

\$100 million, is about how much we will spend every single day on interest on the stimulus bill we passed a while back. Mr. President, \$100 million in savings is certainly good. It amounts to about 33 cents for every single American. Compare that to entitlement spending where, in order to meet all our current and future entitlement promises, we would have to extract \$495,000 from every American household—\$495,000 from every American household. The way I see it, there is simply no question as to where the priority should be.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CHRISTOPHER R. HILL TO BE AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Nomination of Christopher R. Hill, of Rhode Island, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Iraq.

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

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I know we are here to discuss the nomination of Christopher Hill to be our Ambassador to Iraq. I want to talk about that for a few minutes.

But I have to say, as I was sitting there listening to the distinguished minority leader complaining about the interest we are paying on the debt, I almost choked on the absurdity and irony of the situation in which we find ourselves. The reason we have to have an enormous stimulus plan is because of the mismanagement of our entire economy and Government over the course of the last 8 years. Not once—the Senator from Rhode Island will know this—not once did the President of the United States George Bush veto a spending bill—not once. It was under the leadership of the Republicans as the chairs of all the essential spending committees of the Congress. They had the House, they had the Senate, they had the White House. During that period of time, they took a \$5.6 trillion surplus and turned it into a \$10 trillion debt and about a \$5.6 trillion deficit—the most irresponsible period of fiscal management in the history of this country. Not to mention what they did with respect to the management of the regulatory process of our country,

where, as we know, deals were allowed to be made on Wall Street that had no business being made. Regulators were taken out of the industry itself and it was like putting the fox in charge of the chicken coop in the most overt sense possible, so regulation went out the window.

We are paying the price for that today. The American taxpayer is paying the price. The average homeowner is paying the price. Retirees are paying the price. Workers—unprecedented numbers of people laid off because of the hollow, empty Ponzi scheme investments and commission schemes that were engaged in on Wall Street and elsewhere. It is staggering.

To listen to them come to the floor with no alternative plan—they don't offer any alternative as to how you put America back to work. They just say: No, don't spend this money. Oh, my God, we are building up a terrible deficit—despite the fact that for 8 years they were silent about the deficit. There is something in public where you earn the right, sort of a moral level of rectitude or of justification for saying the things you say. I have to tell you, it is hard to listen to some of these folks, who were so much a part of that, without even accepting responsibility for it. They don't come down and say, you know, we made a blooper of a mistake or, boy, did I misjudge this or that or whatever. It is a wholesale flip-flop transition that is absolutely staggering in its proportions. Judging by the polling numbers on the President reflecting the decisions he is making, tough decisions about how to get the country moving again, I think the American people get it. I hope we are going to spend our time more profitably around here than playing the traditional political game of delay and obfuscation and those tactics.

The reason I mention that is the reason we are on the floor today debating the nomination of Christopher Hill is more of the same. It is exactly part of the same process of politics as usual in Washington, DC. There is no reason that for the last 2 weeks, while the Congress of the United States was on its Easter break—many Members back home or traveling the world, dealing with a lot of issues—there is no reason we did not have an ambassador in Iraq, which is what General Odierno wants, what General Petraeus wants, what the President wants, what the American troops need and deserve.

Time and again, Senators have come to the floor and said there is no military solution in Iraq. The reason we are drawing down our numbers of troops there now is to transfer authority to the Iraqis themselves so our troops can come home and so they can assume responsibility for their country. As all of us know, that cannot happen completely and properly until and unless the political issues of Iraq are resolved. As the Washington Post noted, we have not had an ambassador in Iraq since last February. So we have

gone all this time with the principal issue which needs to be resolved, which is political, without the principal player, who is the Ambassador.

It is stunning to me that a few Senators have decided not just to register their opposition—which they can do. They have a right to do that, come to the floor, speak against the nomination and let's have a vote. He is going to be overwhelmingly supported to be the next ambassador to Iraq. But we will have delayed and dithered and who knows what opportunity may have been delayed or lost as a consequence of our not having the principal political player on the ground in Iraq in order to help negotiate.

The fact is, Chris Hill, when you look at the record, even some of the arguments that are being made about him by the few who oppose him do not stand up. They do not stand up to scrutiny. In over three decades of service at the State Department, as ambassador to complicated, difficult parts of the world—Ambassador to Macedonia and Poland, to South Korea—Chris Hill has proven himself to be one of America's most talented diplomats. Today we are asking him to take on one of the most challenging diplomatic posts, one that if you look at his record through the years he has been preparing for in different ways in each of these different posts.

Senator LUGAR yesterday joined in the effort to get this vote and to approve this nomination. I appreciate enormously the partnership Senator LUGAR has provided for years on the Foreign Relations Committee, as a partner to now-Vice President BIDEN, and now working with me and with the rest of the committee. Senator LUGAR believes in calling things the way he sees them and in making judgments based on the facts—above all, in trying to have a foreign policy presence for the United States that is bipartisan, where the politics end at the water's edge. The fact is, Ambassador Hill's decades of diplomatic experience, as Senator LUGAR has pointed out, give him the skills that matter the most in Iraq—the ability to achieve our objectives in a complex, challenging, sectarian, volatile, complicated environment.

This is exactly the experience Chris Hill brings to this effort. He was one of the principal players in helping to resolve the civil wars in the Balkans. Many of us remember how difficult and, frankly, gridlocked that particular situation looked. He has worked on multiparty international negotiations. He has dealt with hostile regimes in the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program. Several times he has conducted his diplomatic efforts alongside a sizable military presence.

His next assignment will require him to bring every single one of these experiences to the table. He will have to do it working against the clock as we finally bring our troops home from Iraq.

We have set a timetable. It is a timetable that the military and Defense Department have agreed with, and it is one that many people believe will require the Iraqis to stand up for themselves in ways that they had been unwilling to do previously. But the fact is that to properly effect the transition that is going to be needed to bring those troops home, it is going to require more diplomacy, smarter diplomacy, and more urgent diplomacy. Now more than ever we need to enlist Iraq's neighbors in working constructively to stabilize Iraq, and that includes Iran and Syria.

Iraq today still presents extraordinary challenges. Nobody should believe that because we have announced the troops are going to start to come home that Iraq is a done deal. It is not a done deal. It is still tricky, it is volatile, explosive. There are very complicated issues such as the oil revenues, the Federal Constitution, the resolution of the city of Kirkuk and the Kurds' interests. All are these are political solutions that need to be arrived at. I believe Chris Hill brings the skills necessary to help us to be able to do that.

A few weeks ago, the Foreign Relations Committee strongly endorsed Chris Hill's nomination. As I said a few moments ago, I absolutely respect the right of any Senator to object to a nominee and to want to make their points about that nominee. But when you know you do not have the votes to legitimately block a nomination, to delay that nomination for critical weeks I think borders on the irresponsible. It makes this institution look a little silly in some ways. The fact is, if you look at the issues that have been raised, those issues have been consistently and accurately answered on the record. Let me go through a couple of them.

Concerns have been raised about Ambassador Hill's record dealing with North Korea. Let me address that directly. First, some have attacked Chris Hill for not pressing hard enough against North Korea's atrocious human rights record. My friend Senator BROWNBACK in particular has been outspoken in this regard, arguing that Ambassador Hill reneged on a promise made at a July 31, 2008 Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

Well, Ambassador Hill has spoken directly to that before our committee in answer to a question he was asked by Senator LUGAR. Yesterday, I asked that portions of Ambassador Hill's Senate testimony be submitted for the RECORD so Senators could read that today in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and make their own judgment.

But Ambassador Hill did the following in answer to a question from Senator BROWNBACK: He did consent to invite the Special Envoy for North Korean human rights, a fellow by the name of Jay Lefkowitz, to future negotiations, except those that were specifically dealing with nuclear disar-

mament. That is appropriate. Those are two totally different portfolios. Mr. Lefkowitz was responsible for human rights, but what was being negotiated was the nuclear component, as Ambassador Hill explained at his nomination hearing. The problem is that the talks with North Korea never got beyond the issue of nuclear disarmament. It never got to the broader, more general issues that were before them.

Furthermore, the call on whether to include the Assistant Secretary for Human Rights in the six-party talks was made above Chris Hill's pay grade. That was not a Chris Hill decision, that was a decision for the President of the United States and the Secretary of State.

