENS. Madam President, before the Senate now is a bill, the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007. It is a very important piece of legislation. It would expand a series of benefits to our veterans, including traumatic injury insurance, adapted housing grants, and burial allowances. As a veteran, I am delighted this bill is here, and I am pleased the Senate has invoked cloture so we may debate it and find a way to reach an accommodation on it with those who may find some fault with it or some matter they may wish to try to change.

What I wish to address is the provisions for the Filipino veterans legislation. In this part of this bill, as far as I am concerned, we are talking about honor, the honor of the United States. In 1941, on July 26, President Franklin Roosevelt ordered all military forces of the Philippines into the service of the United States to fight the Japanese. They were a province of the United States at that time. They were not an independent nation right then. The President had the power to do that. He, in fact, conscripted all men 18 years of

age and over into their military. He took them all, and they fought, they fought hard, they fought almost to the death as, really, I think any American knows who knows about the Long March and Corregidor and what it meant in terms of the time these people delayed the Japanese so we could find a way to rearm this Nation and find a way to eventually overthrow the threats of tyranny that existed as manifested in the attack of Japan on December 7, 1941.

After the war, these people were recognized as veterans by our U.S. Veterans' Administration. All of the Filipinos who went into the services were entitled to full VA benefits. In 1946, Congress changed that. They said that those veterans who came to the United States would get full benefits of being in the military service but those who stayed in the Philippines would not.

I think to deal with this you have to think about the fact that there were 470,000 Filipino World War II veterans still alive after the war. Millions died. Millions died in defense of our country. Yet here, today, there are 18,000 veterans still alive.

My distinguished friend from Hawaii, who is chairman of our Defense Subcommittee, and I went to the Philippines recently and visited with some of them. I am the oldest Member of the Senate on my side. My good friend is, I think, the second oldest on his side of the Senate. We found ourselves junior to these people who are still there. Those men who fought over there, who are still with us now, are very much in need of our help. They deserve what this bill would give them.

This benefit that this bill would extend to them is one-third the amount they would have received had they come to this country. That is what was intended to give them in the first place—one-third—taking into account really the cost of living and various other aspects of their life in the Philippines. They would get the benefits, one-third of the amount they would receive if they came to this country. If they came to this country, they would have been entitled to the veterans' benefits, to the GI bill, to all of the other benefits we gave the veterans after World War II.

Do you know why Congress gave that to those veterans? Because there were too many men seeking a job. They had to take the 16 million of us who survived and spread us out over the economy. They did so by giving us benefits—training as a pilot, we could build our own home and get the money to do that, we could go to school through the GI bill. These people thought they had that right, too, but Congress cut it off in 1946.

These people, who are the survivors now of that almost half-million people who survived as veterans, Filipino veterans of World War II, and who stayed in that country, those 18,000, have asked us for help, to finally be recognized once again for what they did.

The cost is really minimal. The Senate will hear all kinds of estimates on the amount. But 18,000 people—the youngest age involved is 82. They are just not going to be with us that long. Anyone who gives you some estimate of billions of dollars that it is going to cost to take care of these people and give them what they were entitled to long ago—I think it is overestimating it.

Again, I come back to my point. It is a matter of honor, the honor of the United States is at stake.

These people put on our uniform, wore our uniform, fought with our comrades, almost to the death, all the way to Corregidor, and the survivors were denied what they should have had.

If they came to the United States, they had the right to become citizens automatically. But if they stayed with their families and tried to reconstruct their country, we denied them that right, even though by staying at home they would have gotten one-third. If they got to come over here and be citizens they would have the benefits. There were no GI bills over there. If they came over here as citizens, became citizens, they had the full range of benefits.

Now, I do not get excited too many times on this floor. This one, this bill, excites me. There are very few of us left from World War II. When I came to the Senate, almost every person who was a Member had served in World War II. There are five of us left now. I hope the Senate will listen to the five of us because we are united. We say this is a wrong that has to be rectified. We urge the Senate not to change this bill, to support the bill that has been introduced by the distinguished Senator from Hawaii and his colleague with my cosponsorship.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I understand my distinguished colleague from Alabama has a colloquy with Senator MARTINEZ for 5 minutes or so. I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized after the Senator from Alabama.

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

The Senator from Alabama.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN LITTLE

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I thank my colleague, Senator MENENDEZ, for his courtesy. I will adhere to that timeframe. I ask to be notified in 4 minutes.

I would express my appreciation to Senator STEVENS for his service to his country during World War II, and Senator INOUE, our decorated World War II veteran himself. Both served in harm's way for their country. We do value their opinions on so many important issues.

John Little, a native of my hometown of Mobile, AL, a product of UMS High School, a good high school in Mobile, graduated from Southern Methodist University with a BA in history,

got his juris doctorate from Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham, AL, a fine law school.

He interviewed and then joined my staff 9 months into my term, just as I had come to Washington. We hired John, and we told him he would have to start at the bottom. And he did. He handled judiciary issues and correspondence with constituents back home. But within a year, using his excellent writing and research, it was obvious he was destined to take on more responsibility.

John had great talent, and we made him our legislative counsel and gave him the responsibility of several issues, including education, labor, drug caucus work, welfare, and campaign finance reform.

In 2000, John was promoted to legislative assistant and counsel and he dove right into the largest issues of our time, at that point the Elementary and Secondary Education Act debate. We were dealing with a very important issue in education, in particular, the special ed or IDEA reform, the need to create a thoughtful, disciplined standard and reform for students and teachers in the classroom. It was a big problem. We were hearing a lot about it. John spent countless hours of work on this project as my legislative assistant and helped foster the strong reform that eventually would be accepted in the IDEA reform bill which was signed into law that is affecting positively every school in America today.

After 2 years spent on education, labor, and welfare and judiciary issues, I promoted him to my deputy legislative director and counsel. His portfolio grew on a whole host of issues. He also became a key point man in my office on nominations issues.

So after the departure in 2003 of my legislative director, John was the obvious choice to take over and manage the day-to-day legislative operations of my office. He and I spent countless hours together working on IDEA reform and other issues that were so important.

He spearheaded my efforts to promote our plans for a strong national defense, lower taxes, less regulation, and the thoughtful application of commonsense conservative values to promote and pass good public policy.

After the elections of 2004, a new Senator, my good friend and colleague from Florida, Mr. MEL MARTINEZ, heard of the outstanding work of my young legislative director and counsel. I suppose he heard about that because he called me to ask if he could interview him. And I certainly agreed to that.

I think he sought out John's leadership, know-how, interpersonal skills, and a command of the inner workings of the Senate, and he eventually asked if he could bring John on as his chief of staff.

Although I would lose a strong counselor and a legislative leader and friend, my loss was indeed Senator MARTINEZ's gain. So it has been for the past 3 years that John has been at the helm with Senator MARTINEZ as his chief of staff.

He will leave the Senate family now but will be taking on another important challenge in the corporate world. I know John Little well and the values and high ideals he holds dear. He truly loves the Senate and respects her traditions. He loves America. The Senate was a better place with him here.

Thank you, John, for your friendship, your strong personal support, and your service to the Senate and our great country. It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with you. We wish you every success in your chosen endeavors.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

FAIR PAY RESTORATION ACT

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I am here today to stand up for equal pay for women. Now, that is something we have been working toward for a long time, but we are still falling short of the goal.

For decades we have come together across party lines to help men and women earn the same wage for the same work. The Senate voted overwhelming for equal pay when President Kennedy was in office. We gave our support to the Civil Rights Act under President Johnson. We renewed that support during President Reagan's term and during the term of the first President Bush.

So we have had this history of supporting this proposal, this rule of law, under both Democratic and Republican Presidents. Even after all the progress we have made, we still have a long way to go. But last year, five conservative Supreme Court Justices threw a roadblock against fair pay for women.

Here is what happened. A woman named Lilly Ledbetter was one of only a few supervisors at a tire plant. She worked 12-hour shifts and constantly had to endure insults from her male bosses just because she was a woman doing what was thought to be a man's job.

It was not until late in her career that she discovered her company was cheating her, paying her up to 40 percent less—40 percent less—than her male colleagues earned doing the same exact job.

Lilly filed a claim, and a jury awarded her full benefits, full damages. But the Supreme Court said she was entitled to nothing—to nothing—simply because she did not discover the pay discrimination early enough.

According to the Court, in the narrow 5 to 4 decision, if you do not discover that you are being discriminated against right after your employer starts doing it, you might have to suffer the consequences for your entire career, and not only for your career of being shortchanged fair pay for what, in fact, you were doing equal to anybody else, man or woman on that company's agenda, but at the same time having a consequence as it relates to your pension and your benefits and your Social Security because all of those were factored by the income you make.

So when your income is discriminated against, even though you are doing the same job as anyone else in the company in that category, not only do you not receive the income during your working life, but you have a consequence for the rest of your life, in your retirement.

It is a discrimination that keeps on discriminating. Today we have a chance to change that, to make things right. Discrimination is discrimination no matter when it happens. If someone breaks the law, they should be held accountable for it.

This body must make it clear that women should be treated the same as men. We must make it undeniably clear that every worker should be paid fairly for their labor. We must proclaim in a unified voice the same types of voices that have previously held together in this body almost unanimously: that discrimination will not be accepted in the workplace, discrimination will not be tolerated in America.

The idea behind the Fair Pay Restoration Act is simple. It would restate the rule that the clock for filing a wage discrimination claim starts running from the day a worker receives a discriminatory paycheck, not the day the employer first decides to discriminate. This is, in essence, what the law was before the Court decision. It was the law of the land for a long time. All we simply say is, the Court is wrong. And even one of the Justices from the bench in a dissenting opinion said: "This is something that Congress needs to change."

