

one that is durable and sustainable; in other words, that represents a real resolution of some of the issues in conflict and that also deals with the smuggling into Gaza of additional weapons which are being used to attack innocent civilians in Israel.

I know Secretary Rice will be expressing exactly this position. Yes, America wants a cease-fire but, no, not one that leads nowhere. We want a cease-fire that is durable and sustainable and will include a ban on smuggling, activities to carry out a ban on smuggling of weapons by Hamas in Gaza.

I am very pleased, very encouraged that as the initial action of this Senate this year, the majority leader, Senator REID, and the Republican leader, Senator MCCONNELL, are working together in a bipartisan way—totally bipartisan way—to bring before this body, hopefully in the next day or two, a resolution that does exactly what Senator KYL has said: to express our unwavering commitment to the security, well-being, and survival of the State of Israel and recognizing its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against terrorism, that will reiterate again that Hamas must end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and hopefully do what the Palestinian Authority has done, which is to accept the right of Israel to exist and renounce terrorism and to begin to work toward a two-state peaceful solution.

This resolution really will, in essence, I think, say, as Senator KYL has said, in this hour of crisis to the people of Israel, our allies, that we will stand with you, and also say to the peace-loving Palestinian people that we stand with you, too, and we continue to support a two-state solution—Israel and a Palestinian state—living in peace one against the other, but the Government of the United States—the Secretary of State, the President, but the Secretary of State who is at the United Nations is not speaking simply for the executive branch of Government but that the Senate, and we have reason to believe our colleagues in the other body, the House, will have an opportunity to say to not just the Israelis we stand with you, but to say to the world community that we as the representatives of the people of America, across party lines, stand together with Secretary Rice as she expresses the position of our Government: Yes, a cease-fire, but only one that is sustainable and durable and deals with the smuggling of additional weapons into Gaza. This will be critically important.

I thank our leaders on both sides. I thank Senator KYL for the work he has done. Again, it has been a privilege to work with him.

I also say in a larger context that there is a lot of speculation about why Hamas broke the cease-fire and initiated the rocket fire against Israel deeper into Israel than they have ever done before. I do think, as Senator KYL suggested, that the answer to that

question probably comes as much or more from Tehran than it does from Gaza City and Hamas; that Hamas has become an agent of the Iranian Government. It is trained and supplied by the Iranians and secondarily by the Syrians. Therefore, there is a larger conflict being played out.

Iran is noted by our State Department to be the most significant state sponsor of terrorism. The leaders of Iran regularly not only call for the extermination of the State of Israel, but also lead tens of thousands in Tehran and elsewhere in Iran in chants of “death to America, death to America.” We have long since learned from the lessons of history that you cannot simply ignore statements that seem so extreme and fanatical that they are unbelievable because very often the people making them do believe them, and given the chance, as we have seen from Osama bin Laden in recent times, who told us throughout the nineties exactly what he intended to do—he happened to have done it on 9/11, but he did it earlier in other places—we have to take these threats seriously.

I want to say that a precipitous cease-fire simply for the sake of a cease-fire will allow Hamas to claim a victory. A victory for Hamas is not simply a victory for Hamas; it is a victory for Iran. And a defeat for Hamas, which is in reach if we allow the Israeli action to continue, is a defeat for Iran and a victory for the United States and for the forces of democracy as against terrorism and for the forces of moderation and the rule of law in the Islamic world as against fanaticism and violence.

This is all that is being played out. This is why I am so encouraged this resolution is coming forward. It is, yes, a statement of support for our ally Israel, but it is also a statement of policy for the Members of the Senate, across party lines, and I hope with an overwhelmingly positive vote that says the security of the United States is on the line in how this conflict ends. We cannot let it end in a way that strengthens Hamas and Iran.

I repeat, there has been a lot of speculation: Did Hamas break the cease-fire because of the end of the Bush administration? There has been some interesting speculation that has said the best thing that could happen for the incoming Obama administration is that Hamas be defeated here because then whatever happens between the new administration and Iran, Iran will not approach that next chapter with a sense of triumphant, but the country would have seen one of its major clients and agents of terrorism defeated.

We have the opportunity to speak to all that on this resolution in the days ahead. Most immediately, I hope we will speak to the Members of the Security Council and in the most direct way say: We stand with President Bush; we stand with Secretary Rice. This is not simply the position of a few people at the top of the executive branch of our

Government. This position the American Government has taken with regard to the crisis in Gaza is the position embraced by an overwhelming majority of Members of both parties of both Houses.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

PAROCHIAL SPENDING

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I would like to be recognized for a period of time. The majority leader has been very gracious to offer me an opportunity to have some discussions about some amendments that he is going to possibly allow on a bill that he is going to introduce this evening.