Let me tell you precisely what Secretary of State Condi Rice said about Mr. Lefkowitz and his efforts. Publicly in the New York Times, she is quoted rebuking the Human Rights Assistant Secretary in a public way. It is rather extraordinary that that would happen. But here is what she said:

He is the human rights envoy. That is what he knows. That is what he does. He doesn't work on the Six-Party talks. He does not know what is going on in the Six-Party talks. And he certainly has no say what American policy will be in the Six-Party talks.

That is not a Democrat talking; that is his boss, the Secretary of State, Condi Rice, talking about his interference in the process. And Chris Hill was taking daily instructions, as he ought to be as a diplomat, from Secretary of State Condi Rice and from the President of the United States.

So, you know, this is ridiculous that we are here tying up a nomination over something Chris Hill had absolutely no power to fundamentally change. It was not his right to make that decision. He did not make that decision. He followed his instructions. If Senator BROWNBACK has a complaint, his complaint is with Secretary of State Condi Rice and President George Bush.

Lost in this is also the fact that Chris Hill was extraordinarily outspoken in his criticism of human rights in North Korea. He was plainspoken with respect to that, and he was diligent in his effort to improve human rights in North Korea. Listening to some of his critics, you might get the impression that Chris Hill was somehow indifferent to the suffering of the North Korean people. Nothing could, in fact, be further from the truth.

First, he expressed, on a number of occasions, using the plainest language, that North Korea's human rights record was "abysmal," making clear in public and private that North Korea cannot fully join the international community short of significant improvement on this issue.

Yesterday, my colleague from Kansas showed pictures comparing North Korean gulags to Nazi concentration camps. He warned that he must not be silent about North Korea's conduct. He is right. We must not be silent. Most

importantly, Chris Hill agrees with him, and Chris Hill was not silent. He made it plain in open testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in July of 2008. Let me quote from that testimony because it speaks eloquently to Ambassador Hill's character and to his concern for the innocent victims of North Korea's repressive system. Here is what Chris Hill said in 2008, well before being nominated for this job, before the Armed Services Committee of the Senate:

The DPRK's human rights record is, quite frankly, abysmal. And every day that the people of North Korea continue to suffer represents an unacceptable continuation of oppression. I have seen—I've personally seen satellite images of the DPRK's extensive prison camp system. This is truly a scar on the Korean Peninsula . . .

So he refers specifically to the photos Senator BROWNBACK showed yesterday.

He goes on to say:

It is reported that North Koreans suffer torture, forced abortion, and in some cases, execution. The dangers faced by North Korean refugees who flee their country in search of a better life, often only to face suffering or eventual repatriation with a very uncertain fate, are certainly, or are similarly, unacceptable. The United States' dedication to improving the lives of North Korean people will never wane, and we will continue to seek all available opportunities to improve this heartbreaking situation.

We have repeatedly made clear to the DPRK that human rights is not only a U.S. priority—frankly, it's an international priority. It is a part of the standard of joining the international community. We've emphasized how much we value the advancement of human rights in all societies and our need to have this and other outstanding issues of concern discussed in the normalization process.

So Chris Hill could not have been more clear, time and again, in his negotiations, in his public comments, in his testimony to the Senate, about the human rights situation.

Second, Chris Hill worked closely with his colleagues to implement the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004, sponsored by our friend, the Senator from Kansas. Consistent with that act, Ambassador Hill secured the admission of the first North Korean refugees into the United States in 2006. He helped ensure the safe passage of asylum seekers from the north who were detained in other countries. He backed increased funding of radio broadcasting activities and support for defector organizations in South Korea, regularly meeting with North Koreans who made it out alive.

Finally, it was the team of Ambassador Hill and USAID official John Brause that secured unprecedented access for reputable U.S. nongovernmental organizations to deliver carefully monitored food aid to North Korean children. In my opinion, there can be no higher accomplishment in the field of human rights than to prevent the starvation of children. It was not easy for Hill and Brause to convince North Korea to permit Mercy Corps, World Vision, Samaritan's Purse, Global Resources Service, and Christian

Friends of Korea to send Korean-speaking foreign staff to the countryside of North Korea in order to monitor food aid deliveries. But they did that. They accomplished that.

The fact that several of these NGOs are Christian charitable organizations makes this accomplishment even more remarkable given North Korea's poor record on religious freedom issues.

So Chris Hill's record on North Korean human rights is, frankly, unassailable, it is admirable, and we do him a disservice if that is not acknowledged here in the Senate.

What is more, Chris Hill achieved these gains inside the limitations of a policy that was shaped from above by his superiors in the White House, one that properly focused on denuclearization first, while also trying to address a wide range of other concerns, including human rights, missile proliferation, counterfeiting, drug smuggling, and other illicit activities. From the early days of the Bush administration, the focus was always clearly on security issues. In announcing the results of the Bush administration's North Korea policy review on June 6, 2001, the President instructed his security team to focus on North Korea's nuclear activities, its missile programs, and its conventional military posture. There was no explicit mention of human rights in President Bush's policy at that point in time, although there was a pledge to help the North Korean people, ease sanctions, and encourage progress toward north-south reconciliation. But the focus of the administration at that point was national security. As Secretary Rice testified to in the Foreign Relations Committee back in January of 2005:

Our goal now has to be to make the Six-Party mechanism work for dealing with the North Korean nuclear program and then hopefully for dealing with the greater problem of managing this dangerous regime.

This was 6 weeks before Chris Hill was named envoy to the six-party talks, and it was 3 months before he was even named Assistant Secretary of State. So what are we doing debating the question of Chris Hill and this policy, when the policy was put in place by the President well before he even became Assistant Secretary of State? He followed the policy directives.

My friend Senator BROWNBACK said yesterday that our North Korean policy was a Chris Hill policy. That is not the case, and the record proves that is not the case. The decision to focus on the complete verifiable and irreversible elimination of North Korea's nuclear program was American policy, it was U.S. policy well before Chris Hill arrived, and it remains America's policy today.

Those who criticize Chris Hill for not accomplishing more in the area of human rights should also appreciate that he was, in many cases, hamstrung. I think he would have liked to have gone further in some regards, but his limitations were to the six-party talks,

when many of us were pressing for bilateral talks, I might add. I remember in the 2004 campaign, in the debates with President Bush, I advocated moving toward bilateral as the way to get things done. And the President said no. He stood by the concept of six-party talks. For several years, we went on with that. But ultimately it was through the administration's eventual transition to a bilateral set of meetings that we actually made progress and accomplished what was accomplished in that relationship, tenuous as it was.

So Chris Hill was implementing the policy of President Bush, Secretary Rice, National Security Adviser Hadley, Vice President Dick Cheney, and those who had the final say on North Korean policy. That final say did not then rest with a professional foreign career officer who was implementing the policy of his superiors.

I am also troubled that some of the criticisms of America's policy toward North Korea seem to carry with them the implication that Chris Hill does not care on a personal level about human rights. Well, this runs counter to a lifetime of concern and achievement everywhere he has served.

In Kosovo, Ambassador Hill advocated NATO intervention to prevent ethnic cleansing. When more than a quarter million refugees from Kosovo flooded Macedonia in 1999, it was Ambassador Hill who worked tirelessly to keep the border open and set up dozens of refugee camps across Macedonia, protecting every last refugee and pressuring Macedonia's leadership to keep taking refugees even as they complained that their country could hold no more, even as the number of refugees rose to 10 percent of Macedonia's population, with a wave of Muslim refugees entering a delicately balanced majority-Christian, multireligious society. That is what Chris Hill accomplished. He managed to protect the rights of those people, and he did so under enormously difficult circumstances. He ought to get credit for that. The folks who are sounding the drumbeat of human rights ought to be giving him credit for the record of what he accomplished in those difficult circumstances.

Another particular story shows Chris Hill's commitment to human rights. In the middle of the night, a crowd had gathered in a refugee camp and was preparing to harm two Roma families in that camp. Chris Hill personally risked his own safety to stand in front of that crowd and allow the families who were being targeted to evacuate while he stood there. Those present said it was an impressive display of moral and physical courage.

So while we may disagree with the American policy, let's not allow those disagreements to degenerate into personal accusations against a man who has given his entire life to serving America's interests and ideals and has a decades-long record on human rights to prove it.

Simply put, Chris Hill is one of the best diplomats we have. That is why Senator LUGAR expressed his support and spoke of his outstanding diplomatic and managerial skills. Vice President BIDEN has referred to Ambassador Hill as "one of the gems we have in the Foreign Service."

For years, many in this body have argued that we ought to follow the advice of our commanders on the ground in Iraq. How many times have we had a debate in which people have said: Listen to the generals. Listen to the commanders in Iraq. Well, here is what they are saying:

GEN Ray Odierno, the top military commander in Iraq, said:

Hopefully we will have an ambassador out here very soon. It would certainly help to have an ambassador here as quickly as possible.

