

I am proud of the Iraqi people. They need to do more. I think they will. The surge has worked beyond my expectation—not just militarily. Politically and economically the surge has worked, and we are on the road now to what I would say is victory in Iraq.

People ask me: What is winning? Winning is being able to leave Iraq and have behind an ally in the overall war on terror. Winning would be having a partner in the heart of the Arab world, the Iraqi Government, that will reject al-Qaida and deny al-Qaida a safe haven or a foothold. Winning would be having a Shia-led government that will stand up to Iran, be a good neighbor but not allow Iran to become stronger. Winning would be a place in the heart of the Middle East where a woman would have a say about her children through democracy. Winning would be the rule of law replacing the rule of gun. All of that makes us safer. The consequences of losing in Iraq would be enormous and would have been enormous to our national security interests. Al-Qaida would have claimed victory over the United States. Iran would be dominating the southern part of Iraq. The sectarian violence that was widespread, in my view, would have spread throughout the region. There would have been Sunni-Shia battles throughout the Middle East and Turkey, and the Kurds would have had a real problem among themselves. So a failed state in Iraq would have been a nightmare for our security interests. Winning in Iraq means a stable government aligned with us that rejects al-Qaida, and means a buffer to Iranian ambitions; a nation that accepts democracy and would be a peaceful partner to its neighbors. That is a major victory in the war on terror because it was a place where al-Qaida was defeated by Muslims.

This resolution in great detail lays out what happened over the last year and a half regarding the surge. It is a statement by the Congress acknowledging success on the battlefield and in other areas. I hope this is one area where Republicans and Democrats can come together and recognize the great success of our troops and acknowledge the Iraqi people themselves looked chaos in the eye and turned it away. I know it has been difficult for this country; we spent a lot of money and lost a lot of lives. But this war we are involved in is not a place, it is not about taking your eye off the ball; it is about fighting the enemy wherever the enemy goes. I would argue that the world is better off without Saddam Hussein being in power. The big mistake we made after the fall of Baghdad is not having enough troops and letting the situation get out of hand. I don't believe it was a mistake at all to go after Saddam's regime after 17 U.N. resolutions were ignored. So I think the world is much better off without Saddam Hussein being in power.

I would argue we are now on the road to victory in Iraq where we are going

to have a stable, functioning, representative government to replace a dictatorship—that will be our ally. This has come about with a lot of sacrifice on behalf of the men and women in uniform, their civilian counterparts, and Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus have been great teammates over in Iraq. Here we are—a year ago tomorrow General Petraeus testified before the Congress. I wish to let him and all of those under his command, as well as Ambassador Crocker and all of those civilians who have been helping him, know that they have done an enormous good for the world, that they have protected our country from what I thought would have been a humiliating defeat. They have prevented that defeat. They have turned things around so that if we have the right exit strategy now, we are going to secure a major victory on the war on terror. Senator McCain: Hats off to him. He has always been about winning. We are coming home, but we are going to come home winners, with honor, and a more secure America because of what has happened in Iraq in the last year and a half due to the surge.

I hope and pray we can have a vote on this resolution. It would be a good thing for the Senate to do. Whether you agree with us going into Iraq, that is an honest, genuine debate. Once there, we couldn't lose. We were about to lose. Thank God the surge was implemented, and more than anything else, thank God for good leadership, brave young men and women representing our Nation who took the fight to the enemy, and God bless the Iraqi people. I wish them nothing but the best in the future. I do believe the best days lie ahead for the Iraqi people, and that 20 years from now, long after many of us are gone, here in the Senate we will look back on this period and understand what was at stake better than we do today. We will be looking at an Iraq that is part of the solution, not the problem, in the Mideast. History will say that the surge was a monumental event in the course of the war on terror, that the change in strategy was necessary work. I think militarily they will be studying this Petraeus plan for decades to come, and economically and politically, the courage that has been shown by the Iraqi people to step to the plate should be acknowledged by all of us.

