

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. WARNER. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SUNUNU). Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. WARNER. 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.

(The remarks of Mr. WARNER pertaining to the introduction of S. 2600 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. REID. I appreciate the courtesy of my friends, the distinguished Senator from Oregon and the leader, Senator BYRD, for allowing me to speak for a few minutes. He has been waiting a long time.

LEAK OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, yesterday the American people received the shocking news that the Vice President's former chief of staff, Scooter Libby, may have acted on direct orders from President Bush when he leaked classified intelligence information to reporters. It is an understatement to say that this is a serious allegation with national security consequences. It directly contradicts previous statements made by the President. It continues a pattern of misleading America by this Bush White House. It raises somber and troubling questions about the Bush administration's candor with Congress and the American people.

Today, I come to the floor to request answers on behalf of our troops, their families, and the American people. For years President Bush has denied knowing about conversations between his top aides and Washington reporters, conversations where his aides, like Scooter Libby, sought to justify the war in Iraq and discredit the White House's critics by leaking national security secrets. In fact, President Bush is on record clearly, in September of 2003, as saying:

I don't know of anybody in my administration who leaked classified information. If somebody did leak classified information, I'd like to know it, and we'll take appropriate action.

Yesterday, we found there is much more to the story. According to court records, President Bush may have personally authorized the very leaks he denied knowing anything about. In light of this disturbing news, we need to hear from President Bush which of these is true: His comments in 2003 or

the statements made by the Vice President's chief of staff. Only the President can put this matter to rest.

Harry Truman had on his desk in the Oval Office a plaque. It said: "The buck stops here." In George Bush's White House, perhaps he should put one that says: The leaks start here.

He, the President of the United States, must tell the American people whether President Bush's Oval Office is a place where the buck stops or the leaks start. This is a question he alone must answer, not a spokesman, not a statement, only the President of the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I, too, thank the Senator from West Virginia for his courtesy. I ask unanimous consent to speak this afternoon for up to 15 minutes.

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

WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM IRAQ

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise to offer a simple proposition: Congress should act like a coequal branch of Government and vote on whether to keep American troops in Iraq for at least 3 more years. Late last month, the President told the American people that it is his intent to keep American soldiers in Iraq through the end of his term in office. He has never before made such a sweeping commitment. When the Senate voted in October of 2002 to send troops to Iraq, few Americans believed then that the U.S. military would be in Iraq in 2006, let alone 2009 or beyond. Based on what the Bush administration said then, Americans would be justified in thinking that by now Iraq would be free and democratic. Based on what the Bush administration said then, Americans would be justified in thinking that by now Iraq would be stable and self-supporting. Based on what the Bush administration said then, Americans would be justified in thinking that by now the vast majority of U.S. forces, if not all of them, would be safely back home.

Unfortunately, the rosy forecast put out by the White House and the Pentagon in 2002 perished in the harsh reality of Iraq.

The failure to plan for the post-war period has thus far created less security for the world, greater heartache for Iraq, and extraordinary costs for America.

As of today, neither the American people nor the Congress knows how the President intends to get American troops out of Iraq. Instead, virtually every day, the administration offers a new theory for how discouraging events on the ground in Iraq are actually positive signs.

Here is what is indisputable: 2,348 American soldiers are dead, 17,469 are injured, and 262 billion taxpayer dollars have been spent.

If our troops remain in Iraq for at least 3 more years, how many more will die, how many more will be injured? How many more hundreds of billions of dollars will it cost?

By all accounts, the insurgency remains strong and is constantly attacking and killing American soldiers, Iraqi soldiers, and Iraqi civilians. Every day there is another bombing, another brutal image on the TV that reflects the chaos that passes for an average day in Iraq.

Sectarian violence is rampant. The ethnic strife is so grave that Shiites and Sunnis living in mixed neighborhoods are fleeing for the safety of ethnic enclaves.

In recent months, there have been more and more groups of bodies found—hands bound, shot in the back of the head or beheaded—and many Iraqis have come to believe that their own Iraqi Interior Ministry is participating in these death squad-style killings.

According to Ambassador Khalilzad, the "potential is there" for all-out civil war. That, my friends, is an understatement. As former Prime Minister Allawi concedes, a low-level civil war is already being waged in Iraq.

The so-called "enduring bases" that the Pentagon has built in Iraq certainly create the appearance that the Bush administration intends for the United States to occupy Iraq indefinitely, unnecessarily fostering ill-will among the Iraqi population and throughout the Arab world.

Oil production, household fuel availability, and electricity production are lower than they were 2 years ago. Iraqis have electricity half of each day. About 32 percent of Iraqis are unemployed.

The list of problems that plague Iraq goes on and on.

Supporters of the war tout the Iraqi forces that are standing up and taking responsibility for security. Yet it has been reported that not a single Iraqi security force battalion can operate without U.S. assistance. The Iraqi police force is plagued by absenteeism and militia infiltration. The level of incompetence is high enough that U.S. forces are reluctant to hand over their best weapons to the Iraqis.

You will also hear supporters of the war point to the three elections as proof of progress. Yes, there have been elections. But as the current impasse makes clear, elections are just the beginning. And while those elected have been deliberating for the past 3 months, unable to reach consensus over the makeup of the new Iraqi Government, insurgents have been exploiting the power vacuum to kill, to maim, and to instill terror and fear.

Supporters of the war will also point to our reconstruction efforts. But billions of reconstruction dollars have been misused, misspent, or lost by American contractors, like Halliburton, and Iraqi ministries, including the Ministry of Oil.