The Pentagon's top spokesman went even further. He said:

It is vital that we get an ambassador in Baghdad as soon as possible because there is no substitute for having the President's envoy, the U.S. Ambassador, in place and on the job.

Our Ambassadors have also been unanimous in their support. Ryan Crocker, Zalmay Khalilzad, John Negroponte, the three wartime American Ambassadors to Iraq, wrote a letter together urging a quick confirmation for Chris Hill. They wrote Hill "brings over three decades of experience to this task, especially in the areas of national security, peace-building, and post-conflict reconstruction. We need his experience during this critical time in Iraq. . . . The issues are pressing and the President must have his personal representative on the scene now. We encourage the Senate to act promptly to provide its advice and consent."

One of the principal reasons GEN David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker were able to accomplish so much is because they worked together so closely. I know General Petraeus's successor, General Odierno, is looking forward to building a similar relationship with Ambassador Hill, which explains why he is outspoken in the need to send Chris Hill to Baghdad in a timely manner.

So this is not a time for delay. Chris Hill has promised to leave for Iraq within 24 hours of being confirmed, if possible. I believe we should have Chris Hill on a plane tomorrow to Iraq. And I hope my colleagues—I see none of them in the Chamber who oppose this nomination. We are going to try to move to a vote, let me say to my colleagues. If there are people who oppose this nomination, they ought to be here to do so because we are going to try to move to a vote in the early afternoon and not delay this nomination any further.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I rise today to join the distinguished

chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in support of Ambassador Christopher Hill as our next United States Ambassador to Iraq.

In helping to negotiate an end to the crisis in the Balkans, in leading three Embassies, and in working to disarm North Korea's nuclear weapons program, Ambassador Hill has gleaned invaluable experience and given invaluable service in over 31 years of diplomatic service to this country.

Ambassador Hill is a fellow son of the Foreign Service. My father and grandfather were Foreign Service officers, and I have some experience of the sense of calling and dedication that background provides. He is decent, honorable, and snarled right now in Senate politics in a way, frankly, that is less of a reflection on him than it is a reflection on us.

He is also a fellow Rhode Islander, with a family home in Little Compton, RI. His family moved there when he was in the fifth grade, when United States diplomats, including his father, were expelled from Haiti. He attended the Moses Brown preparatory school in Providence and later returned to the Ocean State to attend the U.S. Naval War College.

Now, at the crest of his career, he is a hero of the American Foreign Service and one of our very few most distinguished diplomats. He has shown in his career a special talent for bringing together ethnically divided peoples, a skill that will, obviously, be critical in Iraq. When the Balkans erupted in ethnic conflict, Ambassador Hill was a central player on the Clinton team that forged the Dayton Accords, the peace settlement that ended the Bosnian war.

In his book on the Dayton negotiations, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador Richard Holbrooke described Hill as "brilliant" and "fearless," praising him for being both "very cool and very passionate," and for his strong negotiating skills. These are the very traits we need in an Ambassador to Iraq.

Ambassador Hill served as Ambassador to Macedonia during a troubled time, and as a special envoy to war-torn Kosovo. He said of this conflict that "like a lot of things in life: you've got to do everything you can do" to be satisfied "that you have left no stone unturned." I am confident he will bring the same tenacity to his position as United States Ambassador for Iraq.

As Ambassador to South Korea, Christopher Hill broke diplomatic precedent and charmed the South Korean people by repeatedly visiting hotbeds of anti-American sentiment, such as universities, where he engaged in open debate with audiences. He paid his respects at a memorial for thousands of civilians fired upon by a 1980s military government. No senior U.S. official had ever before visited this memorial, and he won the respect and trust of many through this simple yet momentous gesture. A senior official with the

American Chamber of Commerce in South Korea, Tami Overby, stated:

He was here the shortest term among the six ambassadors that I've seen here in my 18 years, but [he] had the most impact.

Ambassador Hill's time in South Korea was cut short as he was tapped to head negotiations in six-party talks over North Korea's nuclear weapons program. At a time of crisis, when the Bush administration had long ignored nuclear proliferation by North Korea, Ambassador Hill successfully brought China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and other regional partners to the bargaining table. Though some of my Senate colleagues have criticized Ambassador Hill for negotiating with North Korea, his efforts there culminated in the dismantlement of the Pyongyang reactor, slowing North Korean nuclear proliferation and protecting United States and world security.

Now he is President Obama's nominee as Ambassador to Iraq. Timing, as Senator KERRY has pointed out, is crucial, and the delay is perplexing.

Let's look back to May 2005, when the Republican majority leader took to the floor to comment on the nominations of Miguel Estrada, Priscilla Owen, and Janice Rogers Brown to U.S. courts of appeals. He said then of the Senate Democratic minority:

For the first time in 214 years, they have changed the Senate's "advise and consent" responsibilities to "advise and obstruct."

Well, the shoe is on the other foot. My Republican colleagues are obstructing the nomination of our much needed United States Ambassador to Iraq.

When, in 2006, Kenneth Wainstein was nominated as the Assistant Attorney General for National Security, my colleague from Texas, Senator CORNYN, came to the floor and stated:

Obstruction from the other side of the aisle, Mr. President, is impeding efforts to improve national security.

He continued:

Democratic obstruction is impeding this effort to improve national security.

Today, Republicans are engaged in the very obstruction they criticized.

In 2007, when Michael Mukasey was nominated as Attorney General, the Republican leader came here to state:

If . . . our colleagues intentionally delay the nominee and hold him or her hostage, they will show the American people that their concern for the Department was insincere. . . . In these times, it is especially important that the Senate act promptly. We are, after all, at war.

Well, they will be the first to tell you that we are still at war, and yet on this critical appointment for our new President: obstruction.

Similarly, when it came to the Iraq surge, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle argued vehemently that we should defer to the judgment of General Petraeus and commanders on the ground in Iraq. I am not so sure about that. Civilian control of the military is a longtime and valued American tradition. But that was their argument. We heard the name of Petraeus invoked over and over and over again.

Senator McCONNELL, in March of 2007, spoke out against setting deadlines for U.S. troop withdrawals in Iraq, stating that deadlines would "interfere with the President and General Petraeus's operational authority to conduct the war in Iraq as he and his commanders see fit. It would substitute for their judgment the 535 Members of Congress."

In September of 2007, my colleague from South Carolina, Senator GRAHAM, said that ". . . to substitute the Congress's judgment for General Petraeus's judgment, is ill-advised and unwarranted."

Those of us who were here through that time remember clearly the repeated incantation of the name of Petraeus that featured so prominently in the Republican rhetoric.

Well, I suggest to my Republican colleagues, the time may now have come to heed their own advice. Last month, the U.S. military's chief spokesman, Geoff Morrell, stated:

Generals Odierno and Petraeus have come out very publicly and very forcefully in support of Ambassador Hill's nomination. I know they support it. They know him from previous assignments, they like him, they believe he is well suited to the job and are anxiously awaiting his confirmation.

What happened to the deference to General Petraeus now that he wants Ambassador Hill? And it is not just General Petraeus and General Odierno and the military establishment engaged in that theater. The last three United States Ambassadors to Iraq—all Republican appointees—Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, and Ambassador John Negroponte, have all also expressed their unequivocal support for Ambassador Hill.

There are areas outside of politics where professional respect prevails. As a former U.S. attorney and attorney general, I have seen it among prosecutors. We saw it when prosecutors of both parties rallied around the Department of Justice when the Bush administration and Attorney General Gonzales made their best efforts to ruin that great Department. The same principle applies here, the politics of this Chamber notwithstanding. The professional colleagues of Ambassador Hill know better. They know how good he is, and they know we need him there.

My distinguished colleague from Indiana, the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, also agrees. He put it well in Ambassador Hill's confirmation hearing. "We're at war," he said. "This is not a parliamentary struggle among senators with different points of view."

Senator LUGAR is right. This is not or should not be a time for bickering. This is the time to confirm our next United States Ambassador to Iraq without further delay.

Christopher Hill has served in the State Department for 31 years. As Senator KERRY, the distinguished chair of

the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations has said, he is one of our Nation's most accomplished diplomats, ready for one of our most difficult assignments. He has the votes to be confirmed. Delay now can only impede progress in Iraq's future. And it fails me to understand how that could be any Member's goal. The situation is better in Iraq, but it remains difficult.