If a female worker sees her wages are continuously falling behind those of her male counterparts, she should be able to challenge her employer, even if the original decision to discriminate was made years ago. As long as the discrimination continues, the right of a worker to challenge it should continue as well.

This does not only benefit women, it helps all in our country if they are getting cheated in their paycheck on account of their age, or their race, a disability, their national origin, or what religion they belong to.

Now, as usual, there are those who are trying to defend the status quo and scare us into believing that this law would cause a flood of litigation and undercut corporations' bottom lines. Unfortunately for them, history is not on their side in terms of those false fears.

We know this legislation is workable and fair because it was the law of the land for decades, for decades before the Supreme Court made its ruling. All this bill would do is make the law what it was before it was widely interpreted to be only 1 year ago. We simply want to return the standard to be able to protect an individual at the workplace from discrimination simply as the law was for decades before.

And this is not exposing companies to unlimited damages either. The fact is, liability is still limited to 2 years of back pay following the standard set in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

We will hear a lot of goblins here, but the reality is the legislation we are considering as it was limits a company's liability to 2 years of back pay. Now, some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will ask why workers often cannot file their claim within 180 days from the first instance of discrimination.

Well, there are good reasons. There are good reasons for that. To begin with, many workers have difficulty comparing their salaries to coworkers, with many businesses actually prohibiting it, prohibiting an employee from making or attempting to make these comparisons.

Why would a company be concerned about the comparisons among people doing the same job within the context of a company? Why? What is it that they have to fear? What is it they have to hide? Even if a worker sees their pay is lower than their coworkers, they may not recognize it was a result of discrimination.

If a worker does recognize it as discrimination, they often have to wait to contact the EEOC or decide not to due to feeling ashamed or, more often, they fear retaliation by their company, and that is a real fear.

They fear the consequences of rocking the boat and figure a job in which they are discriminated against is better than being fired and having no job at all. Certainly, in this economy today, an economy that does not work for working families, those who are fortunate enough to have a job have to think about that extra burden of raising their voice against discrimination because they might, in fact, lose a job. So when people ask: Why can't they within 180 days go ahead and file their complaints, it is because it simply doesn't always work that way. I would ask those who raise the question: What happened during the decades of the standard of the law that existed? No one raised those concerns then.

Here is what it comes down to. If you vote against this bill, you are going on record and telling an entire nation you want to make it harder for a woman to get paid the same as a man for the same work. It is not about working less. It is not about having a privileged role. It is about being able to achieve pay for doing the same exact job, with all the pressures, all the challenges, all the skills anyone else would have, male or female.

These are challenging economic times, and the challenges are especially tough for women. For every dollar a man gets paid, women get paid 77 cents. Women's earnings have fallen six times as much as men as our economy began sliding toward a recession last year. The truth is, the glass ceiling might be a little higher than it was, but it is still there.

I don't want my daughter, who is fortunate to have gone to a great university, graduated, incredibly smart, to realize less in her power to earn simply because she is a woman compared to those with whom she is competing. Yet if we let the law stand the way it is, that very well can be institutionalized as something that may happen.

It is our responsibility as legislators, as Americans, as human beings to make sure this country holds the same promise for women as it does for men and that in the future our daughters have the same opportunities as our sons. Restoring a woman's opportunity to fight for fair pay is a big part of that. It has to be part of a broader strategy to get our economy back on track. We have to bring down the cost of health care, create green-collar jobs, and help workers get the training and education they need to succeed in a global environment in which intellect is the greatest asset the Nation is going to have, a world that has been transformed, where the boundaries of mankind have largely been erased in the pursuit of human capital so an engineer's report is created in India and sent back to the United States for a fraction of the cost, a radiologist's report is done in Pakistan and read in a local hospital by your doctor for a fraction of cost or, if you have a problem with your credit card, as I recently did, you end up in a call center in South Africa. The reality is that for the delivery of services created by an individual, we are globally challenged. For America to continue to be the leader economically, it needs to be at the apex of the curve of intellect, the most highly educated generation of Americans we have ever had.

Even as we move toward achieving those educational goals, what is it worth if my daughter graduates from Harvard but still makes 77 cents on the dollar that a man makes? It is fundamentally wrong. If we are going to prosper as a nation, that prosperity must be shared. I have said it before and it is as true as it ever was: Only a society with no second-class citizens can be a first-class society. Today it is time to act on that principle. It is time to vote for fair pay and ease the way to prosperity and justice for all. That is our choice. That is our opportunity. That is the responsibility of the Senate.

I yield the floor.

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

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, when the Spanish-American War ended in 1898, the Philippines became a possession of the United States. It became a colony of the United States. We hate to use that word because we frown upon colonial powers, but we became a colonial power. As such, we exercised complete power over the people of the Philippines. Legally, we could arrest them. We could do anything we wanted. However, in 1934, we decided the status should change a little bit, and they be-

came a commonwealth; however, not citizens of the United States.

Then in July of 1941, when war clouds began to appear in the Asia-Pacific area and the Japanese were invading other countries, the President of the United States issued an order forming the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines. The Commonwealth Army of the Philippines had 470 members. They were all Filipinos. They were assured, if combat should come about and they participated, they would be granted American citizenship, if they so desired. And they would receive all the benefits veterans of the United States would receive.

Well, December 7, 1941, became history. Two weeks later, the Congress passed a bill making it a very formal order of the day that if a Filipino came forward and volunteered to serve in the uniform of the United States and pledged to stand in harm's way on our behalf, at the end of the conflict, they would be granted citizenship, if they so desired, and receive all the benefits Americans received.

The Japanese invaded the Philippines. There were two great battles, the battle of Corregidor and the battle of Bataan. The battle of Bataan has been made part of the history of this Nation. We have seen countless movies on the Bataan Death March, one of the better known death marches in our history. In that death march, there were 75,000 prisoners of war. Of that number, 54,000 arrived at the prisoner of war camp; 15,000 died on that march. The distance wasn't too long. It was 75 miles. But they were given no medicine, no food, no water, and 15,000 died on the way. Six thousand escaped to become guerrillas. Of the movies I have seen which show Americans being bayoneted, Americans being shot on the march, you never saw a Filipino on the march. Yet the record will show that of the 75,000 who participated in the death march, 15,000 were Americans and 60,000 were Filipinos.

Most of those who died before arriving at the prison camp were Filipinos. Strangely also, though they spent much time on the frontlines attacking Japanese, carrying out heroic acts, they received no medals, no Purple Hearts, no Bronze Stars, no Silver Stars, and no DSCs. They were serving under American command.

Well, we were victorious. But before we were victorious, General MacArthur left the Philippines and said: "I shall return." The men whom he left in the Philippines were Filipinos. They had the job of harassing the Japanese, keeping them occupied so they wouldn't be moving to other areas to cause havoc. The casualties mounted in the thousands. Thousands died in our defense.

So what happens? Surrender terms are signed on the USS *Missouri*, and law and order is restored in the Philippines. Happy day. About a month and a half later, Washington sent one man

to serve in the Embassy, to take applications of those men who wanted to become citizens of the United States. But a month later, we called him back. That promise we made, if you want to become a citizen, you had to do it in some office in the United States, not in the Philippines. That is why they sent that man down there to represent us. When that man left Manila and returned to Washington, there was no one to take applications.

Then in mid-February of 1946, the Congress, our predecessors, passed a bill repealing that law they passed in December of 1941. They repealed it.

It is a matter of honor, as Senator STEVENS pointed out. Here was a promise, a solemn promise on the part of Americans. And by congressional action, we break that promise.

Here we have a bill before us that will restore this honor. It will say to the Filipinos, since your cost of living is not as great as ours, your pension will be one-third of ours. Well, one can say that is better than nothing. But if they want to become citizens, they can do it in Manila or in Honolulu or anywhere else.

There are 18,000 who want to become citizens. There are many others waiting. But as Senator STEVENS pointed out, the youngest surviving Filipino veteran is 82 years old.

As I speak, men are dying. By the time we consider this measure and pass it, there will be hundreds more who will die.

It is not a matter of money. It is a matter of honor. It is the American thing to do. If we make a solemn promise, we should be prepared to keep it. In this case, they were willing to stand in harm's way for us. The least we can do is to recognize this and to salute them as fellow Americans.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I have deep respect for Senator INOUE, who just spoke. He is passionate. There is no American who can look at Senator INOUE and not see an American war hero. He has committed so much, and his perspective on history is important for all of us to recognize. Before him, Senator STEVENS spoke, one of the foundations of the U.S. Senate. I find myself troubled to some degree that I am at odds with both of them on this issue.

I want Senator INOUE to know how much I respect him and how much research I have done on this issue, and I will try to make my case for why I do not think this is a priority but to do it in the most respectful way I possibly

can to individuals, such as Senator INOUE, who have so much invested not just in their knowledge but in the commitment and sacrifices they have made.

Mr. President, we started debating S. 1315 earlier today. Where I ended off in that earlier debate was pointing out to my colleagues and the country how this special pension, a special pension we intend to provide to a very small group of Filipino veterans who were not enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces but were under control of U.S. forces and command of U.S. forces—I just want to point this out to everybody: Currently, the Filipino Government provides a \$120-per-month pension to this select group of individuals. That pension puts every veteran at 400 percent over the poverty line in the Philippines. What S. 1315 attempts to do is to create a new special pension funded by the American taxpayers that would take the average income of this select group of Filipino veterans to 1,400 percent above the poverty line in the Philippines.

Now, let me put that in direct comparison to the United States. We have special pensions in the United States that apply to our veterans because we believe it is important to say no veteran should live in poverty. Our commitment is such that it is roughly over \$10,000 a year. Let me compute what that \$10,000 means relative to the poverty line. It means they are 10 percent above the poverty line in the United States.