At the end of the day, if we had continued with the old strategy, I think we would have lost. Iraq would have been a failed state and it would have been a mighty blow to this country and the overall war on terror. Now I think we can say with confidence we have turned a corner. Nothing is irreversible. However, I think the gains made on the political, economic, and military front are going to be hard to roll back if we will stay the course and end this fight. We are very close now to having our troops come home in a way that will make us all safer. I have al-

ways believed this one thing about Iraq: Our national security interests in history will judge us not by the date we left Iraq but by what we left behind. I think we are very close to being able to say in the coming months that we are going to leave behind a new nation that is part of the solution, not the problem; a place where Muslims said no to al-Qaida; a place where different groups chose the rule of law over the rule of gun; a place where the woman can finally have a say about her child and her children's future in the heart of the Mideast; and that truly makes us all safer.

I do hope Senator LIEBERMAN will be allowed to introduce his resolution and we will have a vote on that.

With that, I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). 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.

HIGHWAY TRUST FUND

Mr. REID. Mr. President, in July, the House of Representatives responsibly passed legislation to prevent the highway trust fund from running out of money. They put the date that the \$8 billion would be transferred at October 1, the end of the fiscal year, the beginning of the new fiscal year. That legislation passed by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 387 to 37.

The reason the bill receives such strong support is Democrats and Republicans in the House recognize that funding for these critical transportation projects is extremely important. This is infrastructure. For every billion dollars we spend in infrastructure, there are 47,500 high-paying jobs, and a lot of other jobs spin off from that amount. So this \$8 billion is about half a million jobs. Yes, that is a lot when you think about the problems we have in the country today economically.

But when that bill reached the Senate before we left for the convention recesses, Republicans objected to it. Since that time, the legislation has even taken on more urgency. Gas prices have skyrocketed. Fewer Americans are driving, which has decreased the flow of the money into the trust fund.

Second, the Bush-McCain economy has plunged America further into economic peril. Just last month, 84,000 jobs were lost, bringing to the total this year during the Bush-McCain era over 600,000 jobs lost this year alone. And today it was announced that this year will be the largest deficit in the history of our country. So we have an economy that is in deep trouble, we have 84,000 jobs lost just last month and more than 600,000 this year, and it

has just been announced that the deficit is the largest we have ever seen as a country.

The investments in this highway trust fund make our transportation safe. It is not just roads, it is mass-transit projects that are so important to this country. As I told the distinguished ranking member of the Budget Committee who was here objecting yesterday, maybe two or three decades ago, my being from Nevada, I may not have been concerned about mass transit, but we are now. Las Vegas is a metropolitan area with traffic congestion. We have to do something with mass transit. It cannot be handled on the highways.

With this new urgency in mind, the Bush administration joined us in calling for a transfer of these funds immediately. I received a call from the Secretary of Transportation saying this needs to be done. I said: Why didn't you help us before? Basically, the Bush-McCain crew was just hoping they could squeeze through before the new President is elected before anything would happen. But even this President has acknowledged that we have to do something.

Democrats and Republicans in the House, I repeat, have already voted to have this money transferred, and they did it last July. We want to follow suit. Yet some in the President's own party continue to refuse this economically vital legislation that is so important.

We have had 92 filibusters led by the Republicans so far. I am not sure if we counted the last one. Anyway, we will say 92. I have expressed many times my disappointment about the Republicans blocking legislation supported by a majority of Senators—a majority of Senators. They have blocked legislation not only that we Democrats support but a majority of Senators, Democrats and Republicans.

Here we have an interesting thing now. This is new. Republicans are blocking a bill supported by an overwhelming majority of both parties in the House and in the Senate and supported by the President of their own party. They are even blocking that. They are doing everything within their power to maintain the status quo. Yesterday, Republicans prevented us from passing this bill. It is so important that it be done. I have trouble understanding why the Republicans are objecting to a bill that Democrats and Republicans in the House support, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate support, and the President supports. They are objecting to their own best interests, it seems to me. But that is what they are doing. I think we should send this bill to the President's desk, as the President has requested.