Arab-Kurd tensions are high in the north. Sectarian groups struggle for power after January's provincial elections, and elections slated for the end of this year will be a key indicator of Iraq's democratic direction. The safety of our 146,400 men and women on the ground in Iraq, of course, is always of concern. History shows that even major gains can always be reversed. So let us get Ambassador Hill out there to lead the transition of the United States mission in Iraq from a military intervention to a much needed focus on stabilization and economic development, and to advance our Nation's interests in that troubled region.

I thank the Acting President pro tempore. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee for his advocacy and his ardent support of this nomination.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I am very grateful to the Senator from Rhode Island for his comments now, as well as his leadership on the committee. And I appreciate his coming to the floor to take time to do this.

I know Senator CARDIN has been waiting.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I take this time to urge my colleagues to confirm the nomination of Christopher Hill to be Ambassador to Iraq.

I compliment the distinguished chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator KERRY, for his comments. I agree with him on the urgency of our action. It is critically important we have a confirmed ambassador in Iraq.

I also concur in the comments of Senator LUGAR, the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee. We are at war. We should be coming together, as Senator WHITEHOUSE has pointed out, and acting on this nomination.

I am somewhat confused as to why this nomination has been held up several weeks when I think of the fact that a clear, overwhelming majority of the Members of the Senate are going to vote for Ambassador Hill's confirmation.

It is critically important we have an experienced diplomat in Iraq as our Ambassador. Christopher Hill has devoted his career to service to our country as a diplomat. He first volunteered as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon. He was Special Envoy to Kosovo, a very difficult part of the

world. He was Ambassador to Poland and Macedonia and head of the U.S. delegation to the six-party talks on North Korea. That experience will serve him well as Ambassador to Iraq. He has navigated complex regional dynamics in seemingly intractable conflicts to promote peace and development in parts of the world where we thought we could not make progress. He is exactly the type of experienced diplomat the United States needs representing our interests in Iraq. As has been pointed out, we need a career diplomat, someone who has the confidence of the community to be able to make the type of progress we need to make in Iraq.

Chris Hill has the endorsements of the three prior Ambassadors of the United States to Iraq. As Senator WHITEHOUSE pointed out, they were appointed by a Republican President. However, quite frankly, Ambassador Hill represents a nonpolitical appointment that has bipartisan support in Congress. Again, he is the right type of person at this moment to represent the interests of the United States.

Let me speak a little about the urgency of why we need to move forward now and get Ambassador Hill confirmed as our Ambassador. Mr. President, 140,000 American troops are currently in Iraq. They are entitled to have a confirmed ambassador to represent the interests of the United States in Iraq. Our soldiers are serving valiantly, and they are entitled to have all the tools at their disposal to make sure their mission succeeds. One of the most important tools is to have a confirmed U.S. Ambassador.

By August 31, 2010, America's combat mission in Iraq will end. That puts more urgency on our diplomacy. There may have been some disagreement—there was disagreement—as to the surge of U.S. troops, but there is no disagreement as to the surge and the need of a surge for U.S. diplomacy. This is a critical time for Iraq. They are going through a transition in their political environment. The United States needs to be represented by an experienced, confirmed diplomat. Chris Hill is that type of an individual.

Let me speak about a couple of the other issues, starting with the refugee issue, which I heard Senator KERRY speak about. I was recently in Syria and saw firsthand Iraqi refugees who are currently living in Syria. I have been to Jordan. I have seen Iraqi refugees who are living in Jordan. There are millions of displaced Iraqis—a couple million within Iraq, a couple million outside of Iraq, mostly in the surrounding countries—and one of the challenges to a stable Iraq will be dealing with that refugee issue. The United States has to play a critical role in that, a lead role. We know that. We need an ambassador in Iraq on the ground advising the Obama administration as to what will be the most effective policies in dealing with the displaced individuals within Iraq and the

refugees living in surrounding countries. We need an ambassador in Iraq now to represent those interests to give the President the best advice so we have our best chance of a successful mission within Iraq.

President Obama stated our strategy in Iraq "is grounded in a clear and achievable goal shared by the Iraqi people and the American people: an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant. To achieve that goal, we will work to promote an Iraqi government that is just, representative, and accountable, and that provides neither support nor safe-haven to terrorists."

I think we all agree with President Obama's goals for Iraq, but it is clear to all of us that we need a career, experienced diplomat in Iraq representing our interests at this critical moment.

Quite frankly, I don't understand the delay. I really don't. I think the vote is going to be overwhelmingly in support of his confirmation. Let's get on with it. Let's get him confirmed. As Senator KERRY has said, let's get him on a plane to Iraq as quickly as possible so he can help serve our interests as Ambassador to Iraq.

I urge my colleagues to vote for confirmation—and let's get that vote as quickly as possible—to represent the U.S. interests in Iraq.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

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

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

Mr. KAUFMAN. Madam President, I rise today in support of the nomination of Christopher Hill to be Ambassador to Iraq.

Last week, I had the very distinct privilege of joining Senator JACK REED on a trip to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to witness firsthand the remarkable contributions of our military and civilians abroad. In each and every meeting in Baghdad, we were asked about the nomination of Ambassador Hill, and it was painstakingly clear that the absence of a U.S. Ambassador creates questions regarding America's commitment to the future of Iraq.

I cannot stress enough the concern expressed by our military and civilian leadership, as well as the Iraqi Government, that there is no high-level civilian representing the United States in Iraq. It is in this regard that I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Ambassador Hill's confirmation.

Here in the Senate, we understand the intricacies of parliamentary procedures, but outside this delay is interpreted differently. It is seen by far too many as signifying a low priority, a lack of American interest, and a slight to the people of Iraq.

With the beginning of President Obama's drawdown plan and the withdrawal of American forces from major cities by this summer, we absolutely, positively need an ambassador to coordinate increased civilian efforts needed to replace our military presence.

As Iraqis take important steps to improve security, governance, economic development, and the training of police, we must have an ambassador to coordinate our efforts and continue to channel U.S. resources and support. As Iraq faces the challenge of continued sectarian tension—especially between the Arabs and the Kurds—Ambassador Hill's first task should be focusing on mitigating tensions in the north and helping the Iraqis resolve difficult questions surrounding the status of Kirkuk and the hydrocarbons law.

The future of Iraq is incumbent upon critical developments and critical milestones that were made this year, and it is incumbent upon this body—the Senate—to ensure that the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad—the largest in the world—has the leadership it needs to succeed in Iraq.

I have met with Ambassador Hill and I am positive that he is the right person for this critical task. His extensive experience in diplomacy, nation building, and conflict management—especially in the Balkans—has prepared him for the challenge of Iraq. As a member of Ambassador Holbrooke's team, Ambassador Hill was deeply engaged in the success of the Dayton peace accords in Bosnia. As Ambassador of Macedonia, he helped to ensure refugee camps were established for the Kosovar refugees. As a Special Negotiator for Kosovo, Ambassador Hill was the architect for efforts to secure human rights for the population. When those negotiations failed, he recommended NATO intervention to prevent ethnic cleansing. Ambassador Hill has been tested by some of the very biggest foreign policy challenges in recent decades. He has demonstrated time and time again that he has the skills necessary to succeed in Iraq.

The post of Ambassador to Iraq is vitally important to U.S. security interests in the region, and I am confident the Senate will soon confirm Ambassador Hill. With this in mind, I urge my colleagues who oppose this nomination to reconsider their reservations and concerns. For that reason, I wish to address a few of those concerns now because it is critical to stress the importance of protecting human rights throughout the world, and Ambassador Hill does.

The most serious allegation against Ambassador Hill is related to his alleged unwillingness to push North Korea during the Six Party Talks. I can tell my colleagues frankly that I would not support Ambassador Hill's nomination if I had any question about his commitment to human rights. But I have none. He coordinated his efforts closely with the State Department's

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. Together they worked to admit the first North Korean refugees to the United States in 2006 and expanded funding in support of North Korean human rights. This included expanded radio broadcasting efforts and support for North Korean defector organizations in South Korea.

He has intervened with foreign governments, including China, to make sure North Korean asylum seekers did not disappear into detention but could have safe transit into third countries. In public and in private, Ambassador Hill has made clear to North Korean officials that human rights are a primary concern of the United States—as important as the nuclear issue. The United States must insist that any settlement with North Korea take into account its atrocious record on human rights. Ambassador Hill was clear about the primacy of human rights in the process of negotiations.