So with all due respect to my colleagues, I am supposed to come down here on behalf of my constituents, my taxpayers, my veterans, suggesting there is equity in providing a 1,400-percent pension stipend for Filipino veterans over the poverty level but only 10 percent for U.S. veterans? Well, I cannot do that. That is why I am at odds with some of the people whom I really love and respect in this institution.

As I said earlier today, I have done a tremendous amount of research on this issue because so many people have suggested with a high degree of certainty there was a promise that was made. Well, I cannot find that promise. According to information provided at a 1998 congressional hearing, the Department of the Army examined its holdings on GEN Douglas MacArthur and President Franklin Roosevelt and "found no reference by either of these wartime leaders to postwar benefits for Filipino veterans."

Now, I am going to ask that another chart be put up that displays the difference in Filipino veterans because I think most would believe there is one target we are after. What you see here is four different groups. You see Old Scouts. These are the Filipino soldiers who signed up with the U.S. Army, and they served side by side in the U.S. Army. Today, they receive every benefit, except for those living in the Philippines and outside of the United States. And medical care is only pro-

vided at a clinic that the VA has in the Philippines. Every other benefit they get. They are getting pensions. They are getting death pensions for their survivors. They are getting burial benefits. They are getting everything because they were part of the U.S. Armed Forces, even though they are Filipino.

The other three categories you see: the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, recognized guerilla forces, New Philippine Scouts—yes, they were under the command of U.S. forces. Everybody in the Pacific was under U.S. force command. But they actually enlisted in the Filipino forces. We never solicited them. They could have joined the U.S. Army. They chose not to.

The reality is that just about every benefit, except for two, was extended to even the three groups that are the Filipino veterans. The two glaring exceptions are pensions for nonservice-related disabilities—nonservice-connected disabilities—and the death pension for survivors.

So what I want everybody to understand is, in a bill that totals over \$900 million—that, I might add, we are funding. We are offsetting it because a court ruling took this away from U.S. veterans. We took money away in benefits from U.S. veterans. We are now using this \$900 million the courts extracted to say we are going to enhance the benefits for our veterans here at home. As a matter of fact, over \$300 million of it is life insurance changes we are making. And, yes, our veterans are benefiting from it. But \$100 million of that \$900 million is going in this category to beef up our commitment to Filipino veterans. But there is \$221 million that is going to create a special pension, a pension for those Filipino troops who served as part of the Filipino military who were commanded by U.S. forces and never injured in combat. Let me say that again: Filipinos who live in the Philippines who were under U.S. command who served in the Filipino Army and have no service-connected disability.

This is not about disabilities. This is about a windfall. This is about a windfall that exceeds what our standard is here for our veterans, which is 10 percent above poverty, and currently the Filipino veterans are over 400 percent above poverty; and some in this institution suggest that the right thing for us to do is to raise their pension to 1,400 percent over the poverty level in the Philippines.

Some might say: Was it Congress's intent to grant full VA benefits to Filipino veterans? It is important to note that it was a 1942 VA legal opinion which concluded that Filipino veterans had served "in the active military or naval service of the United States" and on that basis were eligible for VA benefits.

Senator Carl Hayden, chairman of the subcommittee on appropriations, had this to say about the VA's legal determination regarding Philippine Army veterans during committee proceedings on March 25, 1946:

There is nothing to indicate that there was any discussion of the meaning of that term, probably because it is generally well recognized and has been used in many statutes having to do with members or former members of the American armed forces. It would normally be construed to include persons regularly enlisted or inducted in the regular manner in the military and naval service of the United States.

I go on:

But no one could be found who would assert that it was ever the clear intention of Congress that such benefits as are granted under . . . the GI bill of rights—should be extended to the soldiers of the Philippine Army. There is nothing in the text of any of the laws enacted by Congress for the benefit of veterans to indicate such intent.

This is our colleague in 1946.

I go on:

It is certainly unthinkable that the Congress would extend the normal meaning of the term to cover the large number of Filipinos to whom it has been suggested that the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1940 applies, at a cost running into billions of dollars, aside from other considerations, without some reference to it either in the debates in Congress or in the committee reports.

Now, I am quoting from the history of our congressional hearings, of our Senate hearings, in 1946, from the chairman of the subcommittee on appropriations.

Again, we have the Department of the Army examining the records of GEN Douglas MacArthur. We have the Department of the Army examining the papers of Franklin Roosevelt. They find no references by either of these wartime leaders to postwar benefits guaranteed to Filipinos. We have the records of the congressional hearing, and Senator Carl Hayden says: I have looked. There is nothing that suggests that this promise was ever made. Yet individuals come to the floor and they make this claim.

Now, I am convinced that—we are dealing with something 50 years later—it is very possible that memories are not exactly the same, that one person's recollection may be different today than it was in 1942 or 1944 or 1946. All the basis we have is to go back in history, to look at the documents, to see what the commitments were, and, more importantly, to try to get inside the heads of our colleagues then, to understand: If it was not in the letter of the law, what was the intent? Senator Hayden makes it very clear: It is not only not the letter of the law, it is not the intent of the Congress of the United States.

Now, what factors influenced Congress's decision to limit certain VA benefits to Filipino veterans in what is known as the Rescissions Act of 1946?

You see, in the United States we have the rule of law. When the courts determined, under their understanding, this set of benefits would apply, Congress actually passed legislation to rescind what the courts had awarded.

Again, quoting Senator Hayden:

The GI bill of rights is intended to benefit an American who served in the armed forces and who, upon discharge from the service, re-

turns to civil life in the United States, where American standards of living prevail. . . . Whenever any part of the GI bill of rights is extended to Filipino veterans, the cost of living in the Philippines and other economic factors must be given careful consideration.

Let me go back to the chart I referenced. That is all we are applying. That is the only standard I am asking my colleagues to look at: that when we apply what sounds in the United States like a meager amount—\$120 a month—what we are talking about is 400 percent over the poverty level. When we talk about increasing by \$300 a month the pension, what we are doing is we are taking potentially a Filipino veteran who is already 400 percent over poverty, or more—assuming they have no other income—and we are putting them at 1,400 percent over poverty, which puts them way above the middle class of the Philippines. This is a tremendous windfall when you look at it from the standpoint of the size of the Philippine economy.

Mr. President, in total, S. 1315 proposes about \$900 million worth of spending over 10 years. I will ask that a chart be put up so everybody can see what S. 1315 does. I think many have construed that I am opposed to S. 1315. I am the ranking member. I only have one piece I am opposed to. I have been accused of holding the bill up since last August. I have tried to negotiate this one piece since last August. What you see there is the Filipino piece, which is No. 1 on the list—\$332 million out of \$900 million. The actual pension issue is \$221 million. There is the term life insurance program, \$326 million for our kids; the State approving agencies, \$60 million; mortgage life insurance, \$51 million. You can go down the list. It is \$909 million worth of benefits. I am only addressing a small sliver. It is a quarter of it in dollars, but it is a small piece. I am for everything else.

If you take the Filipino special pension out, today I will propose to pass it under unanimous consent. I made the offer to the majority leader yesterday. This chart lists all of the provisions of S. 1315, from the most expensive provision to the least expensive provision. Again, you can see that the Filipino piece is the most expensive provision in S. 1315.

During a time of tight budgets, and when multiple commissions have recommended that Congress focus our resources to improve the benefits of our U.S. returning combat veterans, it is plain wrong to put the needs of Filipino veterans, with no service-related injuries, who are residing in the Philippines, ahead of our own service-injured men and women returning from war. I am not sure it is defensible to suggest that we are going to institute that special pension, which means we are not going to divert that \$221 million to our men and women.

I will have a substitute amendment tomorrow. The only change in my substitute amendment is that it keeps intact everything but the special pen-

sion. It diverts the special pension and it enhances the ability for housing upgrades for our disabled troops to be made from \$50,000 to \$55,000. It provides additional grants for disabled veterans who need upgrades to their vehicles that they drive; it will up the special grants by \$1,000. We are going to address additional burial benefits. We are going to address some discrepancies in education benefits for our Guard and Reserve. We are using the \$221 million solely to divert it to our veterans.

Each of us has met with veterans organizations and constituents who have asked us to address the needs that exist in the veterans community, particularly the needs of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who are defending us in the war on terror. The distinguished majority leader touched on this very point last Friday. Frankly, after reading his comments, I was hopeful he might support the amendment I am offering, the substitute amendment. On Friday, he talked about the number of Americans who died in Iraq. He talked about those who are coming home with physical and mental wounds. He made the following statement:

At the height of this war, with soldiers being wounded every day and soldiers coming home from Iraq every day, we can't even get a bill to deal with their health to the Senate floor.

All I have ever asked for is a fair opportunity to amend the bill and a fair length of time to debate the bill. The majority leader has to make decisions as to whether he files cloture motions. He has filed 67 of them, because 67 times they tried to short the minority on our ability to exercise the rights we have as the minority, which are not many.

But 67 times it has been done, so 67 times he filed a cloture motion. That is part of leading; I am sorry.

But don't suggest that the No. 1 thing that you are for is our guys, when \$221 million of this is going to set up a new special pension fund for Filipinos, who live in the Philippines, with no service-connected disability. It is disingenuous.

There is consensus in this body for everything else in S. 1315, except for one provision. We have tried for months to negotiate that one provision. For my colleagues who want to know why this bill has been at a standstill, it is because we have been trying to shift the money to our kids—our children and our grandchildren. At the committee markup last June, Senator CRAIG put forward an amendment to redirect the Filipino pension fund to other priorities. It was rejected on a straight party-line vote—another rarity in the Veterans' Committee. We don't have party-line votes in the Veterans' Committee. For some reason, this year we have now had them.

