

they could all have been elected President, but only one can be, so two of them are out of that race now. I still have two Democratic Senators involved. As my colleagues know, next Tuesday is Super Tuesday, and they are both very busy, as is Senator MCCAIN. So I probably can't get them back here until Monday, but I do need them back. So the Republican leader understands that, and we will try to work something out today to give us a pathway to complete this stimulus package and FISA.

NFL PLAYERS CARE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, when my children were growing up, we had a rule that they accepted—they don't seem to complain now—where we didn't watch television on Sunday. It was just kind of a rule we put down. The television was on all the other times, but on Sunday we didn't watch TV, except on Super Bowl Sunday.

This coming Sunday is the 42nd Super Bowl. It is going to be in Phoenix, AZ. Now, whether this game is a nail-biter or a blowout, we will long remember the heroics of this game, whatever they might be. It might be a goal line stand. It won't be in subzero weather; it is in Phoenix. It may be a fourth-down Hail Mary pass that saves the day or it may be the player who suffers an injury in the first quarter but is able to limp back on the field and play through the pain and who will then be known as the man who led his team to victory even though he was injured. These heroes will, all of them, soak up the cheers of an adoring nation on Sunday.

But there are hundreds and hundreds of former National Football League players who no longer hear those cheers. Instead, they suffer great pain as a result of lifelong injuries from their days on the field. These are the stars of yore, the stars of the past.

Two people from Nevada whom I know are people who were injured playing professional football. These men draw pensions as a result of their injuries because they were modern-day football players. Henry Rolling—an outstanding athlete—went to my high school, basic high school, came out of high school 175 pounds, wound up being a 4-year All-American, University of Nevada, Reno, played in the pros for 9 or 10 years, and was injured. He has the benefit of all of the good things that come about from being a National Football League player.

Some of the players are legends. To me, Henry Rolling is a legend. Some are wealthy. Henry Rolling is a rich man now. He lives comfortably. But many others never hoisted a trophy or earned a spot in our memories. Many were faceless figures behind helmets, lost to history but for these yellowed photographs they show to their families, and maybe even some dusty highlight reels. They helped build a league but never earned much from their on-

the-field heroics. Often, they worked second jobs in the off season. So, far from basking in the kind of wealth we associate with the athletes of today, many are now struggling just to pay their bills and make ends meet for their families. But when they came to the National Football League's retirement plan to claim their disability benefits, they were told go someplace else: Go to our State and see what they have for you. The National Football League can't help. As wealthy as they are, they have turned these players away. The league to which they gave their hearts, souls, and bodies has not stood by their side.

In September, one of these former players who lives in Reno, NV, Brent Boyd, stopped in my office to visit with me to tell me about his struggles, which are the struggles of many former football players. He is a huge man, and he is not fat. When he played, he was 6 foot 3 and weighed 270 pounds. You couldn't see Brent without thinking: That guy must be a football player. He played football at UCLA and was drafted by the Minnesota Vikings.

Now, what do we know about the Minnesota Vikings? During his tenure there, they played football on AstroTurf. Brent explained to me it would be like playing a football game on cement covered with a rug. Every time he hit the pavement, he was hurt. That is the way it was with many of those players. He was an offensive lineman. During a preseason game in 1980, Brent remembers only waking up after being hit very hard. He had a terrible headache. He couldn't see out of one eye. His coach asked his rookie lineman whether he could see out of the other eye. He said yes.

He said go back into the game, so he went back in and he was blind in one eye. Brent did what was expected of him; played through his injury, as he played through many injuries. That was the culture of the sport and the NFL. That was one of countless hard hits Brent took during his playing days.

He told me:

How would you like playing football on cement? That's what we did.

That was what the old artificial playing surface was like. Every hit, when he went down and hit his head, even though he had a helmet on, he could feel it.

It wasn't until years later his doctors began to connect the dots and discovered his chronic dizziness, fatigue, depression, and headaches were a result of head injuries as a result of hit after hit that he took during his 6-year career.

I have talked about Henry Rolling, one of my Nevada heroes. I went to high school with a man by the name of Rupert Sendlein. He was a big man. He had a son who went to the University of Texas. He was an All-American, and he played professional football for 8 years. At the beginning of his ninth year, he went to his doctors and they

examined him. They said: Robin, you can't play football anymore. You have had so many concussions that you have to stop.