Critics of Ambassador Hill have looked at a disappointing outcome at Six Party Talks and pointed the blame at him. It is a chilling thought, but it must be noted that without Ambassador Hill's commitment, the situation could have been far worse. In this regard, I am grateful to Ambassador Hill for all that he accomplished with a government well-known for its intransigence—clearly, the most intransigent government on the face of the Earth.

The practical diplomatic skills Ambassador Hill demonstrated in the Balkans and North Korea are what we need in Iraq. We will need his past experience with refugees and internally displaced persons. We will need his ability to interact with all parties as a fair arbitrator, and we need his experience with security issues and the training of police.

Now, more than ever, it is absolutely critical to demonstrate to the Iraqi people and the world that we value the importance of the future of Iraq. At this critical turning point, we must have a diplomat in Baghdad who can confront the many challenges and provide the necessary leadership for our mission. It is in this regard that I strongly support the nomination of Ambassador Chris Hill, not only because he is an accomplished diplomat but because he is the right person for the task at hand in Iraq.

I yield the floor and 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. BROWNBACK. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BROWNBACK. Madam President, today is a sad day in the history of the world. It is Holocaust Remembrance Day. This month marks the 65th anniversary of a daring escape from Auschwitz by a teenager who then revealed

the truth about the death camps, only to be ignored by the allied leadership.

In March 1944, the Germans occupied Hungary and prepared to deport that country's Jews—numbering approximately 750,000—to Auschwitz. A 19-year-old prisoner, Rudolph Vrba, together with fellow inmate Alfred Wexler, decided to do something that almost nobody had ever done before: escape from Auschwitz. They were determined to alert the world about the doom Hungarian Jews would soon face.

On April 7, Vrba and Wetzler slipped away from their slave labor battalion and hid in a hollowed-out woodpile near the edge of the camp. On the advice of Soviet prisoners of war, the fugitives sprinkled the area with tobacco and gasoline, which confused the German dogs that were used to search for them.

On their second day in the woodpile, Vrba and Wetzler heard Allied warplanes overhead. "They came closer and closer—then bombs began to crunch not far away," Vrba later recalled in his searing memoir *I Cannot Forgive*. "Our pulses quickened. Were they going to bomb the camp? Was the secret out? . . . Was this the end of Auschwitz?"

The Allied planes were actually bombing German oil factories in and around the Auschwitz complex. The idea of bombing the death camp had not yet been proposed to the Allied leadership, and details such as the location of the gas chambers and crematoria were not yet known to the Allied war command. But that was about to change.

On April 10, in the dead of night, Vrba and Wetzler emerged from the woodpile and began an 11-day, 80-mile trek to Slovakia. There they met with Jewish leaders and dictated a 30-page report that came to be known as the "Auschwitz Protocols." It included details of the mass-murder process, maps pinpointing the gas chambers and crematoria and warnings of the impending slaughter of Hungary's Jews.

"One million Hungarian [Jews] are going to die," Vrba told them. "Auschwitz is ready for them. But if you tell them now, they will rebel. They will never go to the ovens."

A copy of the report was given to Rudolf Kastner, a Budapest Jewish leader. Instead of publicizing the information, Kastner negotiated a deal that involved bribing the Germans to permit a train with 1,684 of his relatives, friends and Hungarian Jewish leaders to leave the country. Kastner's action became the centerpiece of a controversial trial in Israel after the war.

Another copy of Vrba's Auschwitz Protocols was given to Rabbi Michoel Dov Weissmandl, a rescue activist in Bratislava, who then wrote the first known appeal for the use of Allied air power to disrupt the mass murder. Weissmandl's plea to the Allies to bomb the railroad lines between Hungary and Auschwitz reached the Roosevelt administration in June.

Assistant secretary of war John McCloy responded that the request was “impracticable” because it would require “diversion of considerable air support essential to the success of our forces now engaged in decisive operations.” He also claimed the War Department’s position was based on “a study” of the issue. But no evidence of such a study has ever been found by researchers. In reality, McCloy’s position was based on the War Department’s standing policy that no military resources should be allocated for “rescuing victims of enemy oppression.”

Vrba’s report convinced the Jewish Agency leadership in Palestine to change its position on bombing. Agency leaders initially opposed bombing Auschwitz because they believed it was a labor camp, not a death camp. But after receiving the Auschwitz Protocols in June, agency officials lobbied British, American and Soviet officials to bomb the camp or the railways leading to it. Their requests were rebuffed.

Most important, a condensed version of the Auschwitz Protocols reached the U.S. Government’s War Refugee Board in June. It helped galvanize the board to mobilize international pressure on Hungary to halt the deportations to Auschwitz. Although that effort came too late for the more than 400,000 Hungarian Jews who had been shipped to their doom, it did spare the 200,000-plus who were still alive in Budapest.

The full version of the Vrba report was actually held up in Switzerland for three months by U.S. diplomats who regarded it as low priority. And when the report finally reached Washington in October, the Office of War Information opposed distributing it; OWI director Elmer Davis claimed the report was actually part of a Nazi conspiracy to “create contempt for the [Jewish] inmates” by showing that the Jews were not resisting their killers.

Fortunately, Davis and his cockamamie theories were too late to blunt the impact of the Auschwitz Protocols. The Hungarian deportations had been stopped, and Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler had played a significant role in bringing that about.

So it was held up by U.S. diplomats, who regarded Auschwitz, in this situation, as a low priority.

I will show you a picture of what is happening in North Korea. These are North Korean children who are being starved to death. These pictures were smuggled out by activists who wanted us to see what is taking place there. There are reliable estimates that up to 10 percent of the North Korean population has been starved to death in a gulag system, which I have spoken about many times on this floor, or by a regime that willfully gives food to those they deem reliable and willfully keeps food away from those they deem unreliable—including innocent children.

This is taking place today on Holocaust Remembrance Day, in full view of the world, with full knowledge of

U.S. diplomatic officials and with the knowledge that this has been going on for some time. They have deemed it a low priority, that it is not essential for us to deal with it at this time, that we have more important obligations to the world and to ourselves. And they starve and they die. It continues.

The situation in North Korea has been studied fairly in depth. Here is a report done by the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, chaired by Vaclav Havel and Eli Wiesel, among others. It is titled “Failure to Check the Ongoing Challenge in North Korea,” about the starvation at the gulags. Here is another report titled “North Korea: Republic of Torture.” They gave this report. And we have our own report by the Congressional Research Service, titled “North Korean Refugees in China and Human Rights Issues: International Response and U.S. Policy Options.” So we have a number of studies. Ambassador Hill knows of these quite well.

Here on Holocaust Remembrance Day, this sounds eerily familiar—deeming this a low priority, saying that we have other more urgent needs and we should not divert resources or attention or focus to another area. And they continue to die. It seems as if we have seen this play before. It always saddens me to see this play. I don’t like it.

The title for this year’s Holocaust Remembrance Day is “Never Again: What You Do Matters.” I think that title could not be more appropriate when we are debating the new potential Ambassador who will go to Iraq. It does matter. This has been a matter that for some length of time I have negotiated with this Ambassador—to elevate this issue in North Korea. But it hasn’t taken place. And we continue to see this situation.

I guess you could say: Well, OK, we could do that. We must have gotten a great deal for letting this situation be ignored. Yet as articulated last night—actually it will be worthwhile to go through it right now.

Let’s look at the deal we got from the North Koreans in the six-party talks. Let’s put these guys on the side bench. We are not going to consider them right now. It is low priority.

This is what the United States got out of the six-party talks where we set aside the human rights issue—not now, even though we have a special envoy for human rights, even though the Congress passed a bill, the North Korean Human Rights Act, after we have done all these things, but, OK, we are going to set that aside right now because we got a good deal in the six-party talks out of the North Koreans. I know they are difficult to deal with, tough negotiators, crazy, but we got a good deal this time.

What we got out of it was we obtained an incomplete declaration from North Korea which the United States was unable to verify. They gave us a declaration, and we could not verify it. It was incomplete. It was also radio-

active, which is spiteful on the part of the North Koreans. The actual report was radioactive.

They imploded a cooling tower at Yongbyon—a little bit of theater, a camera shot, a photo op. It did not stop them from producing nuclear material there. It is just less safe to do it now in this spot. They are even saying now they are going to produce there.

In the last 2 weeks, they have launched a missile that flew over Japan and has a range to reach the western United States. They have captured and detained two U.S. citizens who were reporting on this situation.

They are being investigated for selling nuclear material to Iran. That is what has happened in the last 2 weeks. They pulled out of the six-party talks and kicked out U.N. inspectors. That has happened. That was the deal we got.