In December, shortly after the Dole-Shalala disability commission recommended we improve a host of benefits for war-injured veterans, I offered

another proposal to redirect the spending on pensions for Filipinos to higher priorities. It too was rejected. Any claim that there has not been an attempt to try to negotiate what is in this bill is ludicrous. I put that proposal in the form of a bill, S. 2640. We cannot hide from it. We will vote on it. Members will be asked to choose between our veterans and a 1,400-percent pension over the poverty line in the Philippines. That will happen tomorrow.

This comes down to where our priorities are—the Senate and this Congress. I believe our priorities should be on increasing the benefits that apply to our guys. I believe that the substitute amendment I will offer that increases housing grants for profoundly disabled veterans who need their homes modified is important. It should be a priority. I believe the auto grants for profoundly disabled veterans who need the freedom of mobility to live independently is a priority. I believe improvements to the education benefits for returning Guard and Reservists is a priority. I am sad to say that we do increase the burial benefits. I am sorry it is a provision that people have to take advantage of. But burial benefit increase is a priority of this country. I believe all of these things are absolutely crucial.

I met a veteran from North Carolina last year, Eric Edmundson. He needed a vehicle because of his disabilities. An unbelievable soldier; an unbelievable American. He will never fully recover. He will only be mobile with the help of the aids we can make available to him. The Edmundsons found an accessible van to accommodate Eric's injuries for \$45,000. They had to pay \$14,000 out of pocket.

Can we put the need of that van for Eric Edmundson as a top priority? We can if, in fact, we shift the \$221 million that is going to people who have no service-connected disability, don't live in the United States, aren't U.S. citizens, didn't serve in the U.S. Army, but were under U.S. command during World War II. We are not going to be able to do it if, in fact, we don't shift the money.

My amendment would increase the auto grant benefit to \$16,000 and, more importantly, in the case of the housing benefit, the auto benefit, and the burial benefit, it would index it so that annually we don't have to go in and legislate an increase. It increases with inflation, so for the first time what Congress does is actually thinks about the future and makes sure our veterans receive a benefit that is reflective of the inflation in between times that we have legislated.

Creating a pension in the Philippines, I suggest, is simply bad policy. I will make a comment on why the Philippine pension is not only the wrong priority, it cannot be justified as a matter of fairness. It is important to understand that VA pensions are designed for veterans, as I said earlier, to

stay out of poverty. When we left the Philippines, we made some commitments to the Filipino Government. We transferred to them multiple hospitals and all the equipment that was in those hospitals. As a matter of fact, we granted them, at the time, a tremendous amount of money. That money, in today's standards, would be well into the billions of dollars. We didn't walk away and leave anybody without. We made sure that we rebuilt the country, but we also left the infrastructure that was most needed.

Let me suggest to you that this pension creates a new inequity. There were a lot of troops in the Second World War under U.S. command. They might not have been a territory of the United States, but they signed up for their army, and they were under U.S. command. What is to keep them from claiming they are owed a special pension from the United States? They have never done it. These are the only ones who have. If you think of all of our global partners who could claim, based upon this precedent, quite frankly, it would be a difficult thing for this country to deal with.

As I said earlier, this new spending is paid for by reversing the effects of a U.S. Court of Appeals decision for veterans' claims decision that granted extra pension benefits to elderly and poor U.S. veterans in a manner that was never intended by Congress.

Let me explain in layman's terms what that means. The VA made enhanced payments to U.S. veterans—benefits that were never intended in the letter of the law or in the intent of Congress. When the courts determined that, they pulled back about a billion dollars from this country's veterans. It is that billion dollars that is used in the offset for the \$909 million spending plan we have in front of us today. I may argue the court's decision, but to take money from veterans in the United States, who are slightly above the poverty threshold, and spend it on a new special pension for Filipino veterans, who are already 400 percent above poverty in the Philippines, is flat wrong.

Let me say that again. What the court exercised was to take money away from U.S. veterans who are slightly over poverty, and I have said constantly what we do with special pensions in the United States, we get about 10 percent over the poverty line. We have Filipinos today at 400 percent over the poverty line, and the debate we are having is whether we go to 1,400 percent over the poverty line.

One of the largest service organizations, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, agrees. It passed a resolution in August urging Congress to use funds from reversing the effects of the court decision on U.S. veterans and not to create new benefits for Filipino veterans. If my colleagues adopted that approach, as many of us have urged from the beginning, S. 1315 would have become law in August 2007.

The chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee is a good man. He is a friend. He sent me a letter on April 10, asking for my cooperation on a way forward with some of the contentious issues in S. 1315—primarily this—but on the very next day the majority leader was already talking about filing a cloture motion on the bill. I was perplexed a little. On the one hand, I had an offer to negotiate a way forward; but on the other hand, I have a cloture vote being proposed. I am not sure where the disconnect is. I don't like to look back. I believe we should look forward.

I am prepared to go to the bill. I believe it would be extremely healthy for this Congress and for the American people to be educated on exactly what this is about because this truly does beg where we place our priorities from the standpoint of the Senate. Are our priorities to fund our veterans, our kids with service-connected disabilities, or is our goal to set up a special pension for non-U.S. citizens who live in the Philippines, with no service-connected injuries, and to divert that money away from our kids?

The answer is pretty simple for me. I believe our priority is to make sure our troops get it. I believe our priority should be to make sure our soldiers get whatever they need, to make sure the Eric Edmundsons of the world have the van they need for their disabilities, to make sure those who need adaptive housing because of their severe disabilities from war have the money they need to upgrade their house so they can maneuver in it.

I daresay, a \$1,000 increase on the auto grants and a \$5,000 increase on the adaptive housing is not enough. I can tell my colleagues, we need to do more, and I am committed to say today I will do more. But how are we going to do more if we show something as irresponsible as a decision to spend \$221 million that we have taken from U.S. veterans, away from people slightly over the poverty level, to allow it to go to individuals who are going to be above the middle class in the Philippines?

How can any veteran in America believe we are serious about prioritizing how we spend money in the future if, in fact, we display this type of judgment and willingness to extract money from our veterans to create new programs?

I am fairly confident we have a number of Members who would like to speak on this bill this evening. It is my hope we will have an opportunity to turn to consideration of the actual bill and to entertain any amendments our colleagues plan to offer on this bill.

When the majority leader left the floor earlier today, he said it was his request that we move as quickly to conclusion of this bill as we possibly can. I have given my colleagues a small snippet tonight of what the history I looked at says of our leaders at the time. There was no documentation, there was no hearsay, there was no intent of those leaders or the Congress to

actually extend a benefit such as those that have been described by some of my colleagues.

Clearly, this Congress, as any Congress of the future, could elect to add a benefit. For 50 years, the Congress could have added this benefit. The further we get from the 1942 act and the interpretation by the Court and the further we get from the 1946 Senate hearings that initiated the Rescissions Act that took the Court's interpretation of what the Filipinos were due away, I am convinced it requires somebody to do their homework and come to the floor and remind us of where our priorities are in this country; that until we have more than our kids need, the right priority is to spend it on ours and not necessarily on somebody else's.

I reiterate the fact that our veterans and our VA pension is designed for veterans who have no service-related injuries and who are poor, according to the U.S. definition of poverty, and the maximum VA pension payable to a U.S.-based veteran puts him at 10 percent above poverty and at 17 percent of the median average household income.

Again, the Philippine Government currently provides a \$120 pension to this brave group of Filipino veterans, putting them at roughly 400 percent of poverty in the Philippines and 35 percent of the average household income. Adding an additional VA pension today, adding the pension that is already in S. 1315, would put a single Filipino veteran at 1,400 percent of the Filipino poverty level and 21 percent above the average household income.

Think about that. Our special pension is going to put them 21 percent over what the average Filipino makes annually.

If the argument I have made is not credible from the standpoint of prioritizing our spending, that it should be our kids and not necessarily their veterans, then I ask my colleagues: Is this our responsibility? Our responsibility is to take individuals and to put them 21 percent over the average working Filipino? I do not believe so. I do not believe that is a good thing. I believe it is wrong. But that is what we are being asked to do.

I am not sure the VA was intended to take people and put them in the middle class or, in the case of the Philippines, to put them above the middle class. It was to make sure our soldiers and their soldiers do not live in poverty. Clearly, they are doing better than we are today, and I challenge us to do more about ours, or maybe it describes for us the choice we have before us, that this would be ill-advised for us to proceed forward.

Since World War II, the United States of America has provided a tremendous amount to Filipino veterans. Congress authorized the construction and equipping of a hospital for the care of Filipino veterans. The Filipino Memorial Hospital Center VMMC was dedicated in 1955 and turned over to the Philippine Government free of charge.

Congress authorized the transfer of another hospital located at Fort McKinley in the Philippines, including all the equipment contained in the hospital, to the Republic of the Philippines. Congress provided that annual grants be made to the Philippines to purchase equipment and material for the operation of these hospitals. Congress also authorized disability compensation, survivor compensation, funeral and burial benefits, dependents' educational benefits at the rate of 50 cents on the dollar for individuals residing in the Philippines and full-dollar benefits for those residing in the United States. Full eligibility for VA health care was provided to Filipino veterans legally residing in the United States.

We have done a lot. I am sure it is not as much as some want. We are faced with a job where we have people come in and ask every day—there is something everybody needs. I learned very early in life that the toughest thing to learn in life is to say no because that means somebody is upset with you. But you cannot go through life without learning the word “no.” You cannot do it in business, and you clearly cannot do it in politics. Maybe that is why Charles de Gaulle said politics is too serious a matter to leave up to politicians. It requires a participation level of the American people.

