

out into the market to try to find a job—when we have twice the number of Americans as there are jobs competing for employment—why we are saying to veterans who have come back and others who are standing on an unemployment line that soon that will be cut off as well. It is unconscionable.

We have an opportunity to change that in this supplemental. I hope our colleagues who enjoy the benefits of gainful employment will give the American workers the helping hand they need and stimulate our economy by supporting the extension of the unemployment insurance.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I want to say a few words about two important components of the domestic supplemental bill which, in my view, must be passed whenever we end up considering that legislation, and that is the new GI educational bill and the billion dollars in the bill for the Low Income Heating Assistance Program.

As an early cosponsor of the post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, I am here today to ask my colleagues not only to pass this legislation but pass it with big numbers so if President Bush decides to veto it, we will have the votes—and he knows we will have the votes—to override that veto.

The soldiers who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan have paid a very heavy toll. In Iraq alone, over 4,000 have died, over 30,000 have been injured, and tens of thousands more have come home with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury.

In my State of Vermont, middle-aged dads and moms have left their families, they have left their kids, they have left their jobs, and they have joined their fellow members of the National Guard and Reserve in a kind of war they never dreamed they would be fighting. But they went to war and they did their jobs, and they did their jobs well and without complaint. They gave as much as they could give for their country, and now it is our turn to give back, not only for them but for the well-being of our entire economy.

The original GI bill was an appropriate way for a grateful nation to say thank you for the service and sacrifice of those who wore our country's uniform. That bill was not only a way to express our appreciation to the greatest generation, but it enabled millions of Americans to get a college education, and by doing that, it helped reshape the American economy, it created immense wealth, and allowed millions of Americans to enter the middle class.

There are, in fact, those who believe that the GI bill was one of the major reasons for the strong economic spurt this country enjoyed from the end of World War II to the early 1970s.

Unfortunately, as many returning soldiers understand, today's GI edu-

cational benefits do not match up with what the World War II veterans received and do not come close today to covering the cost of a college education. That is why it is so important that we update these benefits by passing the new GI bill, both for our Active-Duty soldiers and for the National Guard and Reserve.

As a nation, we must understand that caring for our servicemembers is part of the cost of going to war. If we are going to go to war, we cannot forget about the men and women who put their lives on the line and returned from that war.

There are some who say this bill is too generous for our servicemembers, that we cannot afford to provide these benefits. I disagree. If we can spend \$12 billion every single month paying for the cost of the war in Iraq, we surely can spend the equivalent of 4 months of that war to pay for the cost of the educational benefits for these men and women for a 10-year period.

The new GI bill will cover the highest in-State undergraduate tuition at a public college or university where the veteran is enrolled, plus a living stipend, and would be based on how long the veteran served in active duty. This money could also be applied to law school, medical school, or approved programs of study.

This is an extremely important piece of legislation. I congratulate Senator WEBB for offering it. And now it is our job to pass it.

There is another component of the domestic supplemental that also must be passed, and that is the \$1 billion in additional funding for LIHEAP that was included in the supplemental appropriations bill through the adoption of an amendment by Senator JACK REED of Rhode Island. I thank Senator REED for offering that amendment and for getting it passed in the Appropriations Committee by a bipartisan vote of 20 to 9, which included 5 Republicans.

Furthermore, I have been active on that issue by authoring a letter, which was cosigned by 20 of my colleagues, including 4 Republicans, who also understand the absolute imperative for increasing funding for LIHEAP.

Two years ago, under the leadership of Senator SNOWE and many other Senators, LIHEAP funding was increased by \$1 billion above the appropriated level because it was well understood that at that time, we faced a home heating emergency. I strongly agreed with that assessment. But if we faced a home heating emergency a year ago, we face a much more severe home heating emergency today, and that is because the price of heating oil and propane are escalating off the roof. They are much higher today than they were several years ago. It is absolutely imperative that we significantly increase funding for LIHEAP if we are not to see the purchasing power of this program eviscerated.