I wanted to take some time now rather than later so that we would not keep staff here, and that way we could be efficient with our time. I want to talk about several things. I want to preface it with a statement, that I have been very pleased to see a man I respect a great deal, even though not in office as of yet, but the President-elect, be very firm in the principles he outlined as he ran for President and now is about to be sworn into that office.

One of the themes that has characterized his campaign and has characterized him ever since I have known him has been the idea of hope and change. So I, like many other Americans, look forward in great anticipation to the leadership that will be brought forth in the next few weeks and what that means to the millions of Americans who are going to look to Washington this month with a level of hope and excitement that we have not seen in this country in decades.

While most of the attention is going to be focused on the White House, the institution at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, this Congress, will arguably have a greater role in determining whether President-elect Obama's invocation of change is remembered as an election slogan or a true new era in American politics. My hope and prayer is it is a new era.

While many commentators have noted, with some justification, the concepts such as hope and change were never defined much and were not given a specificity during the campaign, I believe the American people have already defined those concepts very clearly in their hearts and minds.

I believe what hope, change, and optimism represent to the average voter is very simple: It is a real expectation that Washington will be different. Voters have not undergone an ideological

shift nearly so much as they are demanding that Government be more competent, that we be more mature, that we be less corrupt, and that we be less selfish. That last part is one of the things that has driven us to do things that are not very good. The concept of self-promotion, the concept of promoting one's career at the expense of our country.

I believe what both parties in Congress must do, and do very quickly, is ask themselves the hard question of why Congress has a historic low approval rating of 9 percent. Why do we have an approval rating of 9 percent? That is according to a recent Rasmussen Poll.

Both parties are accustomed to analyzing what they and the other party did right or wrong in recent election cycles, but yet neither party has come to terms with the fundamental public rejection of how Congress as an institution has governed and behaved in recent decades.

In many respects the American people understand us far better than we understand ourselves. While politicians tend to believe the public is put off by ideologic debate, what alienates voters is the truly debilitating division in Congress between statesmen and those who view reelection as the ultimate goal.

Careerism is not driven by any set of ideas but by pure parochialism and the short-term pursuit of power for power's sake. The real division, then, that blocks progress and commonsense solutions is not between ideas or parties but between every Member's self-promoted interests.

The American people understand this intuitively, which is why Congress has had historic low approval ratings long before we entered this recession. What the public knows is that a Congress that debates ideas tends to develop the best solutions, while a Congress that is driven by careerism and parochialism builds bridges to nowhere and fails to conduct oversight over entities like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

In short, the American people can handle serious debate, but they cannot handle incompetence, corruption, stupidity, and self-interest put above that of the Nation. Congress's handling of an economic stimulus bill will no doubt be an early test. Although the policy may be suspect, Congress seems willing to try to avoid embarrassing the new President by turning the package into an orgy of parochial porkbarrel spending. He said today there will be no earmarks in the stimulus package.

Congress's real test, though, will come next and will be repeated hundreds of times over the next 4 years with each piece of legislation. So far Congress has signaled little desire for a long-term commitment to change. Some would ask why would I say that? I would say that because here in a little while this evening we are going to reintroduce a bill that nobody knows right now how many other bills it has

in it—that is going to be the first order of business of this Congress—that allocates \$10 billion, some to some very worthy projects but tons of that money to projects that do not have a priority anywhere close to what we ought to be doing.

This is an omnibus lands bill that indulges the worst habits of a parochial Congress. The bill, which is a holdover from the last Congress, includes such things as a \$3 million road to nowhere through a wildlife refuge, a \$1 billion water project—\$1 billion—designed to assure that 500 salmon will be repopulated. It does not take long to divide 500 salmon into \$1 billion to see that what we have is \$2 million a salmon. They are worth more than gold. There is \$3.5 million to give to the City of St. Augustine, FL, so they can prepare a celebration 6 years from now to recognize their 450th birthday. I hardly see, in the midst of the economic times we face, how that can be a priority for the Nation as a whole. I know it is a priority from a parochial standpoint, but is it in the best interest of the Nation?