My hope is, over the next day, 2 days—whatever the leadership decides is the future of this bill—that we will have an opportunity to educate the American people and, at the same time, we will educate Members of the Senate that no matter how far you want to look back, no matter how much you want to try to speculate what went on, that when you stick with the written word, when you look at what President Roosevelt said, when you look at what General MacArthur said, when you look at what the Senate did and Senator Hayden—and they were there at the time and the Senate was charged with determining whether this benefit was appropriate—that from all the information in real time they looked at, their decision was the Rescissions Act, to take away what the courts had awarded.

Now, 50 years later, we are being asked not to apply what they thought was correct but to apply what we think today. Even if you use that standard, I daresay you cannot make a claim that a special pension that puts Filipino veterans who live in the Philippines, with no service-connected injury, 21 percent over the median income in the Philippines is the right thing for us to do.

I know there are several Members who are going to come over shortly. I expect Senator CHAMBLISS any minute.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

EARTH DAY AND GLOBAL WARMING

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, 38 years ago this week, Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, a great environmentalist and a good friend of many of our colleagues who are still here, came to the Senate floor with a novel idea. He proposed one day each year to honor our planet, an occasion to rededicate ourselves to stewardship of the Earth and the fight against pollution. He called his idea Earth Day.

When Senator Nelson proposed the first Earth Day in 1970, our country's environmental outlook was grim. Smog choked the air of Los Angeles, New York, and other great American cities; many communities dumped raw sewage and untreated industrial waste in our greatest rivers, including the Mississippi and the Illinois and the Hudson. Polluted air and fouled water weren't the only challenges troubling our country. We had endured a series of tragic assassinations of great leaders, we were torn over a war in Vietnam, and we had seen civil rights riots and antiwar demonstrations in our streets. The Nation was divided and, frankly, losing the self-confidence for which Americans have always been known.

But Gaylord Nelson was an optimist. He believed that with imagination and dedication, despite all the problems going on in the world, we could attack at least one of our country's problems, and that was the problem of pollution. With the commitment of our people and the leadership from our Government, we could devise ways to clean up our rivers and our lakes and the air we breathe. He was right.

Since 1970, when Congress passed the Clean Air Act, we have greatly cut the amount of noxious substances in the air we breathe. Emissions of carbon monoxide have fallen by 50 percent since 1980, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, lead emissions are down 97 percent, and sulfur dioxide emissions have dropped by nearly 50 percent.

Since 1972, when the first clean water legislation passed, we have set high standards for water cleanliness and given our cities and towns the resources they need to stop dumping untreated waste. Our great rivers—the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the Hudson—are healthier today than they were 30 years ago.

Now, this doesn't mean we don't have challenges with the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. As a member of the environmental committee, I know some of the problems we have seen with this administration in terms of rollbacks of some of these great strides. Nevertheless, we all know things have improved with the Clean

Water Act and the Clean Air Act since Gaylord Nelson declared Earth Day.

On Earth Day 2008, however, we confront a new environmental challenge. It is a challenge of equal and perhaps greater magnitude. I am talking here about global climate change.

For several years, our country had a debate over whether climate change was real or some sort of hoax perpetuated by doomsayers. That debate is over. There is now an undeniable scientific consensus that the Earth is warming. Study after study demonstrates that global warming is real and that it is affecting us now.

Early last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its latest report on the science of climate change. This report was produced by some 600 authors from over 40 countries. Over 620 expert reviewers and a large number of government reviewers also participated. This is a very cautious group of scientists with a very conservative process for meticulously reviewing the evidence and reaching their conclusions through consensus. What did they conclude? Well, they concluded that changes in climate are now affecting physical and biological systems on every continent.

Last November, the IPCC issued a followup report. It concluded that "warming of the climate system is unequivocal," based on observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures. It said that evidence from every continent shows dramatic changes in physical and biological systems, including melting of the permafrost, rising water temperatures, and changes in the habitat range of migratory animals.

So how did this all come about? Well, certain types of gases—most notably carbon dioxide but also methane and nitrous oxide—accumulate in the atmosphere and then absorb or trap the sun's heat as it bounces off the Earth's surface. The problem is that carbon dioxide doesn't dissipate quickly; it stays in the atmosphere for five decades or more, causing the Earth's temperatures to rise. This means that most of the carbon dioxide produced in the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s—as I look at our pages, Mr. President, I realize many of them were not even born when this carbon dioxide was released—well, that carbon dioxide is still in our atmosphere today. And it means that carbon dioxide produced today will still be in our atmosphere in 2050 and beyond. All of that carbon dioxide has been trapping heat in our atmosphere. Over time, it makes global temperatures rise. In turn, sea levels rise—both because the water expands as the oceans warm and because melting glaciers and icecaps add more water.

Global warming is real, with enormous consequences for our world and for our economy. For example, here is a chart which shows the rising temperatures. Mr. President, 2006 was the hottest year ever in this country, cap-

ping a 9-year streak unprecedented in the historical record. The winter of 2006 was the warmest on record worldwide. Almost every State in our country is seeing higher temperatures.

You can see what we have here, with the coldest being 1, the warmest being 112. And you can see for several of the States it was the record warmest, and for most of the States it was much above normal, as in the Presiding Officer's State of New Jersey. Maybe you remember the year of 2006—it wasn't that long ago—and you can see how hot it truly was when you look at it from a worldwide perspective. It doesn't mean you won't have a year here or there that won't be normal, but when you look at the actual trend over the last decades, you see an increasing warming temperature.

Worldwide, glaciers are rapidly melting. In fact, almost everything frozen on our Earth is melting. A few months ago, it was reported that glaciers in the European Alps will be all gone by the year 2050. Experts believe that in 25 years there won't be a single glacier left in Glacier National Park. So if people are planning a vacation to visit Glacier National Park to see the glaciers, they better do it soon because experts predict that in 125 years there won't be any left.

Globally, sea levels have risen 4 to 10 inches over the past century. The frequency of extremely heavy rainfalls has increased throughout much of the United States.

The impact is especially dire in Greenland and the Arctic region. The temperature changes there have been the greatest, resulting in widespread melting of glaciers, thinning of the polar icecap, and rising permafrost temperatures. You can see here in our picture that since 1979, more than 20 percent of the polar icecap has melted away. There is the North Pole, and you see the Arctic sea boundary that we had in 1979, and now we have 20 percent melting of this icecap.

Well, I saw this firsthand, Mr. President, when I visited Greenland last summer with my colleagues from the Environment and Public Works Committee. Greenland has been called the canary in the coal mine for climate change. They have seen vast changes. We talked to local residents, and there are still more dogs than residents—more sled dogs—but we talked to some of the local residents who said they can remember the days when there was ice in their front yards, and now they are growing potatoes. They have lost the size of Texas and Arizona combined into the sea from the icecap in Greenland.

Other changes, such as the recent increase in the severity of hurricanes and other extreme or destructive weather events, are consistent with the kinds of changes scientists expect to occur on a warming planet. They are early indicators of even more dramatic climate shifts and economic damage that await us if we don't reduce greenhouse gas

emissions and attack the problem of global warming. So here you have related economic losses, and these are, of course, from increased storms and wildfires.

I think we all remember well the wildfires in California. I remember this well because during the same time the wildfires were raging in California, we had a hearing in our Environment Committee where we had the commission on disease control testify. We noticed, when we looked at the written testimony, it seemed kind of chopped up. It turned out it had been edited by the administration. Among other things, of the parts that were edited out was a part about the effect climate change would have on disease and the mortality rates in our country. There was actually a part edited out that said it would lead to more wildfires in the Western States, just as the wildfires were raging in California.

So this is an example of the increased economic loss we have seen that are weather related in this country. You can see that from 1960 to 1969, and then you go up to 1988 to 1997, and of course I am sure you are going to see more now.

We have had fires in Minnesota and floods in Minnesota, and the people of our State are starting to see this in a very different way. In our State, one economic loss that isn't one of these hurricanes or fires is the decreasing levels of Lake Superior. That will be surprising to people who think sea levels are rising because Greenland's ice sheet is melting. Why would the level of our Great Lakes be going lower? They are going lower because the ice is melting more quickly, so the water evaporates, and Lake Superior is now at its lowest level in 80 years.

Now, you might think: Oh, Lake Superior is so cold, hardly anyone can go swimming anyway. Who cares? Well, it affects our economy in Minnesota because the barges are not able to come in. We have shipped something like 300 tons less, by my memory—we will have to correct the record if I am wrong—300 tons less of traffic because these barges cannot carry as much because the water level of Lake Superior is so low.

By that example, this is truly an issue that has finally moved out of the science labs and the classrooms and the seminar rooms and has entered the everyday conversations of people in my State. I hear it from hunters across Minnesota, who notice how our valuable wetlands are changing. I have heard it from the heads of our snow mobile associations, who testified at a forum I had with our Governor on climate change in January, because they have seen decreasing snow levels. I hear about it from ice fisherman because they have seen it takes longer for the ice to freeze and they can't put their fish houses out as early as they would like.

Just yesterday, USA Today had a story about the shrinking number of

moose in northern Minnesota. Biologists think that global warming is affecting the habitat of these moose and making them more vulnerable to parasites, causing an incredible reduction in the number of moose.

This is how real people in the real world are talking about this. They are worried about what is happening to their planet and the consequences that will have for all of us and our children and our grandchildren.

So the question is, How will we respond in Washington? I am actually going to give a talk on this every single week, Mr. President, up to our debate on this bill in June, and I figured a good day to start was with Earth Day. But just to summarize—and I will go into more detail in other floor remarks I will make—how will Washington respond?

In December, the Environment and Public Works Committee approved a landmark bipartisan bill to get our country moving in the fight against climate change. I thank my colleagues, Senators WARNER and LIEBERMAN, for their work on this legislation, and I thank Senator BOXER, the chairwoman of our committee, for her leadership in developing this bill and moving this bill through the committee.