What did the North Korean regime get so we could set aside this sort of human rights mess there and kind of ignore that? What did they get? They got delisted as a state sponsor of terrorism. They were able to access funds they had in an international bank. Probably those were gotten funds by selling drugs or by printing U.S. currency, which they are greatly proficient at doing. They obtained key waivers of U.S. sanctions imposed after the regime’s illegal nuclear detonation in 2006. So we waived those sanctions. They got off the state-sponsored terrorism list. They received tens of millions of dollars worth of U.S. energy assistance, fuel oil we gave them. That is what the Soviets used to give the North Koreans. Now the United States is giving it to North Korea. They were allowed to continue totalitarian oppression and starvation of the North Korean people and continued operation of a gulag of concentration camps for political dissidents. They were never required to release or account for all abductees or POWs or acknowledge a clandestine uranium enrichment program or their role in Syria’s reactor bombed by the Israelis. That was a North Korean-designed reactor. They didn’t have to say: This is what we did with that. They were able to test ballistic missile technology in violation of U.N. Security Council sanctions without any meaningful consequences.

That was the deal we got, and that was the deal North Koreans got. We called off the human rights issue, which I was pushing and a number of people here were pushing for years, holding up different things in the system saying, you have to deal with this because we don’t like these pictures; we know what is going on; you have to stop it. No, we have to put all that aside; this is a great deal. It was a terrible deal.

Who was the head of all these negotiations? It turns out it is the individual we are now going to promote to the lead diplomatic post around the world for us, Ambassador Chris Hill, nominated to be our Ambassador to

Iraq at the very point in time when those negotiations are moving into the most important diplomatic phase, more from the military phase to the diplomatic phase. This is the key person, this is our lead person on the ground, this is our representative to the Iraqi people whom we put in place, and this is the deal he got in his last assignment. Let's set aside those nettlesome human rights issues that always seem to pop up and get in the way.

On its face, we should not put the individual who negotiated that bad deal and ignored that terrible situation into our best and most important post around the world. We should not do that. And certainly adding insult to injury, doing it on Holocaust Remembrance Day when we have a modern equivalent—not an equivalent, that is not fair to say—we have a systematic modern killing by a government of millions of North Koreans, and that is taking place now.

One can say, I guess, there is nobody else who would take the post in Iraq. And yet CNN was reporting the story about General Zinni, a highly decorated individual of our Government, being offered the post of Ambassador to Iraq by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, being congratulated by Vice President JOE BIDEN, and then mysteriously it is pulled back and he is not given the post. Here General Zinni, a highly qualified, knowledgeable individual of what is taking place in the region—he was certainly a skeptic on parts of the war, an individual with whom I disagreed, but he had his basis to do that—this is the individual who was initially nominated for this post or initially put forward and then suddenly is abruptly pulled out and instead they bring forward an individual who negotiated this bad deal.

Why not General Zinni? If people are so upset, as they I guess rightfully should be, that we do not have anybody in that post, why did they throw the last ambassador out so quickly before we got this one in or bring in General Zinni who doesn't have these questions and problems and doesn't have this history of a horrific failure. Why not General Zinni? We can move him through fast. No problem. He is knowledgeable and qualified, not this controversial background nor this ignoring of a human rights disaster in North Korea as being problematic and nettlesome and harmful to the overall debate.

Never again, as we say, never again are we going to let this sort of situation bubble up on us. Never again Rwanda. Never again a holocaust. Never again, as it happens today.

I want to go through what is happening. I have a number of points I want to cover, but let me start with this. I had a lengthy and ongoing discussion with Ambassador Hill about the human rights situation in North Korea and the problems with it. He refused to invite the Special Envoy Jay Lefkowitz to those negotiations. I

talked directly with Jay Lefkowitz since that period of time. Jay said he was never invited by anybody or by Mr. Hill to the six-party talks or any associated talks. He was kept away from them.

There has been a refusal by Ambassador Hill to comply with the North Korean Human Rights Act. He refused to make use of resources at his disposal to assist in bringing out the human rights issues overall.

I want to read from the record what Ambassador Hill said. We had this ongoing negotiation. I know there is some question about what he actually committed to. I have been talking with people at the State Department for some period of time. They continue to say: No, we are not going to do human rights, but we might do something, this or that. I said: It is not good enough; it needs to be involved in the actual negotiations and is actually a key to getting the regime under control and getting it to stop doing the terrible things it is doing now if you bring up the human rights issues. When you put exterior pressure on North Korea—you have to stop the missiles, nuclear development—the leader can say to his own people: They are threatening us and we have to stand together and be protected. When you talk about human rights, this is what he is doing to his own people. It weakens the regime. They refused to bring that up.

In a hearing before the Armed Services Committee on the six-party talks and implementation activities, Ambassador Hill spoke. Senator John Warner worked with me, saying: Will you work with Ambassador Hill? Yes, if he includes the Special Envoy for human rights in these talks. If he agrees, fine, let's get it out in a public hearing and out on the record and move forward with it. This is what happened at that hearing on July 31 of last year. I was there. I asked Ambassador Hill:

... will you state that the Special Envoy will be invited to all future negotiating sessions with North Korea?

That was my question in a public hearing on the record. This was choreographed ahead of time. I asked:

... will you state that the Special Envoy will be invited to all future negotiating sessions with North Korea?

"All future negotiating sessions with North Korea."

Ambassador Hill: I would be happy to invite him to all future negotiating sessions with North Korea.

Senator BROWNBACK: Thank you.

Those are two sentences. As a lawyer, that is pretty clear. It is "all." It says "all." We both say "all." It is not, well, OK, I meant this group, not that group of sessions. There was no parsing of words because I knew this is what would take place if I did not get a complete statement, and it was a complete statement—all future negotiating sessions. "I would be happy to invite him to all future negotiating sessions with North Korea," and that did not occur.

We received a statement from Jay Lefkowitz who was our Special Envoy

to North Korea. I talked with Jay about this. Let me dig up the statement he sent back to me on the specifics of whether he was invited to any of those sessions. He said he was invited to none of them. Yet here is a statement that he will be invited to all. Jay Lefkowitz: I was invited to none.

Misleading or lying to a Member of Congress at the Senate Committee on Armed Services by the individual we now are asked to trust with the most important account that we have. He is going to be an individual who is going to come back up to this body and he is going to be asking for resources, he is going to be asking for different things for the Congress to do. This is an individual I have had some depth of experience with and I am going to question what he is asking and what he is guaranteeing then in the process, if this is the way he has dealt with me on a very specific, a very clear issue that has come forward.

A number of my colleagues have questions about his overall qualifications to go to the region in Iraq with no prior experience there, when you have an individual such as General Zinni who wants to take the post and has enormous experience in the types of things about which we are talking. I think this is lamentable.

I put in a bill last night. It calls for resanctioning North Korea with the sanctions that were lifted off this deal that was structured. This bill calls for resanctioning North Korea, putting it back on the terrorism list, not sending them more fuel oil, funds to have at their disposal from us, fuel oil to fuel their economy. I think this is appropriate for us to be discussing at this point in time since the individual who negotiated that deal is the one we are considering for this next future negotiation.

It is my hope that we can bring that bill up, that we can get some sort of vote on it. I remind individuals—and I know President Obama is very concerned about what is taking place in North Korea. He stated it, he stated very publicly that he is concerned about it. He stated it as a candidate, and he stated it as a Senator.

I want to put up a quote from Candidate Obama who was also then Senator Obama at that point in time about what he was saying about North Korea. He said this:

Sanctions are a critical part of our leverage to pressure North Korea to act. They should only be lifted based on North Korean performance. If the North Koreans do not meet their obligations, we should move quickly to re-impose sanctions that have been waived, and consider new restrictions going forward.

This is Candidate Obama, Senator Obama, now President Obama, what he stated on June 26, 2008.

What has been the performance by North Korea? I have gone through this. I think it is worth noting, but the most obvious one is a big missile test that

took place less than 2 weeks ago. They are now restarting a nuclear reactor. They are being investigated for sending nuclear material to Iran. The North Koreans have arrested two U.S. citizens. That is the performance that has taken place. We go to an international body, the U.N., and they say we ought to put sanctions on them. I am saying we ought to put our own sanctions back on based on what our President said, as a candidate at that time.

In deference to several of my colleagues, I have much more to say, but I will allow others to speak, and then I will come back later in the day to speak further.