It has been claimed that this bill is noncontroversial, and it should pass essentially without amendment, without debate. However, it is to note that over 100 different organizations on both the left side of the political spectrum and the right side of the political spectrum are opposed to this bill because it is controversial, a point noted by the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

The earmarks in this bill have angered many groups, as has the significant, anti-energy, more foreign dependence on oil programs that are in this bill. This bill contains a provision that will eliminate 8.8 trillion cubic feet of known natural gas reserves, proven reserves, today that we will not be able to take for our consumption. What that means is we are going to import 8.8 trillion feet of natural gas because we are going to say: You cannot have this.

It also contains 300 million barrels of proven oil that we are no longer going to take. We just went from \$146 oil to \$35 oil, \$40 today. If we have learned anything, we ought to be about as much energy self-sufficiency as we can. The controversy over whether we get off fossil fuels is a debate for another time. But no one can deny the necessity of us discontinuing sending our fortunes to countries that are supplying us oil and are also ultimately our enemies.

The energy resources walled off by this bill will match the annual production levels of our two largest natural gas-producing States, Alaska and Texas. My worry about bringing this bill—and, again, I am thankful the majority leader has reached out that we might be able to offer amendments—is, what does this send as a signal to the American public? Here is what it sends. It says: There may be change in the White House, but there is absolutely no change in Congress. Why would we

bring a bill that is going to spend \$10 billion of our money—at least \$9 billion of that is not a priority in terms of the priorities facing this Nation—why would we bring that to the floor as the first order of business of the 111th Congress? The only reason we could be bringing it to the floor is because it makes us look good at home with multiple parochial projects.

If our country has a failing that will cripple us forever, it is the fact that we have allowed parochialism, not the oath we saw all new Members and newly reelected Members take today, where we uphold the Constitution. What we do is, we uphold the future of our own political careers.

History is interesting. The 1994 Republican revolution unraveled not because they made a lot of big mistakes—some were made—but because Republicans made a ton of little mistakes they didn't realize they were making. The new and expanded majority will realize that with greater numbers comes a greater share of the responsibility and blame for whatever happens in this country. If we go back to that 9-percent approval rating, it has to do with this: Congress, we don't believe you are going to do at every turn, at every opportunity, what is in the best long-term interests for this Nation. And we are going to prove it. Because this bill ultimately will probably pass out of this Chamber and be passed, and we are going to spend, at a time when we are going to have a \$1 trillion deficit this year, another \$800 billion trying to stimulate the economy. We are going to say: Priority doesn't matter but parochialism does. Looking good at home matters more than the long-term interests of the country, matters more than the financial future of our grandchildren—my political career, my party, me, me, me.

The historical basis of our country is built on sacrifice. It is built on sacrifice by one generation for the generations that follow. Our political history used to be that as well. My worry, my concern is we can't live up to the hope and the change the President-elect has set before us. By bringing this bill to the floor as the first order of business in the 111th Congress, we have confirmed to the American public that business as usual is business as usual, that we don't recognize the severity of the situation we find ourselves in, that we are not going to change our habits, that we will continue to promote those things that promote us rather than promote the long-term good and benefit of the country. It is pure selfishness. It is saying what I want and what I need and my political future or my State has to come above the long-term interests and the best interests of this wonderful country.

The real challenge doesn't come from any of the parties. It comes from parochialism. The public has told Congress it is time to start acting in the best interest of the country rather than the best interest of our next election. The

sooner Congress realizes change requires a cultural shift in both parties, the sooner that change will come.

I would like to spend a moment outlining a few components of this bill. We have not actually gotten to see the bill, but I have been told by the majority leader that we have added, I think, 12 or 13 other bills to it. But from what we have known in the past, let me go through and explain to the American public what is in this bill.

The national parks today face a severe shortage of money to maintain them at their current level. It is about \$9.8 billion. In this bill we add four new national parks. The U.S. Arizona Memorial in Hawaii is sinking. The visitors center is sinking. We haven't put the money in to repair it, but yet we are going to create more national parks that will further dilute the maintenance budget of the National Park Service so we can't even maintain what we have. We have a \$700 million backlog just on The National Mall in Washington. We didn't address any of that in terms of the priority of fixing that. Yet we are going to add four new national parks.

We are going to add 10 new heritage areas. It is great for us to protect and think about the environment. But we never talk about how that impacts property rights, one of the rights given to us as our Nation was created. We are going to threaten that area. We are going to threaten through eminent domain. We are going to threaten through councils that will impact individual ownership of what you can do with your own property because you might be in proximity to a heritage area. We have 14 studies that would create or expand future national parks; in other words, 14 more. That is what we are funding in this bill. We don't have the money to take care of the parks we have today, but yet we are going to put into this and spend money to potentially create 14 more.