This legislation is visionary, but it is also practical. The bill would, for the first time, set mandatory caps on carbon dioxide emissions, on greenhouse gas emissions. It would establish a cap-and-trade system to use market forces so that the private sector can reduce greenhouse gas pollution in the most efficient way possible.

And I can tell you, we have learned from experience. We did this with acid rain, and it was very successful. We have seen from what the European Union did what is good and bad, so we can learn from that experience and do, I would say, a better job in this country, if we can get this right.

This legislation, in its first title, also contains my proposal, the bill I introduced with Senator SNOWE, for a carbon counter, which is a national greenhouse gas registry, because you can't fix a problem if you can't measure it. Right now, we have 33 States off on their own starting a climate registry, which shows how absurd the situation is getting. They want to act because they are hearing from the people in their States. They know they can't wait, so they have started their own climate registry, instead of what makes sense, which is a Federal registry. And that is the first title of this bill.

In a few weeks, we are going to bring the Lieberman-Warner bill to the floor, and we will have a chance to take a historic step on behalf of our country—in fact, on behalf of the entire world. As we prepare to consider this important legislation, there is something else we need to remember, and that is that global warming is, of course, a huge challenge, but it also presents opportunities for our country. It gives us

the opportunity to develop new technologies, new jobs, and new industries. It gives us the opportunity to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, which just hit another record of \$117 per barrel this week. It gives us an opportunity to give consumers new, cheaper alternatives to fossil fuels. Whether it is an electric car, a hybrid car, or looking at what Brazil did with sugar cane, where they became energy independent, so they are not dependent on foreign oil, we know there are things we can do beyond what we are doing now with switchgrass, prairie grass, and all kinds of alternative technologies. But we have to set the standards as a government so we can encourage that kind of investment. We are not going to have a silver bullet here. As we like to say in Minnesota, we will have silver buckshot. We are going to have a number of proposals and alternatives, but we have to get moving by setting the standards.

This is an opportunity that we must seize now. I am proud to celebrate Earth Day today, to join with my colleagues and millions of Americans in honoring our planet. But in the decades since Gaylord Nelson sponsored the first Earth Day, the occasion has often turned into a symbolic event, a day for teach-ins at our schools and rallies at our State capitols. I participated in them myself.

But today, 38 years after its inception, we have the opportunity to return to the original spirit of Earth Day and celebrate the occasion with action, the action of investing in the farmers and the workers of this country instead of the oil cartels of the Mideast; the action of finally doing something to set that investment in place so we can develop the next generation of new technology, as we did when we said we were going to put a man on the Moon. It was great to put a man on the Moon and beat Russia—and look at what came out of that: the CAT scan and infrared technology. I remember in the 1970s my family went on camping trips with those little chocolate space sticks that came out of that trip to the Moon—hundreds and hundreds of new technological developments because our Nation put its mind on one goal.

This is another time to take action. We will have a chance to pass this climate change legislation that is forward looking, that is bipartisan, and that is pragmatic. We will have the chance to answer the call of the people in this country—the little kids with the penguin buttons, the hunters of Minnesota who see the changes of their wetlands. They see the urgency of this issue. We have a chance to regain world leadership on the most pressing environmental challenge of our day. We will have a chance to take our place in a great tradition of environmental stewardship in the Senate and to renew the promise that Americans made on the first Earth Day, 38 years ago.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, it is my understanding we are postcloture and I have up to 1 hour, is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator will suspend for a moment, please. The Senator is correct.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to S. 1315, but to speak in favor of Senator BURR's alternative bill, S. 2640, the Veterans' Benefit Act of 2008. As we continue to prosecute the global war on terrorism and take care of our veterans who are returning from that effort, as well as take care of veterans from all our past conflicts, our Nation has an obligation to these veterans and their families who make the greatest sacrifices to defend our Nation and freedom across the world. This obligation extends to providing our brave young men and women with the optimal rehabilitation care, compensation packages, and long-term benefits for their service.

This is a very familiar issue to me, and I was pleased to offer several amendments with my Senate Armed Services Committee colleagues during last year's markup of the wounded warrior bill, which will go a long way to improving the treatment and benefits these wounded warriors will receive, both now and in the future. Both of the bills at issue today go a long way to further improving the care of our veterans and wounded warriors, and it is very clear that both Senator BURR and Senator AKAKA worked very hard to craft bills that will benefit our veterans and their families.

S. 1315 makes many significant changes in the area of insurance, housing, labor, and education benefits for our veterans. However, the bill pays for these increased entitlements by reversing a 2006 court decision, which would effectively take \$2,000 annually from poor, elderly, disabled wartime U.S. veterans.

Also included in the bill's spending is \$221 million to create a new pension benefit for Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines, all of whom are not U.S. citizens and none of whom have any disabilities relating to World War II service.

There are two significant problems with the new spending on Filipino veterans. First, it takes money from poor veterans in the United States, to in effect create a middle class of non-United States veterans residing in the Philippines. Second, it comes at the expense of benefit improvements that are needed for our returning combat veterans of the war on terror.

Under current law, a VA pension benefit paid to an individual U.S. veteran cannot exceed \$11,181 a year, which is roughly 17 percent of the United States average household income. S. 1315 would create a new, special pension benefit for Filipino veterans in the Philippines that will put them at over 87 percent of average household income in the Philippines!

As Senator BURR stated on the floor earlier today, the contributions of Filipino veterans during World War II is a

matter of public record and is without dispute. We do owe them a huge debt. They fought on the side of the allies and made a significant contribution to the war effort. However, it is not fair to fund a pension for these veterans at the expense of poor U.S. veterans, which this bill unfortunately does.

I hope the supporters of S. 1315 will hear me when I say that a vote against this bill is not a vote against the contribution that the Filipino veterans made to the effort in World War II. Rather, it is a vote against taking an existing benefit away from a U.S. veteran.

Senator BURR's alternative, S. 2640, will provide veterans with improved life insurance policies, enhance the veterans mortgage life insurance program, improve disabled veterans housing benefits by 10 percent, as well as index future housing benefits to inflation.

S. 2640 also provides for automatic annual increases in burial benefits for our veterans families as well as improved educational opportunities to our National Guardsmen and Reservists who serve for a total of 2 years in an active-duty status.

In relation to Filipino veterans, S. 2640 provides a pension plan to Filipino veterans who have resided in the United States and have not received any benefits from the Filipino Government. In addition, it provides for full disability compensation for Filipinos residing anywhere in the world.

Our Nation's commitment and number 1 priority must rest with taking care of our current veterans, particularly those who have disabilities resulting from their service, which 2640 provides. I encourage my colleagues to support S. 2640, which provides the right compensation and the right policies for the right servicemembers.

I yield the remainder of my time to Senator BURR.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

Mr. BURR. I thank my friend and colleague from Georgia.

I think my colleague put it very well. The big question is, has the U.S. Government met its obligation to Filipino veterans? I think that is at the heart of what some Members have raised with respect to this special pension. Let me say, Filipinos who fought under U.S. command in World War II were no doubt invaluable to the victory in the Pacific. Yes, they were U.S. nationals at the time, but they were also on a timetable to transition to a newly independent, sovereign Philippine Union. Thus, their welfare has always been a shared responsibility between the U.S. Government and the Philippine Government.

Here is what the U.S. taxpayer has already funded to meet United States commitments to the Filipino veterans. After the war the U.S. provided \$620 million—that is \$6.2 billion in today's dollars—for repair of public property, war damage claims, and assistance to

the Philippine Government. VA compensation for service-related disabilities and survivor compensation was also provided, paid at a rate that reflected differences in the cost of living in the Philippines.

Let me suggest, about this cost of living consideration, the first time it has been raised is not today by me. It was actually applied in the 1940s, at the conclusion of the conflict, to the United States.

No. 2, the United States provided \$22.5 million—\$196 million in today's dollars—for the construction and equipping of a hospital in the Philippines for the care and treatment of Filipino veterans. In addition, the United States provided annual grants for operation of the hospital which was later donated to the Filipino Government. The grant assistance continues to this day.

Survivors of Philippine veterans who died as a result of service are eligible for educational assistance benefits, paid at a rate that reflects the differences in the cost of living.

All of a sudden we have second reference to payments being made in the Philippines at the conclusion of the conflict where the cost of living differential was considered in what the United States payment was.

Filipino veterans legally residing in the United States are entitled to a full rated compensation, full rate cash benefits, full access to the VA health clinics and medical centers, and burial in our Nation's national cemeteries.

In addition to that, I have mentioned another hospital at Fort McKinley that was donated to the Philippine Government.

The big question for Members of the Senate and members of the Roosevelt administration, the Secretary of War at the time, was how can we best help the Filipino people? How can we best help these veterans? It was to reconstruct the country. It was to create an infrastructure where health care could be delivered. It was to repair roads. It was to repair the infrastructure so the Philippines post war could have an economy, not dissimilar to the Marshall plan in Europe where the United States and others—primarily us—funded the reconstruction of much of Europe. That is because we knew a country without an economy, without the ability to manufacture something, without the ability for its people to earn something, probably would not survive.

We made the right decision. We pumped into the infrastructure billions of dollars by today's standards. We gave them hospitals. We built them hospitals. We gave them equipment. We bought them equipment. Today we still provide a grant assistance to the Philippines for the care of Filipino veterans.

Some might say if we had a different administration maybe things would be different. On July 25, 1997, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs heard

testimony of Stephen Lemons, Acting Under Secretary for Benefits, in opposition to the bill granting full VA benefits to Filipinos. It was not the Bush administration, it was the Clinton administration. This has spanned 50 years. Think of the numbers of administrations. The quote then was:

Its enactment would upset decades-old policies which have authorized some but not all VA benefits based on this service.

