

pay for the various essentials they need to do to exist. And that is what they are basically doing. They are just getting by. They are just getting by until new jobs are created.

I say to the administration: Where are all of these new jobs? The bottom line is still 2.4 million jobs lost. If the administration wants to curtail this economic program, at least stand up and be as responsive as the last two administrations were and create the new jobs. In that recession, 2.9 million jobs were created and so, of course, Americans could go back to work and, of course, they could get off the Federal program.

We have a big challenge before us. And although this bill does not directly address this, we must recognize that parts of our economy are retooling. Parts of our economy are demanding a more creative approach to jobs that are lost as industries are transitioning. It will take almost 2 years to regain the jobs we have lost. Why not prop up our economy by adding needed stimulus? Why not give American workers a return on a program they paid into, and why not honor them by admitting they would rather have job creation than unemployment checks and get about going back to stimulating our economy with real job creation?

None of that is happening. We are all now about ready to adjourn to some date uncertain. I do not know if it is January or a sooner time, but America was listening last year. At the holiday season, as December 31 rolled around, Americans were furious that this program was being curtailed. People made very serious decisions. Why make them live through those circumstances again and then come back in January or February? After we have all made it clear this was a program that was much needed, why not do the responsible thing now and pass these unemployment benefits.

I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 1839 and that the Senate then proceed to the immediate consideration of that legislation; that the Cantwell amendment, which is at the desk, be considered and agreed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that the bill, as amended, be read three times, passed, and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table without intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). On behalf of the leadership, in my capacity as the Senator from the State of Idaho, I object.

The objection is heard.

Ms. CANTWELL. I do not know how many more objections we are going to hear before we give American workers their right to unemployment benefits. We need to own up to the fact that this body cannot pass tax cuts for the wealthiest, incentivize other programs, and then not take care of our obligation to workers in America—all of whom would, in the end, certainly rather have a paycheck.

I hope this body will come to its senses, address this very important issue, and not leave any Americans at the end of the year without the resources to pay their bills and without helping them be an effective part of our economy.

I yield the floor.

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

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

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE 101st AIRBORNE AIR ASSAULT DIVISION OF THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to honor the Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne, Air Assault Division, based at Fort Campbell, KY. As you all know, two Black Hawk helicopters from the 101st Airborne collided in the night sky over Mosul, Iraq on November 15, 2003. Tragically, all 17 soldiers on board the helicopters perished in the incident. This last Saturday, two additional soldiers from the Division were killed while they patrolled the streets of Mosul.

These tragic incidents bring the total number of Screaming Eagles lost in Iraq to 55. My prayers and deepest sympathies go out to the families and friends of these brave Americans.

Last month, in one of the most moving experiences of my career, I met with some of these soldiers in Mosul, where the 101st is responsible for keeping the peace in the northern part of Iraq.

These heroes shared with me their thoughts about America's struggle to bring peace and security to a long-oppressed nation, and their patriotism and passion for their mission shone through the dust and grime that accumulates with sustained operations far from the comforts of home.

Truth be told, I did not expect to encounter the extraordinary high levels of dedication and morale I witnessed in Mosul and elsewhere in Iraq. Throughout that country, I conversed with soldiers who witnessed first-hand the reality of war, and who knew friends injured or killed in combat.

It was obvious that the thoughtful young men and women I met in Iraq have spent long hours coming to grips with these harsh realities, yet remain committed to their mission and deeply believe that what they are doing is right and just. An example: at the 101st Airborne's headquarters in Mosul, I witnessed a video that detailed the Division's operations in Iraq. The moving video is dedicated to—and features footage of—Screaming Eagles who have lost their lives during the liberation of

Iraq, and it is clear these lost heroes are never far from the thoughts of the soldiers of the 101st. Indeed, these heroes remain a source of poignant motivation for their comrades.