With that, at this point in time, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Madam President, I rise to speak on behalf of Ambassador Hill. First of all, I wish to commend my colleagues. Yesterday, by a vote of 73 to 17 the Senate confirmed the nomination of Ambassador Chris Hill to serve as our Ambassador to Iraq, and I cast a vote for him. I did not get the chance yesterday to speak prior to the vote, so I wished to take a couple minutes today because I think this is an important issue. Its not just about Chris Hill but also about how we conduct diplomacy and about a professional, an individual who has served in administrations, regardless of politics or party, but as a professional. It is extremely important, in my view, that we have a cadre of professional people in our diplomatic corps who can serve both Democratic and Republican administrations with dignity, with professionalism, with brilliance in this case, and that we recognize them. That will necessitate from time to time that there will be a change in policies, but having individuals who are able to accommodate those changes and serve the interests of our country in a highly professional capacity is something to be celebrated, in my view, and something we need more of, not less. My support for Chris Hill's nomination is not to suggest that I necessarily agreed with every decision he made when he served at the discretion of Condoleezza Rice and President Bush but because he did so professionally and with great capacity. That willingness is something I believe we need to celebrate, as I said a moment ago, more often.

Chris Hill is one of America's most accomplished Ambassadors and diplomats. He has served as Ambassador of our country to Macedonia, to Poland, and South Korea, as Special Envoy to Kosovo, and as a key negotiator of the 1995 Dayton Accords. He has been the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, and the Special Envoy to the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program.

His experience, tremendous professionalism and discipline, and his very keen analytical skills have made Ambassador Hill uniquely qualified, I believe, to serve as Ambassador to Iraq.

It is high time the Senate confirmed him. This has gone on too long, given the importance of that Nation and the very precarious situation Iraq is in as it transitions from a nation at war with itself to the political stability we all hope will be achieved.

The purpose of the surge in Iraq was to create the breathing space for the Iraqis to engage in political reconciliation and the political processes that would enable the Government to address the needs of its people and to rely less on American Security forces while doing so. The reduction in violence is a very positive sign and one that all of us welcome. But we must ask ourselves some critical questions as well: Have the fundamentals in Iraq changed? Is this reduction in violence organic or temporary? Is it sustainable? Have the fundamental roadblocks to political reconciliation been removed? How real is that progress? How fragile is it? Given the answers to these questions, what strategy should the United States employ in Iraq?

I believe we made the correct decision yesterday by a vote of 73 to 17 that Ambassador Hill is the right person to analyze these questions. He has a wealth of experience in very difficult places around the globe. While he lacks the so-called direct experience in this part of the world, the skill sets he brings to this are absolutely essential, in my view, to navigate these very difficult issues I have raised. So we need to recognize that.

I also believe he is the right individual because he has demonstrated a solid grasp of the complex Iraqi reality, as well as a commitment to working toward reconciliation in Iraq and helping build an inclusive and responsive government that meets the needs of its people, while allowing American forces to quickly withdraw in the most responsible way possible.

I am confident Ambassador Hill can accomplish this extraordinarily difficult and complex mission because he has demonstrated his ability to do so time and time again. Most recently, with the full confidence of the former President and Secretary of State, Ambassador Hill coordinated difficult and highly sensitive multilateral negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program.

For people who supported President Bush's policy regarding North Korea to raise objections to Ambassador Hill's embrace and faithful execution of that policy is somewhat illogical. Similarly, it is unfair and dangerous for us to sit here and second-guess every split-second decision our Ambassadors around the world have to make, often in extremely difficult and rapidly changing circumstances, when those decisions are consistent with the guidance of the Secretary of State and the President, as they were in the previous administration. On one such occasion, in fact, in his negotiations on North Korea, then-Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice approved of Chris Hill's quick

thinking and adaptability, and she was highly critical of his Chinese negotiating partners for complicating an already tenuous situation.

The American people need our Ambassadors to carry out administration policy at the direction of the President and the Secretary of State and to think quickly on their feet when unexpected circumstances arise. Chris Hill has demonstrated the ability time and time and time again to make those kinds of decisions that advance our interests as a nation through the diplomatic process. To do otherwise would be irresponsible.

Moreover, I am concerned about the complaints that Ambassador Hill did not press hard enough against North Korea on its deplorable human rights record. North Korea's human rights practices are horrific. We all know it. I know of no one, including Ambassador Hill, who thinks otherwise. But to claim Ambassador Hill somehow failed to faithfully and energetically carry out the human rights policies of President Bush and Secretary of State Rice, I think, is wrong. It is not just unfair to him and unfair to the former President and Secretary of State, it is a naive oversimplification of a highly complex matter, particularly when the reduction of a nuclear threat was the primary objective of those efforts.

Ambassador Hill, has earned the support of the chairman and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Generals Petraeus and Odierno, and the last three U.S. Ambassadors to Iraq. Ambassador Hill has testified before the Foreign Relations Committee and has answered all our questions on that committee, and I believe it is time we stopped delaying and send this Ambassador to Baghdad, where he is needed to carry out the critical missions of our Nation and advance the interests of our Nation. I know I am not alone in my belief that we are lucky to have such a talented and dedicated public servant to take on this daunting task, and I would urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

I referred earlier to the vote yesterday. That vote was on a cloture motion to go to Ambassador Chris Hill's nomination. When I said it was a vote on his nomination—that vote of 73 to 17—it was a vote that allows us to get to the vote on the nomination. I was confusing the cloture motion with the vote to come on his nomination, which will occur at some point in the next day or two. Again, I urge my colleagues to be as supportive in the nomination as they were on the cloture motion.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

EARTH DAY

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, tomorrow is Earth Day, and it is a good day to save our mountaintops. I live in east Tennessee, near the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Millions of Americans visit us

every year because of the natural beauty of our landscape. They do not come to Tennessee to see the smog, they do not come to Tennessee to see creeks polluted by mountaintop mining, and they don't come to Tennessee to see ridgeline wind turbines that are three times as tall as our University of Tennessee football stadium, which, with their transmission lines, would create a junkyard in the sky.

The American landscape is a part of our environment. It is essential to the American character. From John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt to Lady Bird Johnson, generations of Americans have worked to protect the landscape. Some of the same groups that have worked hardest to protect the landscape are neglecting it in pursuit of remedies for climate change.

I am working with three Democratic Members of Congress to try to protect the American landscape. The first is Senator TOM CARPER of Delaware. He and I are introducing legislation to put stiffer controls on sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury emissions from coal plants. We have the technology to make the air cleaner, and we should be using it. There is no need to delay dealing with sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury while we figure out what to do about carbon.

Secondly, Senator CARDIN of Maryland and I have introduced legislation to ban the practice of blowing off the tops of mountains and dumping the waste in streams to mine coal. Coal is essential to our energy future. I hope we will reserve a Nobel Prize for the scientist who finds a way to deal with the carbon from existing coal plants. But we will create many more jobs by saving our mountaintops to attract tourists than we will by blowing them up to find coal, especially because our State produces less than 2 percent of the Nation's coal.

Finally, Representative HEATH SHULER of North Carolina and I hosted a forum in Knoxville highlighting the Tennessee Valley Authority and their choices for renewable energy. Conservation and nuclear power are realistic options for clean electricity for our region, and we should move ahead aggressively with both. But solar power, for the longer term; underwater river turbines in the Mississippi River; biomass, such as wood chips; and methane from landfills are all good choices for renewable electricity as well.

On the other hand, the idea of polluting our landscape with 500-foot wind turbines and their transmission towers is preposterous. It makes no sense to destroy the environment in the name of saving the environment, especially since the wind only blows about 18 percent of the time at TVA's one wind farm. And much of that is at night, when TVA already has thousands of unused megawatts of electricity that we could be using. TVA should take the \$60 million it is spending to buy about 5 megawatts of unreliable wind power and instead buy 10 compact fluorescent light bulbs for every TVA household,

which, if used, would save about 920 megawatts of reliable power—the equivalent of an entire nuclear plant.

Senator CARPER and I will host a roundtable this Thursday in the Capitol on our legislation to establish stiff standards for sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury. The Tennessee Valley Authority needs to go ahead and put sulfur, nitrogen, and mercury controls on all its large coal plants that it intends to keep open. But TVA actions alone will not be enough to give us clean air in the Great Smoky Mountains and in Tennessee. We need strong national standards, such as those in our legislation because so much of our dirty air blows in from coal powerplants in other States.

