

over the course of the morning. It would be great if we could do it even late today so we could work on those over the course of tonight. But, again, we defer to leadership and the managers, but it would be great to have that language. That would give people from last night over the course of today to finalize that language. So I agree weakheartedly.

I would just suggest that maybe we could have that filing deadline sometime today or this evening and have staff work over the course of the day rather than tomorrow. Again, it is just so that we can see what the universe is and we can systematically put a little bit of a sense of urgency on getting people to focus on the bill itself. But I agree wholeheartedly, let's have a list here in the next 20 minutes or so, and then mutually establish a filing deadline by which we can actually see the language.

Mr. DASCHLE. I would just ask the majority leader if it is his view as well, since these amendments require legislative drafting, that all Senators ought to understand that the period for drafting these amendments could expire as early as tomorrow. So they need to get their amendments to legislative counsel to make sure they are in concert with the pending bill. I ask if the majority leader shares that view.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I do. I think our colleagues can tell from the dialog going on that we, as leadership, are trying to give a framework to accelerate the process that is currently underway in discussing a very important bill. Our colleagues have met in various caucuses. I know a lot of our Members on this side of the aisle are meeting right now, and we are putting forth the same message to bring those amendments forward. And the managers will process those in an orderly way.

Mr. President, I want to very briefly comment on the bill. We received yesterday the administration's statement of policy that is in support of the Collins-Lieberman bill. I think that was a very important statement for us to receive to show the administration's strong support. In the expression of support, and support for passage of the Collins-Lieberman bill, there were comments made about certain provisions about which they have caution flags. That will be addressed appropriately on the floor of the Senate.

So I am glad we received the letter yesterday. It allows us to address many of those concerns through debate and amendment over today and tomorrow and the next several days.

The administration specifically backs the creation of a national intelligence director with—and I quote from the letter—“full, effective, and meaningful budget authorities and other authorities to manage the Intelligence Community, including statutory authority for the newly created National Counterterrorism Center.”

I mention that because it shows the huge support for reform. There is nothing

really that new about the reform. There have been 13 reports, national commissions over the last 10, 15, 20 years, 13 different ones urging intelligence reform. Now it is on the floor of the Senate. Indeed, we will accomplish that.

I do want to stress that we have both the reform of the executive branch, which is mainly the Collins-Lieberman bill, but we also have the internal reform within this body itself for oversight. Both of those, of course, were recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. The Democratic leader and I have a task force working on the internal reform. Both of those elements of reform are going to be dealt with before we depart. That is a lot of business to accomplish, and that is why there is a sense of urgency in moving along.

Yesterday, we voted on a number of amendments, including the McCain amendment and the Hutchison amendment. We will see more provisions of the McCain-Lieberman bill come through with amendments to be addressed on the Senate floor as they look at specific 9/11 recommendations.

We do want to do this expeditiously. After we pass the bill, we have to go to the conference with the House and work out any differences between the two bills.

I also want to mention briefly the news that came out regarding the FBI and the shortage of linguists to translate intelligence materials. That sort of news is alarming. After 9/11, we know we can't be behind the curve. Our enemies are smart. They are clever, resourceful. We have seen it time and again. We need an intelligence system that will block them at every turn. It is my hope that the Collins-Lieberman legislation will help address this problem. The recruitment of linguists is specifically cited as one of the issues the bill seeks to address.

Moreover, in the bill the new national intelligence director will have the authority to prioritize and allocate resources appropriately. Clearly, this issue would likely fall under that person's purview. Whether it is strengthening the FBI or buttressing the CIA or integrating our intelligence capabilities, these are among the many reasons we have to move with deliberate speed to finish this legislation. Nothing less than America's national security is at stake.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

#### INTELLIGENCE REFORM

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, in discussing these matters with the majority leader, there is somewhat of a rare consensus here that the two matters he has raised once again this morning are critical, not only to this body but to

the country, and must be addressed prior to the time we leave. The bill currently pending, managed so well by Senators COLLINS and LIEBERMAN, and the task force and the effort to reorganize the legislative branch creating greater oversight and clearer lines of responsibility for intelligence are critical matters and high priorities. I hope we can continue to keep the discipline and focus on this legislation until we have successfully completed it.