While \$1 billion is a good step forward, the truth is, we are going to need

a lot more than that to keep pace and level fund in terms of real dollars what the American people are receiving from LIHEAP.

Two years ago, as you know, the price of heating oil was less than \$2.50 a gallon. Today it is about \$4.50 a gallon. What I can tell you is that last winter in the State of Vermont, there were families unable to heat their homes. Families with children became sick because the temperature in those homes was too low. That was last winter. Certainly if that was the case last winter, it will only be worse next winter.

Let us be very clear that the LIHEAP program addresses not only families who are worried about keeping warm in the wintertime, it also addresses the very serious problem of families, especially older people, who, when the weather gets 100-plus degrees, will be too warm in the summertime.

It also addresses the issue of more and more Americans having their electricity disconnected. According to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, which represents the State directors of LIHEAP, a record-breaking 15.6 million American families, or nearly 15 percent of all households, are at least 30 days late in paying their utility bills. Several States have laws on the books that impose a moratorium on cutting off essential utility services in the winter. However, these utility shutoff moratoriums expire during the spring. Without additional LIHEAP funding, senior citizens on fixed income, low-income families with children, and persons with disabilities from all across this country are in danger of having their essential utility services shut off this spring. This is going on in California, Iowa, Massachusetts—all over this country. Rapidly rising energy costs are the major reason so many Americans are late in paying their energy bills. It is extremely important, therefore, that additional LIHEAP funding be included in the supplemental to address these urgent needs.

I hope very much when we get around to addressing the domestic supplemental bill that, A, we absolutely pass this legislation with strong numbers for our veterans to give them the educational opportunities they need and our country needs and, B, let us not forget that with the cost of gas and oil soaring, millions of Americans will go cold next winter. There are people who will suffer this summer unless we pass an expanded LIHEAP program.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from North Dakota.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I have just spoken with Senator GREGG, the ranking member of the Budget Committee. He has graciously agreed that I could begin to discuss the budget conference report. He is at the White

House and will be returning shortly. We have agreed in principle that the time I consume and that perhaps he consumes when he later arrives will be used against the 10 hours, that we will do that retroactively. But we start without an agreement because they are working on a global agreement as to how we will conclude the work of the Senate the remainder of this week. Until they have that agreement, we will not reach a unanimous consent agreement with respect to how we dispose of the budget conference report.

For the information of colleagues, there is up to 10 hours allocated to the budget conference report discussion. We hope that could be done in less time, obviously, and that we might vote this evening, for the notice of my colleagues, or potentially tomorrow, depending on how long it goes and the decision of the leadership.

Before I begin the discussion of the conference agreement, I ask that the clerk keep a close tab on the time because we will try to reach an agreement later to retroactively apply the time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, before I begin on the budget conference report, I wish to say publicly how the entire Senate family is thinking about Senator KENNEDY and Vicki and the family, how much we miss him, his presence on the floor, how much we miss his presence at our caucus, and how much all of us are fervently hoping for his full and quick recovery.

If there is anybody who can beat this, it is TED KENNEDY. He is a lion. Rarely have I ever met somebody of such force of will, somebody who is so totally dedicated to serving the people whom he represents, someone who cares so deeply about America's democracy, about this institution.

On both sides of the aisle, I have had many Senators say to me: TED KENNEDY is simply the most productive Senator among us. Nobody turns out more work, more quality work than he does. Whether you agree with his legislative positions or disagree, you have to admire the incredible energy and devotion that he brings to the job, the respect he has for this institution, and his determination to advance causes in which he believes.

My family has been close to the Kennedy family for many years. When John Kennedy's advance people came to North Dakota or Robert's advance people or TED KENNEDY's, they always stayed with my family. So I have always felt a very close association with the Kennedy family.

Anybody who looks back on his extraordinary service here, virtually unparalleled in the history of the Senate, has to have profound respect for TED KENNEDY, for his work, his values, his

deep and abiding love of this country, and of the institution of the Congress, and his respect for the Presidency of the United States.