During each of the 2-year Congresses in which I have been a Senator, I have introduced legislation to curb pollutants from coal plants, including carbon. Tomorrow is Earth Day and a good day to save our mountaintops. The way we should do that is to have stiffer controls for cleaner air, to ban mountaintop removal for coal mining, and to stop the practice of wasting ratepayer dollars for ridgeline wind turbines that destroy the landscape, which is also an essential part of the American environment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. CASEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 839 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, in late February, President Obama made an announcement to thousands of marines in Camp Lejeune about bringing an end to the war in Iraq. After only 5 weeks in office, this President delivered on what I consider to be one of his most important campaign promises—to end this war once and for all.

But amidst this historic position and with this change that is looming, the Senate unfortunately has delayed the confirmation of the United States Ambassador to Iraq. We have gone almost 2 months without an ambassador in Iraq. With more than 140,000 American military personnel literally risking their lives in that country, the Senate has refused to fill this vacancy and to send our highest ranking civil official to Iraq to work with our military for a peaceful conclusion to this war. It is unforgivable. It is inexcusable. It is a fact.

Ambassador Hill, Christopher Hill, the man who has been nominated for this position, is a highly accomplished career diplomat. This is not a man who comes to this job without experience. He has served America for over three decades in some of the world's most difficult and challenging situations. Here is what President Obama said in nominating Christopher Hill to be our Ambassador:

From his time in the Peace Corps to his work in Kosovo and Korea, Ambassador Hill has been tested, and he has shown the pragmatism and the skill that we need right now.

In the former Yugoslavia, Ambassador Hill was at the center of negotiations for the Bosnia peace settlement. He was the first United States Ambassador to Macedonia, where he helped to build the basic institutions of democratic governance and civil society. As our Ambassador to South Korea, Christopher Hill worked with Korean officials and U.S. military leaders to develop and implement the most significant realignment of military posture in the region since the Korean war of the 1950s.

Most recently, as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Ambassador Christopher Hill worked with China, South Korea, Russia, and other nations to advance negotiations with North Korea over its nuclear program.

Some have argued on the floor that Ambassador Hill did not adequately press the North Korean Government on its deplorable human rights record. But, in truth, Hill did address the North Korean human rights record, but he did so while following the President's request to keep denuclearization of the Korean peninsula at the forefront of his agenda.

President Obama's plan to remove 140,000 troops from Iraq, including all combat forces by next summer, is a challenge. It is a challenge not only for our military but also on the diplomatic front. We will be working with the Iraqi Government throughout this transition to make certain we do everything in our power to have a meaningful handover of authority and a stable Iraq left behind. We are going to have 35- to 50,000 transitional forces that will remain to train and advise Iraqi security forces, to conduct counterterrorism operations, and to protect American civilian and military personnel. Those transitional forces are scheduled to leave by the end of 2012. Is there anyone who believes we can accomplish this without having our best and brightest on the ground in Iraq? Is there any parent or spouse, relative, or friend of a service man or woman now risking their life in Iraq who does not believe we should have an ambassador on the ground? How can we explain to these soldiers that for 2 months, while Congress sits here wringing its hands, we have not sent an ambassador to Iraq?

Yesterday, we were forced to have a cloture vote. A cloture vote basically

says: Stop talking, Senators, and get down to business. Make a decision once in a while.

Do you know what the vote was yesterday? It was 73 to 17. That means that not only the 57 Democrats who are here but at least 16 of the Republicans joined us and said: Let's get this moving.

How do we find ourselves in this position where the President wants to send the most important civil representative of our Government to a nation where American soldiers' lives are at risk and the Senate wrings its hands and says: Well, maybe we ought to wait a few days; maybe we ought to wait a few weeks; maybe we ought to let this sit over the Easter recess while we eat our Peeps and jellybeans. I do not buy that. This is a critical decision for America's security interests. Sending a diplomat of the skill of Christopher Hill is absolutely essential to protect America's interests, to protect the interests of servicemen, to make certain we have an ongoing relationship with the Iraqis, so that our service men and women can come home safely and Iraq will be stable and safe itself afterward. There is no reason to delay this 1 minute more. We should vote on Christopher Hill's nomination immediately. Why are we denying this? Why are we delaying this when 73 Senators yesterday said: Do it. That is enough. There are enough Senators to get this job done.

President Obama stated a clear goal here: ending our combat mission in Iraq by August 31, 2010. When the combat mission ends, the United States will still leave behind in Iraq the largest American Embassy in the world, where we will maintain a diplomatic mission to help a country still struggling to build stability and democracy. Is there anyone who questions whether we need an ambassador to be in that Embassy? Shouldn't that person have been there weeks ago instead of being delayed by the other side in the Senate?

I do not deny to any Senator the right to speak, express their concerns or reservations about any appointment. I do not deny to any committee of this Senate the opportunity to have a hearing, which Ambassador Hill did have. All of that happened in the regular order. At the end of the day yesterday, 73 Democratic and Republican Senators said: Get on with it. Still, we languish over this nomination at this very moment. The military leaders, American military leaders of Iraq, have been begging this Senate to do its job and send an ambassador who can complement the fine work of General Odierno in Iraq. We continue to delay.

The President's plan for Iraq is measured and thoughtful and will bring a resolution to this war. It sends a message to the Iraqi political leadership that they have to take responsibility for their own future. It takes into consideration the concerns and recommendations of the senior military

leaders regarding the time for the drawdown and the manner in which it will be implemented. It frees resources for the real battle against al-Qaida in Afghanistan, which was the source of the 9/11 attacks. It includes comprehensive diplomatic engagement with all of the countries of the region not only on the future of Iraq but on other important regional challenges. It begins to put an end to the extraordinary cost to America and American families in terms of lives and dollars that the Iraqi war has entailed.

Our military men and women have served heroically in Iraq. I have been there to visit them. I have been several times in my home State to see our Guard units take off and join the conflict. I have been there to welcome them home, attended the funerals. We could not ask for anything more. They have given us so much, and they continue to do so as we meet in the safety of the Senate Chamber here in the Capitol. More than 4,200 Americans have been killed, 165 from my home State of Illinois. When the war started, I said I would write a note to the families who lost soldiers from my State. Little did I dream that years later I would still be signing those notes, as I did yesterday. Thousands have suffered serious physical and psychological injuries. That is the real cost of this war. Civilian experts in and out of the Government have also served with distinction and paid with their lives. Thousands of innocent Iraqis have died. I have seen firsthand the dangerously hard work our soldiers face.

We owe them gratitude and admiration, but we also owe them our best efforts to make certain we bring this war in Iraq to an end in the best possible way. President Obama has the strategy, but to implement this strategy we need an experienced ambassador in Iraq without any further delay.

I wonder what would have happened under the previous administration if the Democrats had held up a key appointment of an ambassador to Iraq in the midst of a war. Well, I can tell you what would have happened: The right-wing radio would have gone crazy, talking about endangering American servicemen by not filling this critical position. We would have speeches on the floor about shirking our responsibility and that we cannot go home for a break until we send a full complement of our best and brightest to represent America in Iraq. I can almost predict that would have happened if we had been so shortsighted under the previous administration as to hold back a career diplomat such as Christopher Hill.

Well, it has happened here, and it is happened for too long. It is unforgivable. It is inexcusable. Members have had plenty of time to give their speeches, to express their concerns, even to vote no, which is their right to do if they believe this man is not the right person for the job. But it is time for us to get on with this important mission.

We owe it to those men and women who are risking their lives in Iraq. We owe it to all who have served there and to the American people who have sustained this war, as expensive as it has been in terms of life and costs. It is time for us to stop wasting time. It is time for us to fill this position and send Christopher Hill to be the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I yield the floor.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BURRIS).

NOMINATION OF CHRISTOPHER R. HILL TO BE AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I trust we are not in a quorum call.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are not.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business and that Senator BROWNBACK be recognized following my presentation.

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

(The remarks of Mr. DORGAN are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Chris Hill nomination to be Ambassador to Iraq. I am opposed to that nomination. A number of issues have been raised on this nomination I want to talk about to try to put some factual setting associated with that.

First, though, I wish to have printed in the RECORD at the end of my statement a Jerusalem Post online edition article dated yesterday that I read extensively from in my first presentation regarding the 65th anniversary of the escape from Auschwitz. I ask unanimous consent to have that article printed in the RECORD at the end of my statement.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. BROWNBACK. I want to note for my colleagues, I read extensively from this article and did not cite that during my initial presentation. I want to make sure they know this came from that reporter and that we were putting that in.

Second, there has been a lot of discussion here about: OK, we have to get this person confirmed. We have to get him out, and it is a terrible shame it has not taken place to date.