

up, but I did just want to let my colleagues know that it is very relevant to our goal of securing our ports. I strongly support the amendment and commend the Senator for his initiative.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the amendment before the Senate that's been offered as a complete substitute to H.R. 4954. This legislation could not be more timely. The anniversary of September 11 is imminent, a stark reminder that our Nation must remain vigilant in the global war on terror.

This amendment, the Port Security Improvement Act of 2006, is critically important legislation. It strengthens port security operations, both in the United States and abroad so we can prevent threats from reaching our shores in the first place.

This legislation improves existing programs for targeting and inspecting cargo containers so that a dangerous shipment doesn't enter or threaten the Nation. It provides direction for further strengthening of these programs as technological advances permit. And, it calls for greater coordination and cooperation among Federal agencies in contingency planning in the event there is a security breach.

This legislation represents a thoughtful reevaluation of how best to meet the Nation's security interests at United States seaports. We have taken a look at what has been done since 9/11. This legislation builds upon that. Terrorists have proven that they will change their ways to exploit perceived weaknesses in our defenses. We need to stay ahead of them. This legislation empowers our personnel in the Department of Homeland Security and United States Border and Customs Protection to do just that.

At the same time, this legislation includes provisions to strengthen the economic security of our Nation. It's important to remember that in addition to killing innocent Americans, the 9/11 attacks were intended to wreak economic havoc and injury upon our Nation. This legislation includes provisions that realign resources to ensure better efficiency in the administration of customs laws within the United States Customs and Border Protection. It authorizes the International Trade Data System, a forward-looking program to better utilize technology in order to increase efficiency and facilitate trade. And, it provides for added resources to better meet all of our economic and trade security interests that are overseen by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

In sum, this legislation is the culmination of months of hard and thoughtful work. I thank my ranking member on the Finance Committee, Senator BAUCUS, my colleagues on the Commerce Committee, Senator STEVENS and Senator INOUE, and my colleagues on the Homeland Security Committee, Senator COLLINS and Senator LIEBERMAN, with whom I have

worked so closely to bring this legislation to the floor. I urge all of my colleagues to join me in advancing this essential legislation through the Senate in a timely manner.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I want to comment on the tremendous efforts of the ranking member of the Homeland Security Committee, Senator LIEBERMAN, and the chairmen and ranking members of the Commerce and Finance Committees, Senators STEVENS, INOUE, GRASSLEY and BAUCUS. They along with their committee staffs have worked together for months to develop the bill that is before us today.

Each of the committees has its own jurisdictional interests in this bill. The Homeland Security Committee has jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security with its primary mission of preventing terrorist attacks against the United States and reducing vulnerabilities to such attacks. Many of the programs in this bill, including the Automated Targeting System, the Container Security Initiative, and the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, serve the purpose of reducing vulnerabilities to terrorist attacks and are operated by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection within the Department of Homeland Security—squarely within the Homeland Security Committee's jurisdiction. Moreover, it was the committee's jurisdictional authority to study the effectiveness of government agency programs that began the evaluation of the DHS' cargo security initiatives that are improved by this bill.

The Commerce and Finance Committees also have significant jurisdictional interests. The Commerce Committee has jurisdiction over shipping and the Coast Guard. And the Finance Committee has jurisdiction over the assessment of customs duties and compliance with customs laws.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, it is my understanding that there is no one else who wishes to speak on the bill or the McCain amendment at this time.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, on behalf of the leader, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for as much time as I may consume.

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

AMERICAN ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I rise today to offer a new vision for Amer-

ican independence, a mission that is vital for Americans and for America's homeland and national security.

We Americans have always been freedom seekers. We have been risk takers for liberty, daring to cross oceans and blaze trails across our continent, and at the same time we are reaching skyward to charter our own course into the future. We are always trying to provide a beacon to light the way for others around the world. Now is the time for us to be bold and chart our own course once again.

In this time of expanding promise and unparalleled danger in the world, we are called to come together with a clear vision and a unity of purpose worthy of a great people and a great nation.

We declared our independence from colonial masters more than two centuries ago. We declared our independence from fascism, from imperial communism, and from every other form of totalitarian oppression and brutality in the 20th century. And America belatedly strode forward to become a more perfect union with justice and opportunity for all.

In each of these challenges to our self-determination and our freedom, we not only declared our independence, we also mustered the resolve and the resources to achieve it. It is time for America to declare its independence again.

Nearly 5 years ago, on September 11, 2001, we awoke on a bright, blue-sky morning to the dark realization that a great evil still stalks our world. Out of the shocking smoke and devastation of September 11 came the realization that we are at war—at war with an extraordinarily violent ideology that seeks to pervert a great religion and murder thousands of innocent people to satisfy its thirst for power in a new caliphate from Europe to Indonesia.

Today, we find ourselves engaged in a global war against vile, maniacal terrorists—a war against many foes—including Hezbollah, al-Qaida, the Islamic Jihad, and others, but with its primary theaters being the breeding ground of radicalism and terrorism in the Middle East.

My colleagues, in this war we have our differences over the means and methods, tactics and timetables. We do not have the same conviction about the importance of every theater or every engagement. We do not all see the same causes and effects, nor do we all give credit or cast blame in the same direction.

But there comes a time where we have to set aside such differences and act not as Republicans or Democrats determined to win an election but as Americans determined to win a war, and in so doing preserve our freedom, our values, and our way of life.

Rather than petty political bickering and partisan posturing, let all of us stand together—those of us who understand the reality of the mortal danger that our irreconcilable, fanatical