For our Armed Forces, sad memories of fallen colleagues are inescapable, but so too is the evidence that the Screaming Eagles are on the right side of history. From water coolers in Washington, DC to New York City newsrooms, many of us forget that our troops were present at the moment Iraq was liberated from the tortuous grip of Saddam Hussein. They have since witnessed firsthand the birth of a democratic process and the reawakening of a people enslaved for generations by fear and oppression. The Screaming Eagles have worked side by side with Iraqis to help rebuild a shattered country, and their joint success in this regard is truly remarkable.

The brave soldiers I met in Mosul know America is in Iraq for the right reasons, and that despite setbacks and tragic incidents we are winning the peace in Iraq, just as surely as we won the war.

At one point during my visit, one of the Screaming Eagles came up to me and introduced himself as a captain who hailed from my hometown of Louisville. In the entryway of one of Saddam's former palaces—now serving as the 101st Airborne's division headquarters—he presented me with a flag of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, and recalled how he brought it with him as the division left Fort Campbell and fought north from Kuwait, up through Baghdad, and on to Mosul.

This captain spoke with well-earned pride about the role he and his fellow soldiers played in liberating the Iraqi people and winning the war. And he spoke of the progress they were making in winning over the hearts and minds of these newly free people by treating the Iraqis with a level of dignity and respect they have not received for generations.

While in Mosul, I met with the newly elected governing council of Iraq's Nineveh Province, and I can tell you that the respect and appreciation these democratically elected leaders have for the U.S. efforts is ample evidence the Screaming Eagles are indeed winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people.

Indeed, both this democratically elected new government and that young captain would want us all to understand that America did the right thing to help 25 million Iraqis to realize a life without fear. I can assure you that this captain and his fellow soldiers—although mindful of the great risks and danger inherent in their work—are committed to finishing the job by winning the peace and helping the Iraqis to get back on their feet.

I keep this soldier's flag—still covered in dust and dirt from its historic travels—in my office as a reminder that when America sets out to accomplish a difficult task, it finishes the

job. And when I hear discouraging or saddening news from Iraq, I think of this young captain's dedication to this mission, and know that America must—and will—stay the course.

Mr. President, the entire Fort Campbell community grieves the loss of every single Screaming Eagle, and we long to welcome the division home to the fertile farmland of western Kentucky.

But when the division returns to Kentucky, it will have left an indelible mark on the memories of the people of northern Iraq. The 101st has treated the Iraqi people with respect and honor. They have acted not as occupiers, but as allies to the victims of Hussein's brutal reign. When the Screaming Eagles come home, Iraqis will see their legacy around every corner: in the hundreds of newly refurbished schools, in the electricity that now is available 24 hours a day, in the swimming pool renovated for Iraqi kids by the division, in the repaired irrigation canals that bring water to the wheat fields near Mosul, in the soccer fields that are no longer killing fields, and in the proud Iraqis now patrolling the streets of a free Iraq as policemen respectful of the human rights and dignity of their fellow citizens.

Mr. President, Iraq is now free—and an evil despot no longer threatens the United States and his neighbors—because of the selfless actions of the individual soldiers of units like the 101st Airborne. I pray that the families of those Americans who have lost their lives in this conflict find comfort and solace in their time of need. Their loved ones are American heroes, and I will never forget their sacrifice.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE 108TH CONGRESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, as the first session of the 108th Congress draws to a close, the score of accomplishments of this Senate comes into clearer view. By any historical comparison, this Senate's record of accomplishments is remarkable. But when one considers the slender majority that this party holds in the Senate, and the numerous unforeseen challenges that have risen, the record of accomplishments is truly extraordinary.

Our efforts, the efforts of this Senate in the first session of the 108th Congress, have improved the security of America and the lives of all Americans in significant ways.

While the homeland and national security of America has been strength-

ened, the economic and retirement security of all Americans has also dramatically improved.

America's security has benefited from the first funding of the Department of Homeland Security, the confirmation of the first Secretary of Homeland Security, full funding of the war on terrorism, passage of a modern-day Marshall plan for Iraq, and passage of both the Defense authorization and appropriations bills.