I go on:

History shows that the limitations on eligibility for U.S. benefits based on service in these Philippine forces were based on a carefully considered determination of the government's responsibility towards them.

I also continue:

Current law appropriately recognizes our two nations' shared responsibility for well-being, and should not be changed as proposed by this bill.

The Clinton administration lobbied Congress not to do what we are considering doing in S. 1315. What is it? To extend a new, special pension to Filipino veterans who live in the Philippines, who have no service-connected disability, that, along with the Philippine pension that is currently in place, would put these individuals at 1,400 percent over the poverty line and 27 percent over the average median income of the Philippine people.

Now, I went a little bit further. I checked out this book from 1948. It is called House Committee Hearings. I want to turn to one section I think is pertinent to this debate. Because 1946 was the year we passed the Rescissions Act. The Rescissions Act revised the Court's interpretation of what were VA benefits. This sheds a tremendous amount of light on the difference between my understanding and what those who were charged with investigating U.S. obligations at the time were.

There was a Father Haggerty who testified in front of the committee. These are Father Haggerty's words:

It was constantly promised that as the Ambassador mentioned in radio broadcasts, official American broadcasts to the Philippines during the war, it was definitely promised by General MacArthur, General Wainwright, and also it has been acknowledged, I believe, that Filipino groups recognized the guerillas, acting as members of the United States Armed Forces, were entitled at one time to the complete GI bill of rights; that is, they were included. I believe that is correct, and were later left out.

Mr. ALLEN, a member of the committee:

May I say this, Father, I know you are sincere about it. But I think you are in error there because there are three or four of us here on the committee who were present when the GI bill was written. And I do not think this was ever entered into.

The chairman: "It did not come up?"

Mr. ALLEN: "The Filipinos never entered into it."

Father Haggerty: "I am also speaking of the impression that they all had."

Mr. ALLEN: "We are not responsible for impressions, of course."

I said earlier I have tremendous respect for my colleagues who are on the

opposite side of this issue with me. I am sure their recollections—they served, I did not—are probably as accurate as Father Haggerty, who in 1948, voluntarily, I think, went in front of a House committee, probably the veterans committee, along with an ambassador, and the Ambassador swore: "This is what I understood."

Father Haggerty said:

This was what I—I heard it, I heard the American Government say it. I heard General MacArthur say it, General Wainwright say it.

Well, I said earlier to those who were listening, we had testimony from the Army that said: We looked at General MacArthur's records. We looked at President Roosevelt's records. There was never an intent for this to be extended.

Now, what we find in the Congressional hearing in 1948 is those specific questions were asked by members, and Father Haggerty swears this was accurate, that we said this, that this was the intent of the GI bill.

And Mr. ALLEN, a member of the committee:

May I say this, Father? I know you are sincere about it. But I think you are in error. You are in error because there are three or four of us on this committee who were present when the GI bill was written, and I do not think this was ever entered into.

I am sure as we go through this, we are going to find others who come to the floor and say: Listen, I know this was the intent of Congress. It is probably the way they envisioned it today. But when you go back to the actual records of the 1940s, when you go back to the 1948 testimony, when you go back to the 1946 rescissions bill, when you go back to 1944, and Senator Hayden, this has been explored over and over and over. In every case, with different members, they came to the same conclusion. Let me read from a more recent committee hearing, the committee hearing that took place last year with Senator CRAIG, who was then ranking member of the committee, as he talked to Mr. Ron Aument.

He said:

Ron, let me take off from where the chairman has gone with a couple of questions. If the committee were to structure a pension benefit for those residing in the Philippines that had the same purchasing power that a pension recipient in the United States had, what would be the equivalent maximum pension benefit? Have you ever done any calculations based on S. 57?

Mr. Aument: Yes, we have, Senator Craig. It has not been a simple calculation because some of the economic statistics that we would be turning to are not as readily available to us. Having said that, if we take a look at what today's pension rate for an American veteran is with one dependent, we mentioned it was around \$14,000 annually, and contrast that to the average household income for the most recent census statistic we had at around \$46,000 annually, it is around 30 percent of the average household income.

If we were to compare that to the average household income in the Philippines of around \$2,800, we are speaking around \$820 annually in the form of a pension.

So last year, to bring on par with the United States, on what we do with special pensions for veterans, we made a commitment that they will not live in poverty. What Mr. Aument said was:

If we calculated today the Filipino pension, that would be identical to the U.S. pension, it would be \$820. The existing Filipino pension to the Filipino veterans is \$120 a month, which equates to 400 percent above poverty.

Our own witness early last year basically said that the average household income in the Philippines was \$2,800, and \$820 annually would put a Filipino veteran on the same par with an American veteran receiving a special benefit, a special pension.

Yet what we are here to debate over the next several days is whether the Senate is going to extend to these Filipino veterans who live in the Philippines, who have no service-connected disability, a pension, in combination with the Philippine Government, that will equal 1,400 percent above poverty, that will equal 27 percent above the median income in the Philippines.

We base this all off the belief that we made a promise we are not keeping. I gave three specific instances before, I read from the committee hearing from last year, that dispel any belief that there was ever a promise. The 1948 account I read from the House committee hearing is not the only one; it is the 1946 Rescissions Act, it is the 1944 hearing with Senator HAYDEN. All of them point to the fact that those people who were involved in crafting, writing, and passing the GI bill had no intent for this benefit to ever be extended.

I am hopeful my colleagues will see the priorities we are faced with as it relates to our own veterans, that they will look at these severely disabled soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines who are coming back from Afghanistan and Iraq today, having given their all, injured in a way we cannot replace but with an opportunity to supplement their quality of life.

We can supplement that through a number of different fashions. We can supplement that by extending and raising the housing provisions for their ability to adapt their houses to their disability, \$5,000 more dollars; we can raise the grant allowance for cars so individuals such as Eric Edmundson's family is not stuck with \$14,000 out-of-pocket to make sure they have a van that his wheelchair can go into, that lifts him up, and gives him the ability to have some degree of mobility.

I think that is the priority. That is the choice tomorrow that Members of this body will be given in a substitute that I will propose, that still embraces the majority of what Senator AKAKA had in his bill but eliminates one glaring thing, it eliminates the special pension for Filipino veterans who live in the Philippines, with no service-connected disability.

It replaces it with an expansion of veterans' benefits for our soldiers or our airmen, our soldiers, our marines. I

am convinced this is not only the right thing to do, that we have a historical blueprint that tells us that folks before us who held our jobs have already judged that this is not a promise that is broken; that when you look at the numbers, I am not sure you can be more compassionate. We are not this compassionate to our own troops, to our own veterans.

How can anybody come to the floor and make a claim that providing a pension 1,400 percent above the poverty rate, when our veterans are at 10 percent above poverty, is equitable or fair; that there should be one taxpayer who should be asked to contribute to something that does not affect increasing the quality of life of our veterans first and foremost.

I think America would hold a different compassion if the current Philippine pension did not provide a cushion between poverty and the stipend they get of 400 percent. I think we can make the case that it is not a big enough cushion to have American veterans only 10 percent above the poverty line.

But we have an opportunity not to grow it from 400 to 1,400 and to use that extra 1,000 percent to actually affect the lives of our service personnel who are severely disabled who are coming home every single day.

It is my hope and my belief that tomorrow my colleagues will understand the importance of my substitute amendment. It does not devalue the contribution the Filipino veterans made to the United States and to the war in World War II. What it does is recognize the commitment we already made to the Philippines, to its people, recognizing the fact that the group that we are talking about was part of the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, not the Army of the United States; that even though they were commanded by Americans, they were part of a military that existed within the Philippines, and to suggest that being part of somebody else's Army but commanded by us would suggest that most everybody who was under U.S. command in World War II in the European theaters would now be eligible if this precedent went through for a special pension, that is not the intent of this Congress, it is not the intent of past Congresses, and certainly I do not think it is the intent of the American people.

I believe the responsible thing to do is to pass this package that has over \$900 million worth of benefits, \$800 million under the substitute that would go to our children and our grandchildren, and 100 million that would go still to Filipino veterans who live in the United States or live in the Philippines but have service-connected disabilities.

We are not an uncompassionate country. We do not believe our taxpayers should help to drive an income level of someone else to a point that we are not willing to commit to our own. When we have our veterans at 1,400 percent of

poverty, I am willing to come to the floor and talk about putting their veterans to 1,400 percent of poverty.

But those who have held our job before us have already determined there is not a promise, there is not an obligation, there is not a piece of paper that said we were going to do this. A lot of people think there was. But there was not.

I look forward to the opportunity to debate the amendment and to debate in more depth the history of this benefit and this obligation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SALAZAR. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be listed as a cosponsor of S. 1315.

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

Mr. SALAZAR. I come to the floor this evening to speak on behalf of the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act embodied in S. 1315. This legislation passed the Veterans' Affairs Committee in August of 2007. I know the work that goes on in that committee because I served on that committee with Senator AKAKA and many Members. It is an important tradition that committee has worked in a bipartisan spirit to make sure the United States honors the debt we owe to our veterans, some 25 million veterans in America and 1.4 million, 1.5 million veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. It is through that committee that legislation emerges to make sure the promise this Nation makes to its veterans is a promise we keep.

In my view, the fact that so much time has passed since S. 1315 came out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee in August 2007 until we have it today on the floor is, frankly, inexcusable. At the end of the day, the committee worked to put together legislation to better serve the Nation's veterans.

The legislation before us does some very important things. It expands eligibility for traumatic injury insurance. That is very important, especially today when we see the kind of trauma and injuries our veterans are facing coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan. We have now over 30,000 veterans who have been grievously wounded in that war. I know most of my colleagues have been to Walter Reed or to veterans hospitals where they have seen the kind of wounds our veterans are experiencing because of explosions of IEDs and other kinds of attacks made on our troops. The expansion of traumatic injury insurance is important for our men and women who serve.