I am optimistic, given the cooperation and the degree of comity on these matters, that we can complete our work, but I do believe it is going to take the kind of schedule that the majority leader and I addressed a moment ago.

#### OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO AMERICA'S HEROES

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, over the past 4 years, as we have watched the heroism of our men and women in uniform, our Nation has gained a new awareness for the service and sacrifice of American soldiers. In communities all across our country, Americans are praying for the safe return of loved ones serving abroad. They are sending letters and care packages and small reminders of home. But they are counting the days until they can show the thanks they feel and our soldiers deserve face to face.

Few values bring Americans more closely together than our gratitude and respect for the men and women who serve in uniform to protect us. And today, all America is united in gratitude for the service of our Armed Forces and for the many sacrifices their families must make to accommodate their absence.

Regrettably, there are troubling signs that the tremendous burdens we have placed on their shoulders have begun to come at a cost. In recent weeks, we have learned that the National Guard and Reserves are having difficulty recruiting and retaining enough soldiers to defend our country. For the first time in a decade, the Army Guard is unable to meet its requirement for 350,000 soldiers. Too many soldiers are leaving and recruiting can't keep up.

A regular survey of reservists has found that the percentage of Army Reserve members who plan to reenlist has fallen from 69 percent in May 2003 to 59 percent in May 2004. There can be no doubt, the stress of long deployments and active duty are having an effect on recruiting.

Increasingly, our national security is put in the hands of the citizens soldiers of our National Guard and Reserve. When recruitment for the Guard and Reserve falls off, it threatens to undermine the readiness and the effectiveness of our Armed Forces. Let there be no doubt: Now more than ever, we need our Armed Forces to be strong and prepared enough to meet the threats we face today and those we may see tomorrow.

Earlier in the week, the New York Times reported that the Army is considering cutting the length of its 12-month combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to relieve the stress of duty. This could be a positive step. Special attention also needs to be paid to considering new ways to honor the service of our reservists and offer new incentives for signing up. The debt we owe our soldiers shouldn't be limited to a welcome-home parade. It begins before we send them abroad and it shouldn't end when they return home. This is a debt we must honor every day.

But consider the welcome home thousands of Guard members received when they returned stateside recently only to find they had lost their jobs while they were fighting in Iraq. Over the past 3 years, thousands of Guard members and reservists have come home to find themselves out of work.

Ron Vander Wal, a member of South Dakota Guard's 200th Engineer Company had to sue his employer just to get his old job back. Ron is now back at work, but he never should have had to go to court to get what was rightfully his.

Thousands more aren't as fortunate. And every time a soldier returns home to find that he has less than when he left to fight, we have failed that soldier. How can we ask our soldiers to fight for us overseas and then force them to fight for their jobs once they get home? Sadly, this is only the tip of the iceberg.

More than 400,000 reservists and National Guard members have been mobilized since September 11, 2001. They represent 40 percent of our forces in the region. Their bravery and professionalism have been vital to every aspect of our mission in Iraq. Many of them have been working to improve the lives and health of average Iraqis. And yet, when they return, one out of every five Guard members and Reservists—and 40 percent of junior enlisted personnel—will have no health insurance of their own. That is simply unacceptable.

This kind of neglect is regrettably reflected in our treatment of veterans, as well. Last month, I spoke to a woman from Hartford, SD, whose father served in the Navy—in Vietnam and elsewhere. Recently, her father died, and in his final months the family struggled with the VA to get the benefits he needed. This woman became quite frustrated with the VA and its ability to care for veterans. Today, this woman who loves her country and is proud of her father's service says she will advise her children against joining the military, because she feels our country just doesn't take care of its vets in their hours of greatest need.