The people who are objecting are using all kinds of excuses. Yesterday, they said they had a few amendments. Tonight, I guess they have a few more amendments. They think it is really not right to take the money to replenish the highway trust fund from the

general fund, but they haven't objected to almost spending a trillion dollars of borrowed money going to Iraq. They haven't objected to taking tens of billions of dollars from the general fund to give tax breaks to big oil companies. That didn't seem to bother them. But when it comes to \$8 billion to maintain our highways and our mass-transit projects that create jobs at a time when we have about 10 million Americans out of work, they are even blocking that. This legislation is prudent and necessary. It is a prudent and necessary investment in the economic well-being of our struggling Nation. I hope our Republican colleagues answer the call of President Bush and Secretary Chertoff. Judge Chertoff said the lack of investment in U.S. infrastructure is "kind of like playing Russian roulette with our citizens' safety." That is what President Bush's Secretary of Homeland Security has said. So this is no time for games such as that.

So, Mr. President, here is my unanimous consent request: That the Finance Committee be discharged from its consideration of H.R. 6532 and the Senate proceed to its consideration; that the amendment at the desk be considered agreed to, the bill, as amended, be read a third time, passed, the motion to reconsider be laid on the table, and any statements relating to this matter be printed at the appropriate place in the RECORD, with no intervening action or debate.

But we don't have a Republican here to object, and so I am not going to take advantage of their not being here. But I hope the American people see what is going on. It is another day gone by with our not having the ability here because of the Republicans refusing to approve legislation that is extremely urgent. It is emergency legislation. We have been told so by the President and his Secretary of Treasury, and they still would not let us do this.

I wonder where JOHN MCCAIN is. What is his idea on this? Should we let the fund go belly up? Where is JOHN MCCAIN? Couldn't he send a statement, a message from somebody saying: I agree with President Bush, or does he disagree, for one of the rare, 10 percent of the times when he disagrees? The word out is he supports the President 90 percent of the time. It is really 95 percent of the time.

But is he now going to be part of the 5 percent where he says: I disagree with the President; I don't think that money should be replenished.

Where is JOHN MCCAIN? Let us hear from JOHN MCCAIN.

TRIBUTE TO LAURA SANDERS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a remarkable teacher from my home State of Kentucky, Laura Sanders, who was recognized on August 19 as Kentucky's 2008 No Child Left Behind American Star of Teaching.

Sanders, a kindergarten teacher at Cumberland Trace Elementary School in Bowling Green, KY, has based her teaching career on the belief that all children can achieve and holds high expectations for each and every one of them.

She looks at each child's strengths and weaknesses and works with them individually or in small groups to ensure their success. She is the recipient of numerous awards recognizing her contributions to education.

For the 2006-2007 school year, her students' reading scores went from the 52 percent benchmark in the fall to 91 percent in the spring. For the 2007-2008 school year, her kindergarteners started with a 58 percent benchmark and by mid-year, 85 percent had met the benchmark scores.

However, it is her love of teaching, and the love she has for her students, that defines her effective and creative teaching style that gives students a willingness to learn.

"Love. Love the children that come in your door every day," Sanders advises other educators.

Patrice McCrary, who has been a colleague and friend of Sanders for over a decade, nominated Sanders for this year's award.

"I've had the honor and privilege of team teaching with her. This is our 11th year together, and I have never seen anybody who puts more into their teaching or loves their students more than Ms. Sanders does," McCrary said.

Each year since 2004, teachers across all grade levels and disciplines are honored in the fall as American Stars of Teaching based on their success in improving academic performance and making a difference in their students' lives.

Margaret Spellings, the Secretary of Education, acknowledged the outstanding teaching style that Sanders brings to her students.

"Teachers like Laura Sanders combine a passion for teaching with high expectations that every child can learn," Spellings said. "We at the U.S. Department of Education are proud to recognize these dedicated, hard-working professionals, who are committed to closing the achievement gap and challenging every child to achieve his or her potential."

Her former students are walking examples of her success and her passion for teaching. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join with me in recognizing Laura Sanders's unwavering dedication to education, her community, and Kentucky.

EXPANSION OF THE VERDE VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I am pleased to relate some good news from my State of Arizona. It is good news for Arizonans who live in the Verde Valley, which lies between Phoenix and Flagstaff.