The security of the American people in their work and their retirement has dramatically improved as well. The economic growth package passed earlier this year has pushed the economy to the highest quarterly growth rate in almost 20 years, while the promise of prescription drugs for our seniors on Medicare, thwarted for 38 long years, is just hours—just hours—away from becoming the law of the land with the stroke of the President's pen.

These major legislative victories have been as demanding as they have been time consuming. Yet that did not stop the majority leader from getting the work of the people done.

In an extraordinarily tenacious manner that should make all Tennesseans proud, our leader, BILL FRIST, confronted not just the challenges of last year's business but also the present demands of the war on terrorism.

As I think back on the first year of Senator FRIST's position as our leader, I think we can all feel extraordinarily proud of his many accomplishments in holding this somewhat fractious body together in order to advance the agenda.

The Senate, as we all know from working here, and as many Americans know from studying the history books, was basically constructed not to function very well or certainly not very quickly. At one time or another, virtually every Senator takes advantage of that opportunity. Then you add on top of that the fact that the American people dealt a very narrow majority to the majority party.

Many thought at the beginning of the year the prospect of very much success was quite limited indeed. But as you look back over the year, under Senator FRIST's extraordinary leadership, we have been able to make enormous progress for the American people.

It all began back in January, when we had to pass 11 appropriations bills, uncompleted from the previous year. Under Senator FRIST's leadership, we completed the emergency wartime supplemental appropriations bill. He brought to a successful conclusion the fires and NASA disaster supplemental appropriation. Then he pulled together the conference to pass a very tough Iraq reconstruction supplemental appropriations bill—all of this in the past year.

Even though, as of today, it is not exactly clear when our remaining appropriations bills will be approved, what we can say is this: That under Senator FRIST's leadership, all but 1 of the 13

appropriations bills have gone through the Senate. Six bills are the law of the land and the remaining seven could be just hours away from being successfully concluded, or might be concluded in a couple of weeks. But, in any event, they are largely completed and are awaiting the desire of the Senate to pass this omnibus report and move it along.

When that happens, the Senate will have passed 27 normal and supplemental appropriations bills into law—not a bad year's work.

With this record on appropriations, with passage of the economic growth package, and with passage of the Medicare prescription drug bill, expecting anything more from this Senate would not be reasonable. But in fact much more has been delivered to the American people by this Senate under the leadership of Senator BILL FRIST. We have banned the horrific practice of partial-birth abortion. We have passed the Do Not Call Registry at the Federal Trade Commission. We provided tax relief to military families. We passed the Healthy Forests Act to stop the catastrophic wildfires we have witnessed raging across the western lands. I might say, the occupant of the chair, the Senator from Idaho, was right in the middle of that debate from the beginning to the end, helping steer it to a successful conclusion. I commend him for his extraordinary work on the Healthy Forests proposal.

We have enacted free trade agreements with Chile and with Singapore. The Senate has passed the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization to revitalize an air transport industry suffering from the effects of the terrorist attack of 9/11. We pushed a comprehensive Energy bill to within two votes of breaking a filibuster.

One thing we can say today: This is only the end of the first session. We have a second session of the 108th to go. We have not given up on the prospect of getting an Energy bill. We are going to have a very cold winter. We have the potential for blackouts, all kinds of problems that could be dealt with substantially by the passage of this Energy bill. I believe there will be two additional Senators who will see their way to supporting an Energy bill something like the one we currently have before us in order to prevent America from having another experience like we had last summer with the blackout.

After more than a decade of repression, the Senate has passed the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act. In addition, we secured resources to improve our Nation's elections systems and, hopefully, we will finish the job through the omnibus appropriations bill currently being negotiated. We made a commitment to our States to be a partner in this endeavor, and we took the first step to honor that commitment.

I want to linger a moment on this whole election reform issue. Senator