Well, Brent didn't have the ability to go to a doctor when he wanted. Robin Sendlein now is retired in Phoenix Arizona making a lot of money. His son now is the starting center at the University of Texas. Robin Sendlein had the benefit Brent Boyd didn't have.

Brent is unable to hold down a steady job. He doesn't think right. He went to the NFL retirement plan for help, but he was granted \$1,550 a month in disability payments—far below the \$8,200 promised to ex-players whose injuries resulted from football.

Brent told me of the struggle that ensued, many doctor visits, delays, denials, and financial troubles.

We all know football is a terribly dangerous sport. For those who earn millions, perhaps it is fair to say the reward is worth the risk. But Brent played in a different time. He never signed a big contract, never earned a shoe endorsement deal, never appeared in commercials.

Now he struggles to pay his bills. He struggles to pay his rent. Is Brent's story an exception? No.

Two football greats—Mike Ditka and Jerry Kramer—people whom those of us my age, and probably all ages, are familiar with. Mike Ditka and Jerry Kramer were gridiron greats. They helped create the fund to help retired players. They discovered heartbreaking stories from retired stars, including Willie Wood, a Hall of Fame safety. Willie Wood—I know about him because I was in high school with Bobby Peck. He was an athlete but not very tall. He was All-State in football, baseball, and basketball. He went to a junior college called Coalinga Junior College in California, which prepared people to go to USC and other great schools. I was stunned. Bobby Peck was not the starting quarterback. He was beaten out by a man by the name of Willie Wood. Athletically, Bobby had never been beaten out by anybody in anything. So he, the next year, went to Dixie Junior College in St. George, UT, where he became all-conference, and then he went to the University of Nevada. He was in a different league than Willie Wood, who went on to play quarterback at the University of Southern California.

As good as he was, Willie Wood figured he was good enough to play in the NFL. He tried out for the Green Bay Packers. Vince Lombardi said: OK, you can try out. Willie Wood became probably the greatest safety in the history of the National Football League. He has had many injuries. He weighed 175 pounds.

Others are Wilber Marshall, a three-time Pro Bowl linebacker; Conrad Dobler, a three-time Pro Bowl lineman; and Herb Adderley, an All-Big Ten star at Michigan State and star cornerback for the Green Bay Packers and Dallas Cowboys.

These are gridiron greats who also came upon many lesser known players with stories like Brent's. Mike Moseley, of the Buffalo Bills, suffered knee, neck, and back injuries that forced him to retire early and left him permanently disabled.

Initially, the NFL disability committee granted him benefits. In September 2004, a doctor hired by the NFL ruled that he could do sedentary work, and they cut off his benefits. This reminds me of when I started out practicing law. For a few years, I did insurance defense work. We had doctors that insurance companies would bring in and it didn't matter how bad somebody was hurt, they determined they weren't hurt very badly. That is what this reminds me of. Mike Moseley lost his home, his car, and his savings. His life has been torn apart.

Another example is Brian DeMarco, a lineman for the Jacksonville Jaguars. Similar to Mike, Brian was forced into an early retirement by injury. He was unable to navigate the disability system's redtape—even though his back was broken in 17 different places. Brian and his family were left homeless. He told the *Denver Post* that the NFL:

is a multibillion dollar business, and guys are giving their quality of life up for this sport. Just a little respect and dignity is all we want.

These stories illustrate a point the statistics confirm. According to one press report, almost two-thirds of former professional football players suffer injuries serious enough to require surgery, and almost half of all players retire due to injury.

But among the more than the 1,000 disability claims filed by former NFL players, about 30 percent have received approval. The rest are thrown in the trash bin, such as my friend from Reno, NV.

Brent Boyd was among the former players who testified before the Commerce Committee this past September. They told us how they feel abandoned and forgotten lost in endless doctor visits and redtape.

Daryl Johnson, who played 11 years as running back for the Cowboys, testified that he retired with 5 years remaining on his contract after suffering a herniated disc.

The Players' Association sent him for an evaluation with one of their doctors—not his own. He was not permitted to even bring his X rays or MRI results. Similar to so many others, his claim was denied.

After the hearing last September, and countless news stories, the NFL and the Players' Association have taken some steps to right the wrong.