There are 17 provisions in this bill that will totally prohibit any exploration, oil extraction, coal extraction, natural gas extraction from 2.98 million acres in this country, many of which have proven reserves underlying. There are 53 rivers that are designated or portions of which are designated as scenic rivers. We have a great scenic river in Oklahoma called the Illinois. I am glad it is a scenic river. But with scenic river designation comes a trampling on the rights of people who are far away from it. We didn't change scenic rivers designation in light of our energy needs. Once a river is designated a scenic river and we need to move natural gas or a coal slurry or oil from point A to point B, we are totally prohibited from ever doing that on a scenic river. So it is another strike at any sort of increasing in our independence on energy because we are going to designate scenic rivers. Why not designate scenic rivers with an option to make sure we don't handcuff ourselves when it comes to energy?

There are 65 new Federal wilderness areas. Here is an important matter we came across as we studied this bill. In the United States today, right now, before this bill, there are 107 million acres of wilderness. All the developed land—cities, suburbs, towns—across the whole rest of the country is only 106 million acres. We are going to be adding to that and limiting our opportunity to the resources we have.

There are 1,082 pages in the bill. I understand it is now 1,200 pages. There are 1.2 million acres in Wyoming that are withdrawn from mineral leasing and exploration. There are 1.93 million acres of Federal wilderness land. There are 3 million additional acres withdrawn from leasing and energy exploration. There are 331 million barrels of oil that we know are there and we are never going to take. We are just going to help those who drive up our energy costs because we are going to know it is there but we can't touch it because we are going to make it off-limits. There are 592 spending and 15 new State and local water projects. There is nothing wrong with State and local water projects, as long as they are a priority, but these are earmarked, specific projects for specific Members. There is \$10 billion of total spending money we don't have. We are going to borrow it.

There are 8.8 trillion cubic feet of natural gas that we know is there that we will never touch. What the Department of Interior tells us is there is much more there, but these are the proven reserves.

I will end my conversation, only to be continued in a more thorough manner as the bill actually comes to the floor by asking the American public: What would they hope we would do in terms of trying to change, trying to meet what they see as the problems in front of us? Would it be that we would be about passing things that are small but make us look good that we can't pay for or would it be that we should attend and address the pressing and also long-term needs of the country?

It is about trust. The reason we have a 9-percent approval rating is because we are not trusted. We are addicts. We are self-indulgent addicts over our power.

My query to the body and to the American people is, will you hold us accountable? You have to do an intervention with us, each one of us, every time we are home: Are you being a good steward with the limited dollars we have? Are you making choices that may not look good for you as a politician but are truly the best choice for the country? Are you putting yourself second and our country first? Are you acting as a statesman or are you acting as somebody who wants to get re-elected?

The real paradox is, with trust comes confidence. With that confidence comes the involvement and support of the very people we actually do represent.

We have a choice. I hope the introduction of this bill does not portend

that we will not take President-elect Obama's lead and offer the American people real hope, real change, that we will get away from our addicted self-indulgence to look good at home and start making the hard, tough decisions that will right our ship and put our country first. Anything less than that says the people who took their oath today and those of us who have taken it before, we violate it. We raise our hand and put one on the Bible and say we will uphold it, but then when it comes to the first tough choice, look good at home or do what is in the long-term best interests of the country, we swivel, we back down, and we opt for the short term, the self-aggrandizement, and the stroke on our own back. We are better than that. The people in this body are better than that.

My hope is we can prove to the American people over the next 6 to 9 months that we got the message, that it is about making the tough choices. It is about doing what is right in the long term. It is not about what makes us or our party look good; it is about what is best for the country as a whole.

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

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I would raise objection to the filing of the bill at the desk, the Bingaman land package.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO CHARLES KIEFFER

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I rise today to commend and congratulate one of the best and brightest gentlemen I have ever had the privilege of employing. That man is Mr. Charles Kieffer who has served as staff director of the Senate Appropriations Committee for the last 2 years, and as deputy staff director for 6 years prior to that.

Chuck Kieffer is a marvel of intelligence, wisdom, tact, coolness, and an extraordinary knowledge of appropriations and budget matters. He is personable, polite, and a pleasure to work with. He has been invaluable to me, to the leadership of the Senate, and to all