

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, there is a unanimous consent agreement that has been made, an order dividing the time on the Democratic side. Senator CARPER is not going to come, so that being the case, I ask unanimous consent that Senator SCHUMER be given 10 minutes, Senator WYDEN be given 10 minutes, and Senator DORGAN be given 10 minutes—in that order, changing the order now in effect.

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

Mr. REID. Senator SCHUMER is on his way.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized for 10 minutes of our side's morning business time.

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

The Senator from New York.

THE 9/11 COMMISSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I would like to talk a little bit about the 9/11 Commission which, of course, is right now beginning to interview some of the most high-level people in our Government. The Commission has an important and, I would say, sacred mission, and that mission is to find out what happened and why so many people were killed in the tragedy of 9/11. Of course, many of those people were from my city and State—the vast majority. Some of those people I knew: someone I played basketball with in high school, someone who was a businessman who befriended me on the way up, someone who was a brave firefighter from the Marine Park neighborhood from where I come. And the families mirror—of course with greater intensity—the determination of the American people to get to the bottom of this.

The unfortunate situation is the 9/11 Commission—which is bipartisan and has an important mission that transcends any politics, any one administration, any one Secretary of Defense or Secretary of State or President—is being thwarted as it tries to do its work. They have not been given documents. They have been delayed. Even to this day, Condoleezza Rice has said she will not testify to the Commission in public, even though she was in probably the most sensitive staff position there could be in regard to figuring out the signals before 9/11 and what should be done as a result of 9/11.

I think this is regretful. I think this shows, unfortunately, a pattern in this administration of not wanting facts, of

sort of making up your mind first and then trying to get the facts to fit that.

It is no secret I have been sympathetic to the President on the war in Iraq. I disagree with certain things he did, but I voted for the war. I voted for the \$87 billion. I think we have to fight terrorism. And I do think it is easy to second-guess. I also believe we could get so hamstrung and do nothing that the terrorists would gain more than they have.

Having said that, if there is one thing we thrive on, if there is a thing that is a hallmark not only of winning a successful war on terrorism but of defending the very democracy the terrorists hate and fight, it is that all information come out so we can make an accurate assessment.

I have to tell you, as you look at it, it seems this administration does not want all the facts to come out and, in fact, oftentimes thwarts facts coming out; and then, when they hear facts they do not like that come out not because of administration auspices, they start kneecapping the bringer of bad news.

This has not just happened in one instance; this has happened in instance after instance after instance. Today there is a whole machine discrediting Richard Clarke—certainly disagree with his arguments, certainly disagree with his interpretations of what happened in the White House.

There are two sides to every argument. But to say Mr. Clarke—who, until 2000, according to the newspapers, was a registered Republican, whom I know well, whose sole mission was to defend us against terrorism—to call him names and say he is motivated by partisan politics and he has one friend in the John Kerry campaign, that does a disservice to America; to do the same thing to Mr. Foster, who had numbers on how much the prescription drug bill would cost; to do the same thing to Ambassador Wilson; to do the same thing to Chief of Staff General Shinseki, this is a pattern that does not do the President, the White House, or the administration proud. In fact, it has an antidemocratic tinge to it that should make all of us worry, that should make all of us troubled by what has happened.

Probably the last analogy to 9/11 was Pearl Harbor. And what did this country do? What did Franklin D. Roosevelt and the leaders of this country do? They said: We need to find the facts as to why we were so unprepared. Might those facts have damaged people in office? Surely. But, nonetheless, pursue the facts we did, and a comprehensive report on why America slept was issued.

This 9/11 Commission is in that tradition. Yet this 9/11 Commission has been thwarted every step of the way. Governor Kean is a Republican, greatly respected, not a partisan man. The vice chairman is Lee Hamilton, whom I served with in the House—the same way, a Democrat, but not regarded as

partisan. In fact, sometimes the Democratic leadership in the House would tear their hair out at Lee Hamilton's bipartisan nature.

Yet there is almost a fear of facts coming out. What does this say to the American people? Do we believe our country is right? I do. Do we believe, unlike other countries, that we search for the truth, even though that truth sometimes creates bad currents, dissonance, whatever, but that truth is the hallmark of our democracy? I do. I think the vast majority of Americans do. I think if you ask President Bush, he would say he does.

But yet, over and over again, with the 9/11 Commission, with Richard Clarke, with Mr. Foster, with Ambassador Wilson, there has been not only an aversion to facts coming out but a kind of "McCarthyism" in sort of calling names at the person who had a different interpretation instead of debating whether their interpretation was right or wrong.

This is bad for our democracy. This does not bring credit to this President or the Presidency. This has to stop. I hope today, as the 9/11 Commission begins to interview a series of very important witnesses—two Presidents, two Vice Presidents, many of their leaders—maybe we can turn over a new leaf; that maybe, instead of stonewalling and name-calling and hiding from the truth, this administration will say, look, when you are President you have the powers of the incumbency, but it is also a tough country to govern and sometimes you have to take one for the truth, you have to take one because the facts do not quite square how you thought they did, and explain that to the American people.

I see my colleague from Oregon in the Chamber, and I know he is going to speak on the same subject.

But, again, this 9/11 Commission is extremely important. As Santayana said: Those of us who don't learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them. As a New Yorker, I believe that particularly in regard to 9/11. If we cannot get a full, unvarnished, non-partisan reading of the facts—an analysis of why we were caught so unprepared on that awful day, 9/11—it will hurt us in fighting this war on terrorism, which I believe will be with us for a generation.

If we start off in a way that we are afraid of the facts, if we start off seeming to believe only one side is right and the motivation of anyone who disagrees is suspect, I fear we will not win the war on terror because we will not learn what has happened and we will not be able to correct the mistakes that have been made by many different people of both political parties in the past.

My final plea to our President at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is, don't hide the facts. Don't be afraid of the facts. Don't try to undermine those who will present the facts. Our country will be better and stronger for it if you can stick to those rules.