That is intolerable. Not only is it morally wrong not to honor the service of our veterans, but it directly affects our ability to recruit the next generation of American heroes. Something needs to be done.

Let there be no doubt, the problems with the VA health system are not the fault of the doctors and nurses and the other men and women who work at VA hospitals and clinics. They are among the most talented, most dedicated health professionals in this country. But they can only do so much with the resources they are given. And from the first days of this administration, the White House has systematically tried to reduce veterans benefits, cut funding to the VA, and shortchange the healthcare of America's veterans.

Over the past 4 years, the budget for veterans health has risen far less than has the cost of delivering health care, forcing VA hospitals to meet rising demand with shrinking resources. The White House's 2005 budget deepens this trend by including less than a one-tenth of one percent funding increase, while health costs nationwide are rising at double digit rates of inflation. Overall, the White House budget falls nearly \$4.3 billion short of veterans' needs, according to the independent budget created by leading nonpartisan veterans groups.

The veterans least able to pay are being asked to pick up the difference. Over the course of the last 3 years, the amount vets have paid toward their own care has increased a staggering 340 percent, or \$561 million. And if the White House gets its way, vets would need to pick up more than a half billion dollars more of their care in 2005.

This is wrong. Americans treasure their freedom and we treasure those who have sworn to defend it. The kind of treatment our veterans and reservists are receiving defies the gratitude Americans feel in their hearts and betrays our tradition of caring for those who wore the uniform of their country.

There are two steps Congress should take immediately. First, we should pass the National Guard and Reservist Bill of Rights which I introduced earlier this month. This bill codifies a set of rights the men and women serving in our National Guard and Reserve have earned with their service to our Nation. It states that every reservist has the right to straight answers about his or her deployments, and deployments that are no longer than those of full-time soldiers; the right to the best equipment the Nation has to offer; the right to adequate, timely, and problem-free compensation; the right to child care for his or her family; the right to quality, affordable health care; the right to employment when he or she returns home; the right to education benefits; the right to a fair retirement plan; and the right to representation at the highest levels of the Department of Defense. Perhaps most important, this bill of rights would ensure that the Guard and Reserve remain attractive opportunities for Americans who want to serve their country.

Second, it is time we made good on a simple promise to veterans: If you wore the uniform of our Nation, if you fought under our flag, your health care

needs will be met for life. The full funding of veterans health care should be made mandatory under law. For too long, the VA budget has been subject to the give and take of budget politics. We need to set things straight. The funding for the VA should no longer be set by political convenience, or back-room deals, or the zero-sum game of budget politics. One thing, and one thing alone, should govern the care of our veterans; that is, the needs of our veterans.

How could we do otherwise? How could we let our country move forward and leave behind the men and women whose bravery has won our freedom and prosperity? Moreover, how could we let our children grow up believing that our Government fails to honor and repay those who risk their lives in service to the Nation.

We cannot afford to wake up one day and discover that our military lacks the manpower it needs to defend our country. The signs of an impending recruitment crisis are all around us. We should not let this Congress adjourn without taking real steps to prevent this developing problem from undermining the strength of our military for years to come. It is time to act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

#### ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, very quickly, I understand the Senator from Massachusetts will be recognized shortly. I ask him, is he going to be speaking on the underlying bill?

Mr. KENNEDY. I will be speaking about issues that are included in the underlying bill.

Mr. FRIST. I will ask that following the Senator's time we be given a like amount of time to comment on whatever subject it would be. Then I encourage that we would be able to go straight to the underlying bill. We have the managers here, and I know the Senator has a statement he wants to make.

I ask unanimous consent that Senator KYL follow Senator KENNEDY, with a similar amount of time to respond on the topic, whatever it may be, and we will go straight to the bill. I want to encourage us to stay on the underlying bill.

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

The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

#### POLICY IN IRAQ

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the leader and the leadership. I know the matters we have before us are of great importance and urgency. So is the matter about which I will address the Senate.

By any reasonable standard, our policy in Iraq is failing. We are steadily losing ground in the war. Even after