I want Senator KENNEDY to know that all of us here are pulling for him. I want Vicki to know that we stand ready to do whatever we can to lighten her burden and the burden of the rest of the family.

I deeply admire Senator KENNEDY. Also, what a light he is in this Chamber. He uplifts the rest of us. I have seen many times, when others were stricken in this Chamber, the first person to call was TED KENNEDY, always eager to help when somebody faced a tragedy.

We are thinking about Ted.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. CONRAD. I will be happy to yield.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I am so grateful to the Senator. I wish to associate myself with the remarks of the distinguished Senator from North Dakota and tell him I don't know anybody in the Senate who feels more deeply about Senator KENNEDY than I do. We have been adversaries for 32 years. We have also been partners.

I have watched what their family has given to America. I love his sisters. I love the in-laws. I know he raised the children, and they are good kids. I have great faith in TED KENNEDY as a person who will fight back with the faith and prayers of all of us in the Senate and millions of others across the country. I believe Ted will be able to come back, and he will come back, and I believe he will be able to whip this problem. I am going to exert all the faith and prayers I possibly can to help him do it.

I agree with the distinguished Senator, whenever any of us encountered great difficulty, he was always the first to call.

We have worked together on so many pieces of legislation, landmark legislation, that I wish to personally compliment him for being willing to cross the aisle in so many ways and to work out difficulties. One of the last things we worked on was the bio bill. That is a very complex, difficult bill, and we worked along with Senator ENZI, who is a wonderful companion of Senator KENNEDY on the HELP Committee. We worked with Senator CLINTON, who added a great deal to the work on that bill. Senator SCHUMER was a great asset on that bill. These are people for whom I have great respect.

Let me say to Ted and Vicki that our prayers and our faith are with both of them and their children and the rest of the extended family, and we will do everything in our power to support Senator KENNEDY in this time of difficulty. I personally believe that if we have enough faith and pray hard enough and with the great clinical help he will have, Senator KENNEDY will return and

continue to do the job he believes in. I know he appreciates everybody who has spoken out for him, who has expressed concern, who has expressed anguish, as I do here, about his present situation. I know he is facing this with a great sense of humor, which is one of the most endearing qualities Ted Kennedy has, among many endearing qualities.

He carries so much weight on the Democrat side and, of course, for those of us who work with him on the Republican side, a lot of weight with us as well. So I want him to know we all love him, appreciate him, and appreciate the leadership he has provided through the years and the quality of the person he is.

If the distinguished Senator would allow me to address another topic, I would be very grateful.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that these new sets of remarks be placed in the RECORD at an appropriate place.

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

Mr. HATCH. I will have more to say about Senator KENNEDY later, but I wanted to make those few remarks here today.

COMBATING CHILD EXPLOITATION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, the exploitation of children is a plague. It is a war with many fronts, and we must be engaged in them all. I wish to review some of the ways we are fighting this good fight and encourage my colleagues to be as relentless in protecting children as are those in the world who exploit them.

Just 2 days ago, the Supreme Court upheld our most recent attempt to combat the spread of child pornography. In a 7-to-2 decision—an overwhelming vote by the Supreme Court, by the way—the Court held that the PROTECT Act is consistent with the first amendment. I introduced the PROTECT Act in January 2003. It passed this body unanimously in February, passed the House without objection in March, and was signed into law in April. The PROTECT Act prohibits the pandering or solicitation of child pornography.

Child pornography is perhaps the most egregious form of exploitation. It not only victimizes and brutalizes children directly but makes a permanent record of that abuse that may never be erased. Child pornography is not protected by the first amendment, which means its possession and sale can be banned.

In 2002, the Supreme Court struck down the Child Pornography Prevention Act, a bill I introduced in the 104th Congress. So we went back to the drawing board. If the objective is important—and I do not believe any objective is more important than protecting children from exploitation—then we must not take no for an answer. We must not let speed bumps,