While in Iraq recently, as a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, I sat down with representatives of the Oil Ministry to discuss the issue of graft. After I repeatedly pointed to independent analyses documenting the serious corruption problems within the Iraqi oil sector, the Iraqi officials finally acknowledged that there were "small" problems with graft in this sector. Considering that oil accounts for more than 90 percent of the country's revenues, this ought to be extremely disturbing to Congress and people all across America.

Just as the President made the case to go to war, he owes it to Congress and the American people to come to Congress and lay out his plan and his budget for achieving a lasting peace in Iraq.

Congress owes it to the American people and the institution to vote.

If the President refuses to come to Congress in the coming weeks with his plan and his budget to win the peace in Iraq, Congress owes it to the American people to vote up or down on whether to keep American troops in Iraq for at least 3 more years.

The President's case for winning the peace in Iraq should address these concerns:

First, how the President can help make the Iraqis self-reliant so that they can defeat the deadly insurgency.

Second, how the President intends to help Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish leaders break the political impasse so that they can form a unity government.

Third, how the President intends to pull the Iraqi people back from the brink of all-out civil war and the specter of another Rwanda or Darfur.

Fourth, how the President intends to help rebuild the Iraqi infrastructure and ensure that Iraqis have access to basic services like electricity and clean water.

And fifth, how the President intends to bring the troops home from Iraq.

If need be, to be sensitive to national security matters, I would not be averse to the Senate moving into Executive Session to consider portions of the President's plan and his budget for securing the peace in Iraq.

I simply ask the President to come to Congress and describe his plan and his budget specifically, and let Congress consider its potential to succeed before the Congress, with its silence, consents to 3 more years of very costly involvement in Iraq.

The vote I call for today, if held, won't be about cutting-and-running. It won't be about who comes up with the best spin. It will be about holding the President and Congress accountable. The vote will hold the President accountable for presenting a plan and a budget for securing the peace. And the vote will hold Congress accountable by making it finally act like a co-equal branch of government.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia is recognized.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Oregon, who has just spoken, for what he has said. I shall read his speech carefully tonight, the Lord willing, the general theme of which I am in accordance with. His was a speech that had to be said and ought to be said. It was in his words. I might have made it with a change or two. But we are together, as we were when the Senator and I joined the immortal spirits of the 23 who on that day cast the most important vote that I have ever cast in my 48 years now in the U.S. Senate.

EASTER WEEK

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, this Sunday, April 9, is Palm Sunday, thank God. It marks the beginning of the Christian holy week and Easter. The Senate will recess today so that Members might celebrate this holy week in the home churches, among their families, friends, and constituents. Before we adjourn, I would like to give a little consideration to those world-shaping events of some 2,000 years ago.

Whether one counts himself or herself as a Christian of any denomination or a follower of any other faith, one must admit that the man, the person, at the center of the Easter celebration was and is a figure of historical import, just as are the founding figures of the rest of the world's religions. There are today, by some estimates, approximately 2.1 billion Christians of all denominations, more than any other religious affiliation, and almost twice as many as those who describe themselves as secular, nonreligious, agnostic, or atheist—1.1 billion. By way of contrast, there are approximately 1.3 billion adherents of Islam and just 14 million of Jesus' Jewish faith. That one man's example and teachings have affected so many people so deeply and for so many years is a testament to his faith.

On Palm Sunday, a rabbi from Galilee, whom we know best today as Jesus, made a public entrance into Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Passover.

In doing so, Jesus surely knew what was in store for Him. He knew—He knew—He was a wanted man. He knew He was a wanted man—He knew it—marked for arrest by the civil authorities who feared that He would incite a rebellion that would lead to Roman occupation and unprotected by religious authorities who feared His teachings and who could not countenance His refusal to deny being more than human. But still He came. Still He came and the people cheered and threw palm leaves, a symbol of triumph and the national symbol of an independent Palestine, before his path. What a remarkable act of faith. What a remarkable act of faith to come willingly to one's tragic end, seeing through the suffering to the miracle of resurrection. The miracle; the miracle of resurrection. What a remarkable act of courage, to remain silent and smiling at the people

He knew would not or could not aid Him in His final hours.

Some 2,000 years later, those 2.1 billion Christians around the world commemorate Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem by making crosses out of palm fronds, combining the triumphant entrance with the lasting image of Jesus Christ on the cross.

By Thursday, called Maundy Thursday or Holy Thursday, Jesus' freedom ended after His last meal, when He was arrested and imprisoned, betrayed—yes, betrayed—by Judas for 30 pieces of silver. Foreknowledge could not have made those fateful moments any easier to bear. On Good Friday, Christians will solemnly remember His suffering and death upon the cross. Candles and lights will be extinguished in memory of His final hours. Good Friday remains a sad, dark day despite the knowledge of His resurrection to leaven the terrible suffering He endured.

Holy Saturday is a day of vigil, as Christians figuratively keep watch over Christ's tomb and await the glorious resurrection to come. And Easter Sunday, or Resurrection Sunday, is a joyful, glorious day of reaffirmed faith, of promises kept, of hope restored.

I read now from the Book of St. Matthew, the 28th chapter, the first through the seventh verses, the King James version of the Holy Bible:

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where [Jesus] lay.

The scriptures say:

Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, He "goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: Lo, I have told you."

For the next 40 days, Christ proved to his followers that He had, indeed, risen from the dead. Then He ascended into Heaven, fulfilling the final promise of His wondrous life. As John 3:16 so beautifully summed up the central promise of the Christian faith, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In Jesus' resurrection and ascension, God offers the greatest and only proof of His love and His promise that in death, there is life in faith. That—that, not chocolate bunnies and colorful eggs—is the great gift of Easter. Its comfort and solace linger on in the soul even longer than chocolate does on the lips. It warms us even more during sad times—yes—than does the spring sun after a cold and cheerless winter.