The bill also extends the eligibility for specially adapted housing units to

veterans with severe burns. I know in my visits to those who have been wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, I have seen many who are in burn units who have suffered the scars of this war. This benefit for housing units that are specially adapted for those who are suffering burn injuries is a very important provision in this legislation that will be part of our efforts to make sure we are providing support to our veterans who have served.

This legislation is also important because it increases benefits for veterans pursuing apprenticeships or on-the-job training programs. Across the country and in my State of Colorado, we know there are many veterans who are unemployed. In fact, in most States, about half of the homeless population comes from the veterans ranks. So providing on-the-job training opportunity for these veterans is important. This legislation does that.

For all of the good things this legislation does, we could have taken it through this Chamber, through the House of Representatives, and to the President's desk, and we could have had that legislation already in law. We could have the framework of a law now honoring the veterans of America in the way they should be honored. Yet because of one provision of this legislation, it has been held up not 1 month, 2 months, but since August of 2007, to the point where today it is already April of 2008, and we are on the floor of the Senate trying to break a filibuster over legislation that is supposed to provide a benefit to our veterans in important ways.

The provision which some on the other side have objected to—not all of them but some of them—has to do with the treatment of Filipino veterans during World War II. I join, proudly, my colleagues—Senator INOUE and Senator STEVENS—in support of the legislation that would restore the benefits to Filipino veterans by granting them full veterans' status for the sacrifices they made during World War II.

Over the last half century, the treatment of Filipino World War II veterans, in my view, has been a stain on our national honor.

The Philippines became a possession of the United States in 1898, when it was ceded by Spain following the Spanish-American War. During that time period, and for the following 60-some years, the United States essentially controlled the territory and the people of the Philippines.

It was in 1934, then, that the Congress enacted the Philippine Independence Act. That provided a 10-year timeframe for the independence of the Philippines. But it was during that 10-year timeframe, when the Philippines essentially were in a commonwealth status relationship to the United States of America, that the clouds of war and the horrific war of World War II beset the entire globe.

Between 1934 and 1946, the United States retained powers over the Phil-

ippines, including the right as a government to call the military forces organized by the Commonwealth Government into the services of the Armed Forces of the United States.

On July 26, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt issued a military order calling on the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines to serve with the Armed Forces of the United States in the Far East.

The Filipinos who served were entitled to full veterans' benefits by reason of their service under the command of our Armed Forces.

Of the 470,000—that is 470,000; that is nearly half a million—Filipino veterans who volunteered, approximately 200,000 served in the Philippine Commonwealth Army, the Philippine Army Air Corps, and the Philippine Army Offshore Patrol—all under the command of the United States of America and our military.

We, I believe, in America cannot forget the sacrifice of our Filipino friends who fought side by side with American soldiers in World War II.

They constituted the vast majority of the 80,000 soldiers who defended the Bataan Peninsula against the Japanese invasion.

They constituted the vast majority—the vast majority—of the soldiers who were forced on the Bataan Death March.

They fought side by side with American soldiers to defend Corregidor in 1942.

They fought as guerrillas after the Japanese captured the Philippines.

They worked behind enemy lines to provide intelligence to the American Army. More than half the battalion that was tasked with providing intelligence from the occupied Philippines later received the Bronze Star for their heroic service.

When President Roosevelt signed a bill for the Filipinos to enlist in the U.S. Army, the Army stood up two entirely new regiments—the 1st and 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments.

The 1st and 2nd Filipino Infantry Regiments participated in the bloody combat and mop-up operations at New Guinea, Leyte, Samar, Luzon, and other major battles in the Philippines.

Members of the 1st Regiment were also attached to the U.S. 6th Army, and they were working often behind enemy lines to help free the Allied prisoners from the death camps in 1945.

In my view, the Filipinos who served in World War II were entitled to full veterans' benefits by reason of their service with our Armed Forces. Despite all their sacrifices—despite all their sacrifices—after the war was over, after the Philippines gained officially their independence, the Congress passed the Rescissions Act of 1946, now codified in our U.S. law.

The 1946 act precluded most of the Filipino World War II veterans from receiving veterans' benefits that were available to them prior to 1946 and that are available to all other veterans of

our Armed Forces today regardless of race, national origin or citizenship status.

S. 1315, today, would restore veterans status to those World War II heroes and, in particular, it would provide pension benefits to aid Filipino veterans residing in the Philippines during their twilight years.

The pension benefits under S. 1315 would amount to less than one-third— to less than one-third—of the basic pension amount provided to veterans living in the United States of America today. The average income of persons residing in the Philippines, however, is considerably lower than their counterparts in the United States. So the pension benefits under S. 1315 would provide a decent standard of living to these veterans.

Our Nation cannot abandon those who have served under our flag and who have served under our command. We must rally in support of these proven friends of America and act to redeem our Nation's debt in honor of their service.

I urge my colleagues to support S. 1315 in its entirety, and to support granting the benefits that the Filipino veterans from World War II, in my view, have earned.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am proud to rise in support of the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007. This bill expands much needed and long overdue benefits for the men and women in uniform who have served overseas in difficult and dangerous circumstances to keep America safe.

We must honor our U.S. soldiers who have died in the name of their country. These service men and women are America's true heroes and on this day we pay tribute to their courage and sacrifice by bringing this bill to the Senate floor. Some have given their lives for our country. All have given their time and dedication to ensure our country remains the land of the free and the home of the brave. We owe a special debt of gratitude to each and every one of them.

Our Nation has a sacred commitment to honor the promises made to soldiers when they signed up to serve our country. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I fight hard each year to make sure promises made to our service men and women are promises kept. These promises include access to quality, affordable health care and a proper burial for our veterans.

That is why I am an enthusiastic supporter of the Veterans' Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007. This bill provides an increase in burial benefits for the families of our wounded or disabled veterans, which I have been fighting for since 2001. This means that service-connected burial benefits will increase by \$2,100 for a total of \$4,100; non service-connected burial benefits will increase by \$900 for a total of \$1,200; and, plot allowances will increase by \$445 for a total of \$745. These benefits will increase annually to keep up with inflation.

I am also proud to support this bill because it takes an important step in recognizing the sacrifices made by our men and women of the National Guard and Reserve by expanding the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, outreach program. This program provides important information about benefits and services that veterans and their spouses, children and parents may be eligible for through the VA. By expanding this program we are ensuring that our citizen soldiers and their families have the resources and help they need to make a successful transition back to civilian life after answering our Nation's call.

This bill also recognizes the sacrifices of veterans who are suffering from the physical, permanent wounds of war. It expands eligibility for traumatic injury insurance and specially adapted housing benefits to veterans with severe burns. It also restores veteran status to Filipino veterans who served under United States command in World War II.

Whether fighting to defend democracy overseas or standing sentry on the home front, America's veterans have been there for us. We have a sacred commitment to honor all of the promises made to them when they signed up to fight for us. That's why I am fighting hard today and everyday in the U.S. Senate to ensure that the federal government maintains its commitment to veterans. Promises made must be promises kept.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The majority leader is recognized.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT REQUEST— S. 1315 AND H.R. 2831

Mr. REID. Mr. President, here we are again not being able to go to the bill. I would hope we could go to this bill tomorrow and debate it all day. As everyone, I think, knows, we would like to have a vote tomorrow night at 6 o'clock on the reversal of the Ledbetter decision.

So I have conferred with the manager of the bill and told him I was going to ask consent that in the morning we have the opportunity to go to the bill and legislate—have people offer amendments on it tomorrow—that we would go at 6 o'clock tomorrow to the cloture vote—the motion has been filed—on the Ledbetter decision. I ask unanimous consent that be the case.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, would my friend like me to be a little more specific?

Mr. BURR. I would love for that.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that on Wednesday, April 23, following a period of morning business, the motion to proceed to S. 1315 be agreed to; and that the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on H.R. 2831, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, occur at 6 p.m., with the time from 5 to 6 p.m. equally divided and controlled prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. BURR. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. We had a unanimous vote earlier today to proceed to the bill. I believe it has been a productive day. I believe Members have learned a lot in the debate, and I think it is important to get the history of the issue on the record for all Members.

Having said that, I am prepared to begin consideration of the bill and for the amendment process to begin as well. Under the rules, my understanding is the cloture vote on Ledbetter would proceed an hour after we convene.

Now, I am not in a position to delay the Ledbetter bill, but I am in a position to agree to go immediately in the morning to consideration of S. 1315. The way the majority leader has worded his unanimous consent request would push off the rules of the Senate, requiring that the Ledbetter vote be in the morning. So, therefore, I have to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I think my friend may have misunderstood my consent request. I think it is appropriate—we would not have to have morning business in the morning. We could go directly to the bill in the morning. We could convene at 9:30, 10 o'clock—whatever would be convenient to the minority—and we would legislate on that all day tomorrow, offer amendments. My friend wants to, I am sure, offer an amendment to change the provision in the bill as it relates to Filipinos. That would be fine.

At 6 o'clock we would have a vote on a motion that has already been filed to invoke cloture on Ledbetter. That would take 20 minutes. That is all it would take. And then, if cloture, of course, is invoked, then we would be on Ledbetter. If it were not invoked, then we would be right back on S. 1315.

So again, I say to my friend, I think it is a good idea we go to the legislation in the morning. I wanted to do it Thursday night. We did not do it Thursday night. We did not do it Friday. We did not do it Monday. We have not done it today. So I would hope on Wednesday morning we could do that. That was my consent: We go to that, we take a brief pause at 6 o'clock tomorrow evening to vote on cloture on