Where before their approval process seemed a little more than ad hoc, they now apply standards used by the Social Security Administration to determine disability. We hope it is more effective.

They have also implemented the 88 Plan, which provides funds for a residential care facility or in-home care. The question is, Who are they going to give it to?

Brent Boyd, and so many like him, still suffer the pain of their injuries, still struggle to pay their bills on far less disability assistance than they deserve. Some suffer the inability to think properly because of the head trauma they suffered.

In the coming weeks, I will work with the NFL and the Players' Association and other retirees to ensure progress is being made.

As the bright lights shine on Super Bowl XLII this Sunday—and they are a multibillion dollar business, and they should help these people—I want Brent and his injured brothers to know they are not fighting in the shadows. They deserve a spotlight also.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

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

STIMULUS MARK-UP

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, Americans saw something many of them thought they might never see: Speaker PELOSI, Minority Leader BOEHNER, and the President working as a team. Republicans and Democrats rose above politics and put the people and the economy first. And on Tuesday, the House passed their compromise stimulus plan by a vote of 385–35. Then all eyes turned to the Senate: Would we put our individual interests aside, or would we throw the whole plan into jeopardy by loading it down with gifts for anybody who came calling?

Apparently the temptation for giveaways was too great for some to resist. As soon as the bill hit the Senate, it started to look a lot like Christmas over here. Chairman BAUCUS added 10 new provisions before the bill was even considered in committee. Three more amendments were added in committee. You could almost hear Bing Crosby's voice coming out of the Finance Committee. And so the stimulus train is slowing grinding to a halt here in the U.S. Senate.

All of this only reinforces my view that the only way we'll get relief to the people soon enough for it to work will be to insist on speed over spending. And the only way to do that is to pass the bipartisan, House-passed bill. That way we can send it to the President for a signature—and get much needed relief into the hands of millions of Americans as quickly as they are now expecting it. This is the only way to pass an economic growth package that doesn't grow the government or raise taxes and that can be signed into law in a timely manner. The other option is to bring it to the floor, where we know it will only grow and slow under the weight of endless additional spending proposals. We need to act quickly. The majority leader called for a bill that is "timely." The House acted quickly. Now it is our turn.

We have a choice: We can accept Washington politics as usual and spend weeks and weeks arguing over how much more can be added to an already unwieldy bill or we can act right now and deliver a timely economic growth package with bipartisan support that can be signed into law now. We could get a bill down to the President in thirty seconds if we want to. The White House and the House have done their part. Now let's do our part. Let's vote on the House-passed bill, without any further delay.

HONORING OUT ARMED FORCES

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to pause for a moment so I may share with them the story of a soldier lost in battle. On January 5, 2007, MAJ Michael L. Mundell of Brandenburg, KY, and his unit were sent to secure a combat area in Fallujah, Iraq, after an American tank reported being struck by an improvised explosive device.

En route to the scene, a second explosive device went off near Major Mundell's vehicle, tragically taking his life. He was 47 years old.

Major Mundell served in the U.S. Army for over a decade before leaving active service to work as a civilian contractor to the armed forces. In November of 2005 he again volunteered for active duty. His wife Audrey tells us that Mike once told a friend "he was going over there to fight them so they couldn't come over here and hurt his children."

For his bravery in service, Major Mundell received numerous medals and awards, including two Meritorious Service Medals, the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart.

Mr. President, Major Mundell was one of those who may have been born in one of the other 49 States but became Kentuckian by choice. Born in Pittsburgh, he grew up in Canonsburg, PA.

As a child, Mike developed a passion for military service. He wanted to grow up and drive tanks. When he was three, he handed his father an encyclopedia and asked him to read it to him.

His family says this began his lifelong love of reading. As an adult, he enjoyed Civil War history, and would often read more than a book a day. He also enjoyed mysteries and thrillers, and read through the Bible three times.

In 1977, Mike graduated from Canon-McMillan High School, home of the Big Macs. His wife Audrey liked to tease him that his high-school mascot was named after a hamburger, but Mike made his school proud on the football field.

Mike went on to graduate from Washington-Jefferson College in 1981 where he majored in history, participated in ROTC and played soccer.

After graduation, Mike realized his lifelong goal of becoming an Army officer when he received his commission as a second lieutenant. Assigned to Fort